



Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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Caritas in verite

Once he finally got his old van going, the young man slowly drove through Port au Prince's Cite Soleil neighborhood. He pointed out the many bullet holes in some of the decrepit houses; the street that was the line of demarcation between extreme poverty and misery and the location of many fierce battles between different gangs; the dry creek choked with garbage that overflowed into nearby houses every time it rained; the "port" where one or two boats bring in a few fish each day and boys swim in filthy water; the once-proud playground now falling apart.

Then, with enormous pride, he arrived at the neighborhood Pax Christi house and introduced the soccer team, coaches and young community leaders who are part of an amazing-sports-for-peace program. Young people who were or could easily have been involved in gangs, kidnapping or street violence were learning new skills – not only about soccer, but especially about life.

These scenes from Haiti provide fitting background to reflect on the new encyclical, *Caritas in verite*, or "Integral human development in charity and truth," issued by Pope Benedict XVI in early July.



"Love - *caritas* - is an extraordinary force which leads people to opt for courageous and generous engagement in the field of justice and peace." (Art. 1) Courageous and generous engagement – in Cite Soleil or Juba, in Phnom Penh or Appalachia, in New Orleans or Nairobi.

Benedict is strong in his criticism of a global economy that is exacerbating the gap between the rich and the poor – providing a small minority with "super development," while the majority barely survive. He notes "damaging effects on the real economy of badly managed and largely speculative financial dealing, large-scale migration of peoples, often provoked by some particular circumstance and then given insufficient attention, the unregulated exploitation of the earth's resources."

He insists that "to desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity... Every Christian is called to practice this charity, in a manner corresponding to his [sic] voca-

tion and according to the degree of influence he [sic] wields in the *pólis*. This is the institutional path — we might also call it the political path — of charity, no less excellent and effective than the kind of charity which encounters the neighbour directly, outside the institutional mediation of the *pólis*." (Art 7)

The encyclical specifically recognizes the importance of *Popularum progressio* ("On the development of peoples") and lifts up the social teaching of its author, Pope Paul VI. Benedict writes: "His was certainly a social teaching of great importance: he underlined the indispensable importance of the Gospel for building a society according to freedom and justice, in the ideal and historical perspective of a civilization animated by love. Paul VI clearly understood that the social question had become worldwide and he grasped the interconnection between the impetus towards the unification of humanity and the Christian ideal of a single family of peoples in solidarity and fraternity." (Art 13)

Caritas in verite insists, however, in a manner not evident in Paul VI's teaching, that nature -- more than raw material to be manipulated – is a wondrous work of the creator with an intrinsic "grammar" that sets forth the ends and criteria for its just use. This recognition is increasingly central to the mission of Maryknoll.

The encyclical also emphasizes the importance of cross cultural understanding as an essential element in peace. For nearly 100 years Maryknollers have known well the gift of crossing borders and believe that the myriad of diverse cultures in our interconnected world provides exquisite raw material for the work of promoting inclusive global security.

In the many countries and cultures where Maryknollers walk with the people of God, they experience the tremendous contribution of Catholic social thought to the efforts of local communities to follow the Gospel faithfully. Forty years ago, *Popularum progressio* raised crucial questions about development and social justice; *Caritas in verite* reiterates and further develops these challenges in the present context.

The painful and hopeful reality of Cite Soleil challenges us to read these treasures of the Catholic tradition and allow them to renew and inform our commitment to work for the fullness of life for all people and the whole earth community.

Africa: President Obama visits

Following President Barack Obama's visit to Ghana, many scholars and analysts have speculated about Obama's approach to the continent. His speech on July 11 shed light on some of the areas that will be the focus of policy during the next four years. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns intern Alice Burger contributed to the following article.

During the speech Obama emphasized four main points: the need for democratic institutions, the route for creating opportunity, how the U.S. will help to combat health problems, and how to achieve the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He also emphasized the need to fight corrupt institutions, the self-sufficiency purpose of aid funding, and the hope of Africa that lies solely with Africans themselves.

As a key point in his speech, Obama remarked that "development depended on good governance," including democratic institutions that resist corruption on all levels. Although it is important that a government have the consent of the people, what happens in between elections is also important. He said that the U.S. will not impose a system of government on another country but will support the institutions and civil society that build toward democracy.

While commentators applauded Obama's push for sound governance, they noted that Africans are not the only ones to blame for corruption – irresponsible investors and donors that implicitly condone bribery are also at fault.

Obama described his administration's \$3.5 billion food security initiative, which concerns many due to its apparent openness to the controversial "green revolution" for Africa. The Africa Faith and Justice Network (AFJN) writes, "The solution to food security in Africa lies within local communities, not with genetically modified (GM) seeds or fertilizers from [U.S.] American companies such as Monsanto... Obama's change in U.S.-Africa policy should include subsidizing only small farmers in the U.S, as well as a proposal to repeal patent laws on living organisms."

The president also pledged to provide \$63 billion to fight HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, polio, and neglected tropical diseases, noting that the harm caused by these diseases cannot be reduced if health-care professionals continue to leave Africa while many of those who remain work in clinics that focus

only on one disease. Obama urged further investment in programs that will support over-all wellness and maternal and child health.

These health-related measures were welcomed by commentators. The Bush administration provided funding for many healthcare programs, including through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR) and the President's Malaria Initiative, but more funding for comprehensive health care is needed.

Conflict, according to Obama, is a "millstone around Africa's neck." While the whole continent is not one giant war (as some might characterize it), violent conflict remains a reality for many. Diversity ought to be a source of strength rather than conflict, and vibrant democracies, he said, should help bring an end to conflict. Transnational cooperation through, for example, the African Union, can provide a way for peaceful resolution to conflicts that face countries today. As a part of securing peace, Obama promoted the also-controversial Africa Command (AFRICOM), which will further the militarization of the continent (see *NewsNotes*, Sept.-Oct. 2007 and Nov.-Dec. 2007) and promote a dangerous integration of U.S. national security and development objectives. According to AFJN, in December 2008, AFRICOM also "helped plan Operation 'Lightning Thunder' against the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in collaboration with the Ugandan army, but it failed miserably. As a result, the LRA retaliated against the people of northeastern Congo."

But the U.S. bears additional responsibility for violent conflict in Africa, including through its support for Ethiopian military operations in and occupation of Somalia in 2006; military aid sent to warring parties in the DR Congo; and military training operations in Rwanda and Burundi.

Furthermore, the U.S., "a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the top suppliers of arms in Africa, continues to look away when it comes to a commitment against small arms proliferation. Rather than signing the 'Protocol against the Illicit Manufacturing of and Trafficking in Firearms, Their Parts and Components and Ammunition,' the U.S. favors businesses that make a profit from both the legal and illegal sectors of the weapons market. ..

"President Obama's challenge is to review and

implement stronger laws in the U.S. to prevent small arms proliferation worldwide and in Africa in particular. In addition, the U.S should not ignore the fact that by reaching an agreement and signing the Arms Trade Treaty now being debated at the United Nations, many lives in Africa could be saved and the number of armed rebel groups reduced.” (AFJN)

Finally, President Obama spoke about the hope that lies in the hand of Africans. He commented that, while African countries were left with the dreadful legacy of colonialism, many of the troubles plaguing the continent today have their cause in the actions of

Africans themselves.

Shortly after President Obama’s visit to Ghana, four African presidents – Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia; Paul Kagame of Rwanda; Seretse Khama Ian Khama of Botswana and Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal – issued a joint statement, saying, “Left unsaid as [President Obama] boarded Air Force One is the fact that Africa seeks not patrons but collaborators, who will work ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ the continent. Among the many enormous challenges before the Obama administration is to build just relationships with the people of Africa.”

Africa: Nuclear weapons free zone enters into force

The African Nuclear Weapons Free Zone or Pelindaba Treaty was signed at Cairo on April 11, 1996 and entered into force on July 15, 2009, after being ratified by Burundi, making the number of ratifications the 28 required for entry into force of the treaty. The following is an excerpt from an article by Liviu Horovitz, with the Center for Non-proliferation Studies.

“In the aftermath of French testing in Algeria, the UN General Assembly adopted in 1961 a resolution calling for a zone free of nuclear weapons in Africa. Three decades later, after South Africa’s accession to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), the Organization of African Unity established a Joint Group of Experts to draft the treaty text....

“The Pelindaba Treaty covers the entire African continent, as well as the surrounding islands, and establishes a legally binding obligation to not only refrain from developing, producing, or otherwise acquiring nuclear weapons, but also to not test, allow, assist, or encourage testing, dump radioactive waste, or station nuclear weapons on the territory of any of the member states of the treaty. In addition, the Treaty commits its parties to apply the highest standard of security and physical protection of nuclear material, facilities, and equipment to prevent theft and unauthorized use, as well as prohibits armed attacks against nuclear installations within the zone. Over the last 13 years, all 52 African nations have signed the Pelindaba Treaty, while 28 African nations ratified. With similar treaties already in force in South America (Treaty of Tlatelolco), the South Pacific (Treaty of Rarotonga), Southeast Asia (Trea-

ty of Bangkok), and Antarctica (Antarctic Treaty), the entire Southern hemisphere is now a zone free of nuclear weapons – an immense success and a great opportunity for further positive steps for Africa in particular, and the international community at large....

“The Pelindaba Treaty’s entry into force requires that a Conference of all Parties be convened as soon as possible by the African Union to establish the way forward. Steps including the establishment of the African Commission on Nuclear Energy (AF-CONE), the ratification of the Treaty’s protocols, and the wider ratification process in the remaining 24 countries represent both challenges and opportunities for Africa’s policy makers....

“Due to both political opposition and lack of governance, some of the remaining 24 ratifications are likely to be difficult to acquire in the short term. For example, Cairo’s primary concerns are Israel’s nuclear status and Iran’s nuclear intentions. Egypt has gradually conditioned its willingness to take any additional arms control steps on Israel’s NPT accession. Consequently, Egypt is not a party to either the chemical or the biological weapons conventions, does not adhere to the IAEA’s Additional Protocol, and has not ratified the Pelindaba Treaty.

“Finally, the Pelindaba Treaty remains unique by linking regional and international organizations to ensure complete regional nuclear disarmament; the treaty requires the dismantlement and destruction of any nuclear explosive device or nuclear weapons production facility under IAEA and AFCONE verification prior to the Treaty’s entry into force. South Africa’s renunciation and complete dismantlement

of its nuclear arsenal at the beginning of the 1990s and Libya's 2006 renouncement of all weapons of mass destruction were vital steps in this process of entry into force. The Pelindaba Treaty thus serves

as an important example of the promise of NWFZs as an approach for promoting both nonproliferation and disarmament."

Zimbabwe: Small steps forward?

The following article was circulated through Together with Africa, the MOGC's special email project in preparation for the Vatican's extraordinary synod on Africa in October.

A recent article in the Guardian begins, "Schools and hospitals returning to life. Food in the supermarkets and queues at the tills. Investors flying in and refugees coming home. Independent newspapers due for launch and international media broadcasting openly. ... A president and prime minister laughing together as they call for national healing. This is Zimbabwe in August 2009. Politically motivated beatings turning families against themselves. Villagers bartering chickens in the absence of a new currency. MPs, lawyers, journalists and students under arrest. Corruption rampant and another cholera outbreak predicted. A president rebuilding his tools of oppression and a prime minister said to be in danger of assassination. This, too, is Zimbabwe in August 2009."

David Smith, the author, goes on to list the ways in which Zimbabwe is still a "confusing place," six months after Robert Mugabe (ZANU-PF) and Morgan Tsvangirai (MDC) reached a power-sharing arrangement whereby the MDC controls ministries such as health and education and ZANU-PF runs the army, the police and the judiciary.

"Supermarket shelves that were once bare are stocked high again, though 94 percent unemployment means many people cannot afford to shop," Smith writes. "About 2.8 million pupils are back at school as teachers finally receive a monthly wage, albeit just \$100 to \$165 to work in crumbling classrooms. Zimbabwe University came back to life last week after six months in darkness. Hospitals and clinics are functioning again ... But the revival comes with caveats. About 70 percent of the population does not have access to clean water and the cholera outbreak that killed more than 4,000 people is widely predicted to return with the rainy season towards the end of the year. The decay of agriculture appears to be slowing but farm invasions continue."

On August 4, Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported that Tsvangirai accused Mugabe of frustrating efforts to implement the reforms required by the Global Political Agreement (GPA).

Nevertheless, there has been some progress. It was announced on July 30 that television stations such as the BBC and CNN had in fact never been banned from conducting business in Zimbabwe, and reports of a ban were "false." The BBC immediately sent its correspondent to Harare.

According to IRIN's Aug. 4 article, "The *Daily News*, a pro-MDC newspaper that was shut down by the ZANU-PF government in September 2003, has also been re-licensed to operate, but its computers and archives were seized in the run-up to the elections in 2008, so the publication is not expected to appear on the streets anytime soon.

"After years of cracking down in response to public demonstrations, the government has also described as 'false' reports that Zimbabweans were not allowed to stage demonstrations, claiming all that was needed was to notify the police. ...

"Parliament also recently announced that it would start interviewing members of the proposed Zimbabwe Media Commission, which will replace the Media and Information Commission, the ZANU-PF government media regulatory body that presided over the closure of independent newspapers, television and radio stations.

"Interviews to appoint commissioners to the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Zimbabwe Human Rights Commission are in the pipeline.

"On 30 July the National Security Council met for the first time since the formation of the unity government in February to discuss the prickly issues of the armed forces and security services. The ministers and commanders of the security forces finally sat down with Tsvangirai, whom they had vowed never to work with or salute."

For additional information see Africa Files (8/10/09), www.africafiles.org.

Sudan: CPA in trouble

According to the Integrated Regional Information Network (8/13/09), concern is growing at the likely humanitarian impact of poor rains and high levels of insecurity in Southern Sudan, with aid workers and officials warning of a major hunger gap in coming months. And the World Food Program's ability to deliver much-needed supplies to hungry communities is being hampered by increasing violence, but this is only one of the major problems facing Sudan. Fear is rising that the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), signed in 2005, is unraveling.

In mid-August the Sudan Council of Churches wrote an urgent appeal entitled "Let us join together to rescue the peace for our people." In their statement they said in part:

"Deeply saddened and highly alarmed by the current situation and possible future scenarios..., we have spent four days of serious reflections to assess the current situation in our country, to reflect on our own role and responsibilities, and to plan how the Church in co-operation with our communities, our governments, our partners and all those who committed themselves to the full implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement ... can respond to the severe obstacles and challenges we are facing all over Sudan.

"Instead of a comprehensive dialogue and reconciliation process as the basis for a common future, we have witnessed people retrieving back to their own groups. Instead of seeing development and becoming self-sustained, we have to call for providing relief in many areas once again to rescue the life of our people.

"In the fourth year of the CPA-Interim Period, at a time when people should be able to enjoy the fruits of peace, we see prevailing and emerging conflicts all over Southern Sudan, namely in Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria, in the Lakes State, in Jonglei, in Upper Nile, in Warrap, let alone in Darfur and parts of Southern Kordofan. We cannot but suspect a common pattern behind all these armed conflicts, which by far exceed the so called ethnic clashes, leaving hundreds of people killed and thousands newly displaced.

"While disarmament is going on in some places, brand new arms are provided in others, by sources

apparently connected to those who seem to have no interest in a common peaceful and just future of our people.

"In addition, those responsible to provide security seem to be unable or even unwilling in some places to do so, for reasons we fail to understand.

"In a country rich of resources like Sudan, many are unemployed or do not get their salaries for months. This cannot be explained by the global financial crisis alone. Money allocated for development of the people, never reaches them but vanishes unaccounted for.

"Furthermore, especially in the areas where oil exploitation is going on, we witness an ecological disaster, with polluted water and soil. Our people, displaced by the war, cannot return home due to the lack of security, basic services and the environmental damages.

"Elections have been postponed twice, and there are indications that even if they will be held finally as scheduled now for April 2010, they may not be free and fair, based on experiences with the contested results of the recent census.

"Being aware that the boarder demarcation is far behind schedule, and the Referendum Bill is still disputed between the parties, we furthermore fear that the Referendum for Southern Sudan and for Abyei as well as the Popular Consultation for Southern Kordofan and Southern Blue Nile might not be conducted as provided in the CPA. We recognize holding the Referendum in 2011 as being of key significance in the implementation of the CPA. We are aware of the various aspirations of our communities; we consider it important for Church leaders to speak with a united voice on this issue..."

Committed to dialogue as the best option for managing the current state of affairs, they then specifically called upon the parties to the CPA, regional and international partners, all parties to the conflict in Darfur, communities of faith, government of national unity and the government of Southern Sudan to "take responsibility and to join hands – for the sake of our people and the whole region." And they committed themselves to provide responsible, accountable and transparent leadership, to work in the spirit of unity, and to act with the people and on their behalf, wherever needed.

Kenya: Search for justice after post-election violence

The following article was written by MOGC intern Alice Burger, who lived in Kenya for the first five months of 2009.

Kenyans have had a challenging 18 months since the post-election violence that rocked the country in January 2008, and the road ahead remains uncertain and pitted with troubles. For the past few months, Kenyan lawmakers have been trying to decide how to bring those responsible for the chaos to justice. According to international observers, there are two possibilities for addressing the issue: They could bring the case to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or set up a special tribunal within the country.

At the end of July, the legislature chose neither option, deciding instead to use the existing judicial system along with a reconciliation council, an arrangement that falls short of a special tribunal because it is not independent of the government. The U.S. and other observers have been supportive of finding the truth within the country, but they are concerned about the chosen route. As Secretary of State Hillary Clinton quipped during her speech in Kenya in early August, using a common Kenyan adage, "If you cannot afford a lawyer, buy a judge." The courts are obviously not trusted to be objective by either Kenyans or outsiders. This raises a serious danger for the East African country: if citizens believe that the trials are biased, the violence could be reignited even as the ashes of the previous violent events are reexamined.

In addition to the glaring problems of bias, other legal problems remain with trying those charged under usual Kenyan law, according to L. Muthoni Wanyeki, executive director of the Kenya Human Rights Commission, a non-governmental organization. Since Kenya became a member of the ICC, new laws now apply to the country under the Rome Statute which are intended to address egregious human rights abuses and to ensure that people at all levels of power are brought to justice. Unfortunately, the statute was not domesticated, meaning it was not implemented into law within Kenya, until after the post-election violence; if crimes are tried under these



laws, there could be claims of retroactivity, potentially making the trials invalid. Yet if the Rome Statute is not applied, only those at the lowest levels – those who were on the street and were themselves harmed by the upheaval – would face the consequences of their actions, not those who started and perpetuated the violence. This is a considerable problem in the Kenyan case, as both President Mwai Kibaki and Prime Minister Raila Odinga are on the list of people who should face charges, as well as a plethora of middle-level people who worked to organize the violence in Nairobi and the Rift Valley.

Another problem with trying these cases under Kenyan courts comes from the investigation that would precede the actual trials. The Criminal Investigation Department would be responsible for gathering evidence, creating a conflict of interest. Police officers have been accused by the Commission of Inquiry into the Post-Election Violence of various crimes, ranging from theft to rape to murder (up to one-third of all the deaths that occurred during the period).

To complicate the matter still further, earlier this year the Kenyan parliament voted to bring the case to the ICC. By referring the case in this way, they have opened up the possibility of an investigation by the international body. The list of those suspected in post-election violence – a list created by the sanctioned Waki Commission on Post-Election Violence – has been given to the Court, moving the process along. Even if domestic trials do take place, the ICC could still start their own judicial process if they believe that justice is not truly being served and if they believe that the courts in Kenya are biased or inadequate.

In the wake of the December 27, 2007, elections, 1,300 people were killed and 300,000 were displaced from their homes (thousands of whom still remain in camps); property was destroyed and chaos and fear reigned in several parts of the country – from Nairobi to the Rift Valley to Kisumu in the west. Those affected by the violence deserve justice, but this may remain elusive if the legislature continues on this path of calling for local trials.

Africa builds united position for Copenhagen

An African Union proposal demanding billions of dollars in compensation for the impacts of climate change is taking shape. According to African Union Commission chair Jean Ping, it is time for Africa to aggressively engage with climate change negotiations to ensure its interests are met in the designing of global responses. See page 18 for an additional article on Copenhagen. The following Inter-Press Service (IPS) article is available at <http://www.ipsnews.net/africa/nota.asp?idnews=48204>.

(IPS) AU officials say the lack of a coordinated stance on global warming by African governments has placed serious limitations on Africa's ability to negotiate in the past. To put this right, a meeting to formulate a common stand ahead of the Copenhagen meeting has just concluded in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa.

African experts on climate change and high-level representatives of AU member states have recommended Africa demand between US\$67 billion and 200 billion annually in compensation. Details of the plan have not been released; so it is not yet known how Conference of Africa Heads of State and Government on Climate Change (CAHOSCC) intends to calculate how much each developed country would be expected to pay, or for how long; or how the plan proposes money should be allocated to various parts of the continent. Or who will oversee its expenditure and accountability. More information is expected once the proposal is approved by African heads of states, who are expected to consider the plan at a meeting in Tripoli, Libya on Aug. 31.

Ethiopia has been nominated to lead ... the recently-formed continental delegation, CAHOSCC, ... comprise[d] of chairpersons of the AU and the AU Commission, representatives of Ethiopia, Algeria, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Mauritius, Mozambique, Nigeria, Uganda, Chairpersons of the African Ministerial Conference on Environment, and Technical Negotiators on climate change from all member states....

Experts say Africa contributes little to the greenhouse gas emissions blamed for warming, but the continent is likely to be hit hardest by the droughts, floods, heat waves and rising sea levels forecast if climate change is not checked ... Ethiopia's team at the Addis Ababa meeting, headed by Neway Gebreab,

chief economic advisor to Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, proposed their country lead the negotiations by CAHOSCC.

"Ethiopia has proposed itself because it has very much been interested on issues surrounding climate change in relation to Africa; it has had some links with authorities and experts in this field, and believes (the country) can put these valuable insights at the service of the continent," Neway told IPS.

... Earlier this year, Ethiopian Prime Minister Zenawi called on rich countries to compensate Africa for climate change, arguing that pollution in the northern hemisphere may have caused his country's ruinous famines in the 1980s. A study commissioned by the Geneva-based Global Humanitarian Forum that was released in May said poor nations bear more than nine-tenths of the human and economic burden of climate change. The 50 poorest countries, however, contribute less than one percent of the carbon dioxide emissions that scientists say are threatening the planet.

Africa is the region most at risk from global warming and is home to 15 of the 20 most vulnerable countries, the study indicated. ... Developing nations accuse the rich of failing to take the lead in setting deep cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, and say they are trying to get the poor to shoulder more of the burden of emission curbs without providing aid and technology. A new climate treaty is due to be agreed in Copenhagen in December. But a senior UN official has warned the discussions risk failure if they are rushed. Yvo de Boer, head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat, said only "selective progress" had been made towards trimming a 200-page draft treaty text in Bonn earlier this month, one of a series of talks meant to end with a UN deal in Denmark.

On the African front, [Rhoda Peace Tumusiime, AU commissioner for rural economy and agriculture] believes the decision by African leaders at the AU Summit in Sirte in July that Africa should be represented by one delegation in Copenhagen defending a united stand and demanding compensation is an indication of new appreciation of the issue of climate change. Africa has to this point been a passive observer in designing global responses to climate change. "The situation right now is different. African leaders have recognized climate is a very important issue," she told IPS.

Honduras: U.S. must condemn coup

In its first real crisis in Latin America, the Obama administration has disappointed many who hoped the U.S. would take a much stronger public stand against the coup in Honduras. While his rhetoric at the Summit of the Americas in April indicated improved relations with governments and people in this hemisphere, President Obama's reaction so far to the overthrow of an elected government has not been visible or strong enough, leading many to doubt the U.S. commitment to restoring the elected President Manuel Zelaya.

In the early morning of June 28, members of the Honduran military entered the Presidential Palace, woke President Zelaya and forcibly escorted him, still in his pajamas, to a plane that took him to Costa Rica via a Honduran airbase, Soto Cano, also known as Palmerola, where hundreds of U.S. soldiers are stationed. President Zelaya had proposed a non-binding poll to gauge the interest of the Honduran people in a binding referendum, to take place during the November elections, to establish a constituent assembly to write a new Constitution.

The poll was declared illegal by the Supreme Court, many members of Congress and Zelaya's own attorney general. Supporters of the coup claim that Zelaya wanted to use the referendum to extend his term as president, which is illegal under the Honduran Constitution. Article 239 states that a president who even proposes changing the presidential term limits immediately loses his political position for at least 10 years.

Yet Zelaya's proposal would not have extended his administration. November's election would choose the person to replace him, as the presidency is limited to one four-year term. Even if the proposed referendum for a constituent assembly had passed, it would take many months to create it and for the assembly to write a new constitution. This hypothetical future constitution would have to be ratified by the people and may or may not extend the term limits for presidents. So the accusation that Zelaya was trying to extend his term is not true, yet this myth continues to be used by the coup regime to legitimize itself.

The coup was a reaction to the more significant changes that a new constitution might bring: Proposed amendments would likely lead to more

participation from women and minorities as well as change the terms of mining permits. The constitution could also affect the use of Honduran bases by the U.S. military. (Honduras is the only Central American country to allow such use of its bases.) The Garifuna, an indigenous people in Honduras, were especially hopeful that the new constitution would declare the country to be "multicultural and pluri-ethnic."

Although his critics allege Zelaya had a desire to hold onto power, one of his proposed constitutional changes was a midterm vote of confidence for elected officials, including the president.

Despite its claim to democracy and legitimacy, during the last two months the coup regime has terrorized the Honduran people. In the days after Zelaya's expulsion, curfews were enforced and media outlets were shut down. Media outlets critical of the regime continue to be harassed through illegal detentions, destruction of equipment, as well as violent attacks and death threats.

Numerous international human rights delegations have documented abuses by the military and police including severe beatings and illegal detentions of thousands of nonviolent protestors and innocent bystanders; sexual assault, including rape; illegal detentions of members of the media; and forced recruitment of young men. At least four protestors have been killed in large protests and a number of civil society leaders have been killed near their homes in assassinations that remind many of the violence of the 1980s.

While international reaction to the coup has been strong and swift, the U.S., arguably the country with the most influence on Honduras, has reacted timidly. Immediately following the coup, neighboring countries closed their borders and halted trade with Honduras for a few days. All other countries except Japan have withdrawn their ambassadors, and even the World Bank stopped its funding in the country. Yet the U.S. still maintains its ambassador in the country and, despite U.S. law, has not cut all its aid.

So far, the U.S. has suspended \$35 million in military assistance and other programs to Honduras and has revoked the diplomatic visas of four of the coup leaders. But the administration could take a number of other measures to pressure the coup

regime to step down. It should roundly denounce the violence being perpetrated by the coup regime; suspend all U.S. aid; cancel diplomatic, tourist and business visas of coup leaders; freeze the U.S. bank accounts of those leaders; recall U.S. Ambassador Hugo Llorens; and stop training Honduran soldiers at the Western Hemispheric Institute for Security Cooperation (WHINSEC), formerly known as the School of Americas. These measures could likely force the coup leaders to step down.

The bulk of U.S. money to Honduras comes from the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC), which has yet to suspend or halt its aid. However, in the past two years the MCC reacted quickly in stopping funds in similar situations in Mauritania and Madagascar. In both cases, the MCC suspended its aid to those countries within three days of the military coups and terminated agreements with those countries within two months. More recently, after alleged fraud in municipal elections in Nicaragua last November, the MCC, which is chaired by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, suspended its aid 15 days later. This inconsistency in treatment of countries is difficult to justify.

A religious delegation visiting Honduras August 18-25 expressed how they saw the coup affecting the Catholic Church. "One of our deepest preoccupations ... is about the profound divisions in and animosity surrounding the vibrant Honduran Catholic community, when the rich resources of our faith tradition should be guiding the nation toward a just resolution to this intolerable situation." Soon after the coup, Cardinal Oscar Rodriguez Maradiaga and

all the Catholic bishops released a letter that did not condemn the coup and was interpreted by many as supporting the same. Since that letter many priests and some bishops have spoken out against the coup regime and participated in protests against it. The cardinal has remained silent on the issue and many Hondurans are angry that he does not speak out against the repression. The Catholic hierarchy could be playing an important mediating role in the situation, but instead it sits in silence allowing its dated statements to be used to justify the coup regime.

It is clear that the coup regime is simply digging in its heels to stay in power until the November elections. Yet the Union of South American nations (UNASUR) and others have stated their clear rejection of any election held without President Zelaya first being restored to power. A standoff is in the making and is only likely to be stopped by action from the U.S.

As long as the U.S. remains apparently neutral in the situation, the coup regime will be able to hang on to power. It is essential that the U.S. show a firm rejection of this coup, not only to because it is the legal and just response for Honduras, but also to serve notice to other countries in the hemisphere that potentially could endure similar issues.

Faith in action:

Call the State Department (202-647-4000) and U.S. Ambassador Llorens in Tegucigalpa (011-504-236-9320 ext. # 4268) asking them to take some of the steps listed above to help remove the coup regime and reinstate President Zelaya.

Colombia: Agreement with U.S. worries neighbors

A potential military agreement between the U.S. and Colombia has sparked concern from South American neighbors. Reaction to the plan to give the U.S. a 10-year lease to seven Colombian military bases has indicated that both countries could become more isolated in the region and set off a regional arms race.

U.S. and Colombian officials say U.S. personnel at these bases will not serve in combat roles, but rather will cooperate on "security matters including narcotics production and trafficking, terrorism, illicit smuggling of all types, and humanitarian and nat-

ural disasters," according to the State Department. Though the deal has not been signed, the Obama administration's 2010 defense budget request already includes \$46 million to make construction improvements to the Palanquero base. The U.S. felt the need for access to the bases after Ecuador's President Rafael Correa's refused to renew the U.S.'s 10-year lease on the Ecuadoran base in Manta unless the U.S. allowed an Ecuadoran military installation within U.S. borders.

One of the most difficult aspects in the U.S.-Colombia negotiations is the level of immunity granted U.S. personnel. According to the Colombi-

an magazine Cambio, “This discussion is not minor, and it was one of the points that justified Ecuador’s decision to close Manta. That country’s Constituent Assembly considered that about 300 irregular and criminal acts - illegal detentions and seizures of Ecuadorians and their goods, robberies, murders, injuries and paternity cases - are attributed to U.S. military personnel, and received no response from U.S. judicial authorities.”



By signing this deal, U.S. activities in Colombia will become even more secretive and less influenced by Congress. The current Plan Colombia is debated yearly in Congress as part of the foreign aid budget. But these bases would not be up for an annual review; they will be treated as a long term agreement under the Defense Department. There is also the question of how many U.S. personnel will work in Colombia. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has assured that the current cap of 1,400 U.S. personnel in Colombia at a time will be respected. But the Senate Armed Services committee recently asked the Pentagon to consider removing that limit in Colombia.

Despite reassurances that this deal represents nothing new in/for the region, there are many causes for concern. The plan gives no assurance that the military activities will be solely in Colombian territory. Colombia already showed its willingness to carry out unwanted military operations in other countries. In March 2008, Colombian military crossed into Ecuador with no warning to or permission from Ecuadoran authorities to kill members of the guerrilla organization FARC, a move supported by then-candidate Obama. This action, plus the doubling of Colombia’s military in the past 10 years and Colombia’s frequent complaints that Venezuela and Ecuador harbor the FARC, has led neighboring countries to boost their number of troops on or near the Colombian border in what could be the beginning of a regional arms race.

“What worries Brazil is a strong military presence whose objective and capabilities have the potential to go beyond Colombia’s internal needs,” stated Celso Amorim, Brazil’s foreign minister. He noted the contradiction between Bogota’s statement

that the FARC has been practically annihilated, and an increase in U.S. military presence to combat them. The Brazilian military is especially concerned about U.S. intentions toward the Amazon and the wealth of minerals, water and biodiversity there. A Brazilian military study in 2002 expressed alarm at the then 6,300 U.S. soldiers in a “militarized belt” around Brazil. It also pointed

to the fact that 25 percent of oil consumed in the U.S. comes from Andean countries as evidence of the importance of the area for U.S. interests. Many Latin American analysts see the purpose of U.S. use of the bases in Colombia as a way to assure access to key natural resources in the region such as Bolivia’s massive fields of lithium, a key mineral for rechargeable batteries.

Reactions to the proposal have been strong. Bolivian President Evo Morales has called for a continent wide referendum on the plan. “If the Colombian president wants his bases to be used, I say I want a referendum in South America so the people of Bolivia, Colombia, Peru, Venezuela, Brazil, Argentina -- all 12 countries -- can decide,” said Morales. He will also bring two proposals to the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR): to create a regional defense school and a regionally coordinated fight against narcotraffic, and for a resolution that no South American country would accept foreign bases in its territory.

Ecuador’s national assembly passed a resolution saying the U.S. use of Colombian military bases would undermine peace in the region, while Brazil’s President Lula da Silva has called for a summit with the U.S. to discuss the details of the plan and diffuse tensions between countries.

Despite assurances from the U.S., South American leaders have legitimate fears with a U.S. presence in seven military bases nearby. As Adam Isacson of the Center for International Policy writes, “The United States is creating a new capability in South America, and capabilities often get used.” With so many regional leaders opposed to the agreement, its signing will further isolate the U.S. and Colombia in the region while strengthening the position of those who speak out against the U.S. empire in Latin America.

Environment: Mining waste in Peru's Puno region

In May 2010 the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) will meet to review work accomplished to date in the field of mining and several other related areas, and to assess what remains to be done. To facilitate this work, civil society groups were requested to submit reports of instances that highlight the implementation of policies already developed or instances that indicate failures in this regard.

Maryknoll Sister Pat Ryan works in the Altiplano of Peru with Derechos Humanos y Medio Ambiente de Puno (Human Rights and the Environment of Puno), a non-governmental organization (NGO), which recently submitted the following information to the UN CSD to be used in preparation for the May meeting.

On April 29, leaders of the indigenous Aymara community of Condoraque approached the NGO to request help in the removal of contaminated mining waste from the Choquene Lagoon and the Condoraque River. Upon visiting the location, NGO members learned that a large scale mining company, before abandoning the site, allowed waste from tungsten, gold and silver mining to accumulate on land bordering with the Choquene Lagoon and the Condoraque River. Formerly pristine, the river had been a source of water and food for Condoraque and 15 other communities located downstream. Now, due to contamination presumably caused by chemical leakage from the mining waste, the water no longer supports life and the nearby former pastureland has turned black and is degraded.

These conditions are of grave concern to the people of Condoraque because they herd alpaca, which require fresh pastureland and uncontaminated water. The alpaca are presently diseased due to the polluted water.

The NGO agreed to help

the people of Condoraque in their work of reclamation of the water by networking with other groups that have complementary skills and the collaboration and authority of the government. It is evident that the recovery of community livelihood and food security depends upon the success of this effort. To date the following has been accomplished:

- Empirical testing of water's Ph level.
- Development of informational materials and dissemination to the national ministries of mining and agriculture, the regional ombudsman's office, the regional governor, the office of the public prosecutor, and radio stations
- Consultation with the Institute for Legal Defense (IDL) and preparation of the case as a possible national prototype
- Commitment of the public prosecutor to do an on-site inspection

Although it will be a long time before this case is properly resolved, it is clearly important to:

- Insist on appropriate and culturally sensitive consultation with local populations prior to and during extractive development projects
- Form partnerships with other communities for protecting water sources

- Participate in policy making processes governing extractive industries
- Establish networks providing a variety of competencies, as in technological, planning, legal, etc.
- Record the accounts of observations and experiences of the local community
- Substantiate claims through scientific methods
- Advocate for reasonable access to scientific evaluation of water for all communities
- Apply the precautionary principle in cases involving risk of contamination
- Set development criteria in terms of sustainability.



Free trade: Perspective from Peru's Altiplano

On January 16, 2009 President George W. Bush signed the U.S.'s free trade agreement with Peru, which went into effect on February 1. As in other Latin American free trade agreements, the U.S.'s declared intentions for this agreement with Peru were to strengthen legal industries as alternatives to drug production and trafficking, and to improve the quality of people's lives. This article addresses this second point, providing an insight from a remote part of Peru.

Maryknoll Sister Aurelia Atencio has worked in the Altiplano of Peru among the indigenous Aymara people for the past 30 years. Her observations and reflections on the impact on rural communities of trade agreements between Peru and the United States are particularly valuable because she is an agronomist with a broad understanding of the earth's natural cycles and patterns of development.

With a compassionate view of the reality of the Aymara people, Sr. Aurelia notes that, contrary to the perception of sophisticated societies, the Aymara have a highly developed society, with a complex language and culture and adaptive governance structures. They interact regularly with groups outside of the local community, including engaging in trade agreements, and move continuously back and forth from their communities, which connects them with a larger experience, expanding their own world. They have made many changes in customs over the past 30 years, reflecting realistic adjustments to modern life. Most especially, over the years they have preserved and developed seeds.

The traditional diet of the Aymaras is healthy. Over time they have produced potatoes, quinoa, canihua and various other grains and root crops. They have fish from the lakes and rivers and milk and cheese from the livestock as well as dried meat

and eggs. As a result of Sister Aurelia's work, a variety of organically grown vegetables for local consumption are produced using greenhouses.

However, Sr. Aurelia's fundamental observation is that the Aymaras' quality of life has been in steady decline. The present free trade agreement emphasizes production for export and food product purchases imported through transnational for-profit corporations. The market is flooded with non-traditional items like rice and noodles. Additionally, seeds are affected under these arrangements.

The global trend toward indigenous people's being unable to save seed from year to year is a major concern. After centuries of developing seeds as a community heritage, indigenous people would have to buy "certified seed," genetically modified and privately patented. This is particularly worrisome in view of the fact that the Aymaras have successfully produced food for hundreds of years in challenging conditions. The new genetically modified seeds are not proven; they are costly and their cultivation usually requires large amounts of water, pesticides and

chemical fertilizers. They produce imbalances and unknown consequences.

Sister Aurelia's way of living among the Aymaras may offer the best model for improving life in a mutually enhancing way. First, she undertook the process of adapting to the culture; then, from an organic perspective, she taught the skills of improved potato cultivation, better animal production, greenhouse management, nutrition, food security and sovereignty, protection of intellectual rights, environmental alignment, biofuels, transgenetics and health care. She created a potato seed bank as a resource in times of drought. When she returns to the U.S., she brings wisdom gained over many years of how to live well within a bioregion, and reflection on genuine progress, rooted in respect for the immense biodiversity and cultural diversity in the Earth's inherent code of development.



Free trade: The problem with patents

“The battle over ‘intellectual property rights’ is likely to be one of the most important of this century,” says Mark Weisbrot of the Center for Economic Policy Research. Patents and other intellectual property rights (IPR) leave millions of people around the world without medicine by driving prices out of reach. Due to the increasing effects of climate change – higher sea levels, longer droughts, warmer temperatures -- IPR issues will become even more important in determining if countries and communities will have access to new technologies that could save lives and alleviate suffering.

From the perspective of the global North, one of the principal reasons for “free trade” agreements is to ensure the strongest IPR laws possible. Yet “the economic argument for relaxing patent rules is... the same as that for removing trade barriers, only times 50 or 100, or even 1,000,” according to Weisbrot, because the extra costs created by patents are many times larger than the costs from tariffs, quotas or other trade barriers.

Trade agreements with strong IP laws significantly affect people in participating countries. Enacted in late 2001, the U.S.-Jordan free trade agreement drastically changed access to medicines in Jordan. According to Oxfam, it “has delayed generic competition for 79 percent of medicines newly launched by 21 multinational pharmaceutical companies between 2002 and mid-2006.” Also, “[n]ew medicines to treat diabetes and heart disease cost anywhere from two to six times more in Jordan than in Egypt” which has no free trade agreement with the U.S. These high costs come in the context of an already overtaxed Jordanian health care system. Pope Benedict XVI summed up the problem of IPR measures in trade agreements in his recent encyclical, *Charity in Truth*: “On the part of rich countries there is excessive zeal for protecting knowledge through an unduly rigid assertion of the right to intellectual property, especially in the field of health care.”

Intellectual property rights will become even more crucial as climate change increases and technologies to reduce carbon gas emissions and adapt to changing weather and scarce resources are developed. Countries most affected by climate change are almost exclusively technology importers. We must find ways to continue to encourage the innovation

they need, but also need to ensure that IP laws are not unnecessarily restrictive and costly.

Current IP laws lead to a host of factors that make technologies more expensive to end users. In the area of medicine, the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Researchers of America estimate that an incredible 70 percent of research spending in the U.S. is for “copy cat” drugs that serve the same purpose as an already existing patented medicine, but with a technical difference that allows a new patent. With an alternative system, this redundant research could be used instead to develop new drugs. The patent system encourages other inefficiencies such as increased spending on sales and marketing; no sharing of scientific findings until a product is patented which slows development of technologies; huge legal costs defending patents; and massive spending on political lobbying to protect and expand patent monopolies.

Luckily a number of effective alternatives to monopoly-creating patents and copyrights exist. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) proposed a plan, codified in the Free Market Drug Act of 2004, that would establish publicly funded research centers, both in and outside of universities, financed with the same amount of money currently spent on research, approximately \$25 billion a year. The government currently pays for only half of that amount, but savings from the plan would more than cover the additional money coming from public coffers. By requiring that all medicines developed in these centers be open to the public and priced as generics, the plan would drastically reduce the costs of medicines – an estimated \$130 billion in savings annually. In addition, scientists’ decisions would be made based on the greatest public need instead of potential profitability. Finally, research results would also be made public thus encouraging more innovation. IP expert James Love has a similar proposal funded by mandatory employer-based research fees.

Today’s growing need for technologies to diminish and adapt to climate change calls for a re-evaluation of our intellectual property rights structure. The current system of government-mandated monopolies through patents, copyrights and other tools must be reconsidered in order to establish a new arrangement that encourages innovation while providing affordable technologies to all.

Inching toward an International Climate Change Treaty

Negotiators have been meeting throughout the year with the goal of a new global climate agreement by the time they convene December 7-18 in Copenhagen for the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). At their last informal meeting August 10-14, negotiators left Bonn, Germany feeling the pressure of only 114 days remaining with miles to go before they meet their goal.

August's informal meetings in Bonn produced candid discussions on the legal architecture of the agreement on long-term cooperative action under the UNFCCC. However, divergent views prevail on several of the critical issues, and negotiators left Bonn with the unmanageable "brick"—the nickname for the 2,000 page text that contains thousands of bracketed text representing issues that need resolution by December.

Technical discussions continued on more industrialized nations' emissions reductions. Engagement was high among all parties, but less industrialized countries were disturbed by some richer countries' pledges to reduce emissions using different baseline years and different assumptions around carbon mechanisms which make the various proposals difficult to compare. (The U.S. is currently working with the base year of 2005).

Pressure mounts from various sources. Scientific reports reveal that previous targets of carbon reductions are no longer realistic to slow climate change impact. Scientists now concur that the world needs to reduce the carbon dioxide (CO₂) levels in the atmosphere to 350 parts per million (350ppm). In the U.S. this would mean cutting emissions to 1990 levels by 2020 – something the U.S. has been unwilling to commit to in climate legislation thus far.

Currently global CO₂ is at the dangerous level of approximately 390ppm. The "350 campaign" urges decision-makers to embrace the 350ppm goal and calls for worldwide action around this appeal on October 24, 2009. Getting to 350ppm means setting a long term target for industrialized countries' reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by 80 percent (and less-industrialized countries by 50 percent) by 2050 – using 1990 as the baseline year.

The urgency of the impact of climate change also pressures negotiators to come to sign an agree-

ment. Countries like the small island state of Tuvalu desperately cry for adaptation assistance as rising ocean levels swallow their land mass. At the same time, the sluggish economy means that industrialized nations (especially the U.S.) are slow to commit new public funds necessary for climate adaptation.

At the conclusion of the Bonn meeting, the working group chair declared parties will have to work "twice as hard" in Bangkok (September 28-October 9) and subsequently in Barcelona, Spain November 2-6 before convening in Copenhagen at the UNFCCC's 15th Conference of Parties and fifth meeting of the parties to the Kyoto Protocol.

This fall there are two other important meetings where these issues will be discussed. The first is at a UN High Level Meeting in New York September 22, where Secretary General Ban Ki-moon will use this opportunity to urge swift action on establishing a climate change agreement. The second will be at the G20 Summit held in Pittsburgh September 24-25 where President Obama will chair a meeting of leaders from the countries that represent 85 percent of the world's economy.

One of the underlying issues that complicate the negotiating landscape is that of transparency. While some of the upcoming opportunities for all countries to discuss ways to move ahead, the Group of 20 industrial and emerging market economies only includes 20 nations. Clearly the G20 countries have to work out some kind of agreement with emissions levels rising in countries like China and India, while industrialized nations like the U.S. fear making short-term domestic emissions reductions in the face of the ongoing financial crisis. On the other hand, the decisions on how to respond to climate change must be a more inclusive undertaking because Earth and all the life it supports are at stake.

Faith in action:

Use the September 22 date of the UN High Level Meeting on climate change to create your own "seal the deal" action this fall. Learn more at www.sealthedeal2009.org.

Register your faith community for a 350 action on October 24 urging world leaders to set an ambitious target at Copenhagen to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide to 350 parts per million. See details at: <http://www.350.org/people/faith>.

Special series: Ecological economics, part 5

A fundamental conflict exists between economic growth and biodiversity conservation, as there is no way to continue economic growth without also irreparably destroying Earth. This fifth part of the series will explore the issue of technology and show why it will not result in ecological preservation without a parallel shift away from a growth-oriented economy toward a steady state economy. Much of this article is adapted from Brian Czech's "Prospects for reconciling the conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation with technological progress," in Conservation Biology, Vol. 22, No. 6, 2008 and www.workersoftheworldrelax.org.

Human beings are completely dependent on plants and non-human animals for survival and these plants and animals are in turn dependent on Earth. It is important to remember that any increase in resource use by humans means a de facto decrease in resources available for other life forms. When a mountain top is blown up to extract minerals, the plants and animals there lose their habitats and food sources. As wildlife biologist Brian Czech puts it, "The foundation of the human economy is agriculture and extractive activity that directly impacts nonhuman species... In the absence of [humans], natural capital is allocated entirely to nonhuman species. The level of human economic activity determines how much natural capital is available for biodiversity"

Yet many erroneously believe that technological advances in the efficiency of our resources will allow us to sustain an ever growing economy while decreasing our ecological footprint. Researcher Annababette Wils writes of three basic divisions of innovation in relation to resource use: explorative technology that helps find new stocks of resources that were previously undetected; extractive technology that helps extract previously inaccessible resources; and end-use technology that increases technical efficiency. Better technology in exploration and extraction of resources clearly lead to increases in resource use, so only end-use technologies offer any hope to reconcile the conflict between economic growth and biodiversity conservation. Yet we will see that unless the drive for growth is curbed, no technology will be able to resolve that friction.

Consider improvements in fishing technology that increases the amount of fish caught and sold per unit of fuel consumed. This will lead to one of three basic scenarios: either the same number of fish will be caught and sold while using less fuel, which would reduce economic growth; or the same amount of fuel is purchased and more fish are caught and sold, thus increasing economic growth; or a combination where a little less fuel is used to sell a few more fish. If the overriding goal of the fishers is to grow the size of their operation, they will choose to increase their catch of fish, so the increase in technology does not result in any decrease in any overall resource use. Only by choosing to forego growth would the technology result in a decrease in resource (fuel) use.

In 1865, William Stanley Jevons noticed this phenomenon with the introduction of a more efficient steam engine. In what became known as Jevons' paradox, he showed how instead of reducing overall consumption of coal, the increase in efficiency actually increased consumption noticeably. While the more efficient engine enabled greater production, it made the transportation of goods and people cheaper thus increasing the demand for it. Similar events followed other increases in efficiency.

In 1975, Congress mandated more fuel efficient cars as a way to decrease use of foreign oil. Yet as travel became less expensive, people traveled more, bought more cars and increased fuel consumption: By 1990, engine efficiency had grown by 34 percent, and fuel consumption had grown by nine percent. One way to avoid this increased growth in consumption is through a fuel tax, or a similar policy, that would raise the cost of fuel in relation to the efficiency savings. However, the growth mindset makes policies like this difficult to pass.

A good illustration of combining policy with technology to lower an ecological footprint can be seen in European productivity and GDP levels. In the early 1970s, European productivity per worker hour was about two thirds that of the U.S. and European consumption levels were similarly about two thirds the size of the U.S. Today, however, European productivity is almost equal to the U.S., yet its level of consumption has remained at around two thirds. While the U.S. used technological advances to produce and consume more, Europe used it to create

more leisure time. Work hours were decreased and annual vacation hours were increased.

It is only by combining technological advances in efficiency with policies to reduce consumption

that technology will help reduce humanity's effect on the planet. If the current drive for constant growth is maintained, technology will only moderately slow down the rate of Earth's destruction, not reduce it.

Special series: Corporations in U.S., part 5

This fifth part of the series focuses on how a memo to the Chamber of Commerce in 1971 led to a unified corporate campaign to convince U.S. residents of the benefits of corporations and free enterprise. This campaign led to a significant increase in corporate influence on key sectors of society such as schools, media and the courts.

It's hard to imagine today, but in 1971, an important lawyer who sat on the boards of 11 corporations wrote: "One does not exaggerate to say that, in terms of political influence with respect to the course of legislation and government action, the American business executive is truly the 'forgotten man.'" The author was Lewis F. Powell, writing to Eugene Sydnor, Jr., chair of the education committee of the Chamber of Commerce, in a memo titled "Attack of American Free Enterprise System." It was to serve as a discussion piece at the next Chamber meeting.

In the memo he lamented how the radical left was more numerous and better financed than ever before and gaining support from universities, the press and even churches. Powell issued a clarion call to use "the wisdom, ingenuity and resources of American business to be marshaled against those who would destroy it." The call was well received and a well financed campaign began to influence public opinion and the government, led by the Chamber of Commerce and the Business Roundtable, an organization of the CEOs of hundreds of the largest corporations in the country. They pooled their vast resources to create think tanks like the Heritage Foundation, the Cato Institute, Accuracy in Academe and others that produce authoritative papers on the benefits of free enterprise to influence media and government officials.

The memo stressed the importance of countering "the assault on the enterprise system" in universities and high schools and called on corporations to fight for "academic freedom" with "openness, freedom and balance" that would provide openings for members of the Chamber's "staff of speakers"

to address students about the values of capitalism. They created a panel of scholars who "believe in the system" and "whose authorship would be widely respected - even when disagreed with" to write pro-business articles and to "evaluate social science textbooks, especially in economics, political science and sociology."

In the section titled, "What can be done about the public?" Powell suggested that television "should be monitored in the same way that textbooks should be kept under constant surveillance." When "programs are unfair or inaccurate" prompt complaints should be sent to the media and the Federal Communications Commission; corporations should call for equal time on the TV and radio so that networks would "afford at least as much opportunity for supporters of the American system to participate as these programs do for those who attack it." "There should be a fairly steady flow of scholarly articles presented to a broad spectrum of magazines and periodicals." He also suggests that corporations spend 10 percent of their advertizing budgets to this overall purpose of convincing people of the benefits of capitalism.

Yet it was in the legal arena that Powell saw the most potential. "Under our constitutional system, especially with an activist-minded Supreme Court, the judiciary may be the most important instrument for social, economic and political change." "This is a vast area of opportunity for the Chamber, if it is willing to undertake the role of spokesman for American business and if, in turn, business is willing to provide the funds." Since then, the Business Roundtable and the Chamber's litigation center have fulfilled this role very well with high-paid lawyers initiating and defending cases in favor of corporations at all levels of the judicial system.

Less than two months after the Chamber of Commerce discussed Powell's memo, Richard Nixon appointed him as Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. The memo was not released to the public until after his confirmation. During his tenure as Chief Justice, Powell wrote the majority opinion in First

National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti, a 1978 decision that effectively invented a First Amendment “right” for corporations to influence ballot questions, among other pro-business decisions.

Through the offensive described in Powell’s memo, U.S. corporations succeeded in shifting the mood of the country to favor big business and free markets. The absurdity of the phrase “Few elements of [our] society today have as little influence in government as the American businessman, the corporation, or even the millions of corporate stockholders” today shows the measure of their success.

Powell’s appointment to the Supreme Court also shows the importance of analyzing court appointees according to their ties to business. During Senate appointment hearings many are concerned about the nominee’s views on social issues while ignoring their economic views, even though decisions in the economic area will more directly affect them. The Chamber of Commerce has been very effective in getting people it supports on to state, federal and

Supreme Court levels.

Today’s Supreme Court has shown itself to be more pro-business than the Rehnquist court before it. John Roberts had written two briefs for the Chamber and was highly favored by it for the nomination, and not without reason. According to Jeffrey Rosen in the *New York Times* magazine, quoting Scotusblog, “Although the court is currently accepting less than two percent of the 10,000 petitions it receives each year, the Chamber of Commerce’s petitions between 2004 and 2007 were granted at the rate of 26 percent.” A Georgetown law professor found that the court reverses lower court decisions in 65 percent of its cases, but when they are Chamber of Commerce petitions, the rate rises to 75 percent.

In order to counteract this incredibly effective permanent campaign of corporations to increase the pro-corporate mindset in the country, we need to carry out a similarly complex and multi-faceted movement to rein in corporate power. In the next issue, we will point to promising ways to do so.

UN: Pledge to protect children strengthened

In a major step forward, the United Nations’ Security Council has adopted a resolution that calls on the UN system as a whole to monitor and report on grave violations against children caught in the violence of armed conflict.

This expansion strengthens SC Resolution 1882, and will make killing and maiming of children and rape and other forms of sexual violence against children top priorities for Security Council action. All parties to armed conflict found by the UN Secretary-General to be recruiting and using child soldiers, killing and maiming children, or raping and subjecting children to sexual violence in the context of armed conflict, will face action by the UN Security Council’s Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict, which aims to hold perpetrators accountable and ultimately to halt these violations.

Julia Freedson, director of the global network Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict, said, “This action by the Security Council signifies a real advancement in efforts to protect children; it must now make certain that the ideals set out in this resolution translate into tangible improvements in the lives of children — especially the end of violence and

the end to the impunity enjoyed by armed groups.”

The resolution’s key achievements include:

- Reaffirmation of the Security Council to use sanctions against persistent perpetrators and commitment to closer cooperation between the Council’s Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict and pre-existing Sanctions Committees;
- A call to member states to hold perpetrators accountable, and bring them to justice through national and international justice mechanisms, criminal courts and tribunals;
- A call to parties to armed conflict to develop and implement action plans to halt all violations against children, in coordination with UN teams in the field.

The government of Mexico was applauded for its leadership in securing the adoption of this important resolution. It remains critical, however, that the Security Council and the international community as a whole keep the momentum on the children and armed conflict agenda and demand that all parties to conflict take concrete and measurable actions to halt all violations against children.

UN: “We are all sons, daughters of Earth”

The following article includes excerpts from the address given by Maryknoll Father Miguel D’Escoto, president of the UN General Assembly, at the beginning of the UN Conference on the Financial and Economic Crisis in July 2009. His entire address and concluding remarks are available on the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns’ website.

... It is neither humane nor responsible to build a Noah’s Ark only to save the existing economic system, leaving the vast majority of humanity to their fate and to suffer the negative effects of a system imposed by an irresponsible but powerful minority. We must take decisions that affect us all collectively to the greatest extent possible, including the broad community of life and our common home, Mother Earth ...

First of all, we must overcome an oppressive past and forge a hopeful future. It must be acknowledged that the current economic and financial crisis is the end result of an egoistical and irresponsible way of living, producing, consuming and establishing relationships among ourselves and with nature that involved systematic aggression against Earth and its ecosystems and a profound social imbalance, an analytical expression that masked a perverse global social injustice. In my opinion, we have reached the final frontier. We seem to have reached the end of the road travelled thus far, and if we continue along this way, we could arrive at the same destiny which has already befallen the dinosaurs.

... From this perspective, it is essential to seek what the Earth Charter calls “a sustainable way of life.” This implies a shared vision of the values and principles promoting a particular way of inhabiting this world that guarantees the well-being of present and future generations. As great as the danger we all face from the convergence of these various problems is, the opportunity for salvation that the global crisis is helping us or forcing us to discover is even greater.

We have built a globalized economy. Now is the time to create globalized policy and ethics based on the many cultural experiences and traditions of our peoples...

The viewpoint that comes to us from the so-called earth sciences, that the Earth is contained within a vast, complex and evolving cosmos, must

be incorporated. This Mother Earth, the term approved by the General Assembly this past April 22, is alive. Mother Earth regulates herself, maintaining the subtle equilibrium among the physical, chemical and biological in such a way that life is always favored. She produces a unique community of life from which the community of human life — humanity — emerged, as the aware and intelligent part of the Earth herself.

This contemporary concept agrees with the ancestral vision of humanity and of the native peoples for whom the Earth always was and is venerated as Mother, Magna Mater, Inana, Tonantzín, as the Náhuatl of my country, Nicaragua, call it, or Pacha Mama, as the Aymaras in Bolivia name it.

There is a growing awareness that we are all sons and daughters of Earth and that we belong to her. As President Evo Morales has reminded us many times, she can live without us, but we cannot live without her. ...

At this time in history, with the global crisis and for the sake of the common good of the Earth and humanity, we must take collective short- and medium-term action to keep society functioning on the one hand, and to set a foundation for new forms of sustainable living on the other. Five essential elements could give coherence to new initiatives that seek to construct alternatives ...:

- First: the responsible and sustainable use of limited natural resources. This means moving beyond exploitation and strengthening a relationship of respect and synergy with nature.
- Second: putting the economy back in its proper place in society as a whole by abandoning the reductionist vision which had made it the main focus of human coexistence. The economy should respect values but not be a source of values; it should be seen as the activity that lays the foundation for the physical, cultural and spiritual life of all human beings on the planet, while respecting social and environmental norms.
- Third: to spread democracy to all social relations and institutions. It should not only be applied and strengthened in the political arena, with a new definition of the State and of international organizations, but also extended to the spheres of economics, culture and the relationship between men and women so that it becomes a uni-

versal value and democracy is permanent.

- Fourth: to build a minimum ethos on the basis of multicultural exchange and the philosophical and religious traditions of peoples, so that they can participate in defining the common good of humanity and the Earth and in developing new values.
- Fifth: to strengthen a spiritual vision of the world that does justice to man's search for a transcendent meaning of life, of the creative work of human beings and of our brief appearance on this small planet.

Personal, social and planetary well-being can only be achieved if these five essential elements are made real. This is made possible by an economy that makes sufficient and decent provision for the whole community, where human beings live in harmony with each other, with nature and with the Whole of which we are a part.

These are the foundations for a bio-civilization which gives a central role to life, the Earth and humanity, whose citizens are sons and daughters of joy rather than of need. ...

The common good of humanity and the Earth is a dynamic reality that is constantly evolving. Four ethical principles are important for keeping it alive and open to further development.

The first ethical principle is respect. Every being has intrinsic value and can serve the good of humanity if guided not by purely utilitarian ethics, such as those which predominate in the current socioeconomic system, but rather by a feeling of mutual belonging, responsibility and conservation of existence.

The second is care [which] implies a non-aggressive attitude to reality, a loving attitude which repairs past harm and avoids future harm and, at the same time, extends into all areas of individual and social human activity. If there had been sufficient care, the current financial and economic crisis would not have occurred. Care is intrinsically linked to maintaining life, because when there is no care, life weakens and disappears. The oriental expression of care is compassion, which is so needed these days when much of humanity and the Earth itself are being battered and crucified in a sea of sufferings. In a market society which is driven more by competition than cooperation, there is a cruel lack of compassion towards all suffering beings in society and in nature.

The third principle is collective responsibility.

We are all dependent on the environment and interdependent. Our actions can be beneficial or harmful for life and for the common good of the Earth and humanity. The many crises now occurring are largely the result of a lack of responsibility in our collective projects and practices which has led to a global imbalance in markets and in the Earth system.

The fourth principle is cooperation. If we do not all cooperate, we are not going to emerge stronger from the current crises. Cooperation is so essential that in the past it enabled our anthropoid ancestors to make the jump from animality to humanity. When they had food, they did not eat individually but brought everything to share with everyone in the group in cooperation and solidarity. What was essential in the past is still essential in the present.

Lastly, there is a belief which pertains to the common good of humanity, a belief that comes from spiritual traditions and is affirmed by contemporary cosmologists and astrophysicists, that behind the whole universe, every being, every person, every event and even our current crisis, there is a fundamental energy at work, mysterious and ineffable, which is also known as the nurturing source of all being. We are sure that this nameless energy will also act in this time of chaos to help us and empower us to overcome selfishness and take the action needed so there is no catastrophe, but an opportunity for creating and generating new forms of coexistence, innovative economic models and a higher sense of living and living together.

In conclusion, I would like to place on record my deep conviction that the current scenario is not a tragedy but a crisis. Tragedy has a bad outcome, with an Earth that is damaged, but can continue without us. Crisis purifies us and forces us to grow and find ways to survive that are acceptable for the whole community of life, human beings and the Earth. The pain we now feel is not the death rattle of a dying man but the pain of a new birth. So far we have fully exploited material capital, which is finite, and now we have to work with spiritual capital, which is infinite, because we have an infinite capacity to love, to live together as brothers and to penetrate the mysteries of the universe and the human heart. ...

[W]e will shine our light again ... in a planetary civilization which is more respectful of Mother Earth, more inclusive of all people and with more solidarity with the poorest, which is more spiritual and full of reverence for the splendor of the universe and which is much happier. ...

Debt: Vulture funds legislation introduced

The following reflection was written by Tony Cortese who worked as an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns during the 2009 summer.

Read this excerpt from the poem “Vulture” by Robinson Jeffers through the perspective of a debt-laden, impoverished country:

I had walked since dawn and lay down to rest on a bare hillside

Above the ocean. I saw through half-shut eyelids a vulture wheeling high up in heaven,

And presently it passed again, but lower and nearer, its orbit narrowing, I understood then

That I was under inspection. I lay death-still and heard the flight-feathers

Whistle above me and make their circle and come nearer.

I could see the naked red head between the great wings

Bear downward staring. I said, “My dear bird, we are wasting time here.

These old bones will still work; they are not for you.”

Imagine that through “half-shut eyelids” the country gazes upon its surroundings, only to see commercial creditors narrowing their orbits. Imagine that “lower and nearer” these private equity and hedge funds come to inspect the prey, searching for just one sign: distressed debt. Imagine further that instead of being alive and able to turn the vulture away, the country must admit defeat; it is holding a dead carcass of debt. The country cannot resist the scavenging of the vulture.

Just before a poor country’s debt is to be defaulted, cancelled, or restructured, a “distressed debt fund,” or vulture fund (which can also target private debt), swoops in and purchases this debt for pennies on the dollar from the original creditor. Appearing dignified and altruistic at first, the action soon turns damaging as the vulture fund begins a process of litigation to recover up to 10 times the purchase price from the impoverished country. This is highly destructive to Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC), which are cheated out of the debt cancellation promised to them by the HIPC Initiative. In fact, a 2008 report by the IMF states that vulture funds were engaged in claims seeking a total



of \$1.47 billion from HIPCs. Money that was intended for social services and infrastructure instead finds itself in the pockets of secretive commercial creditors, many of which are based in tax havens.

Some of these vulture funds are owned by large, U.S.-based financial institutions such as hedge funds,

while others are highly secretive. Often, subsidiary companies are established by larger hedge funds solely to pursue a debt, and then shut down after winning the assets. This makes the process of tracking and regulating these vulture funds immensely difficult – something the Jubilee USA network and, most recently, the U.S. Congress are trying to do.

In order to begin the process of tracking and regulating, Rep. Maxine Waters (D-CA) introduced the Stop VULTURE Funds Act (HR 2932) on June 18. If passed, the bill would significantly reduce the litigating power of vulture funds in U.S. courts and would outlaw profiteering (more than six percent interest) by U.S.-based vulture funds on debts held by countries eligible for debt relief. Before any litigation occurs in U.S. courts, HR 2932 requires public disclosure of the names of any persons with an interest in the sovereign debt claim, how and where the claim was acquired and the purchase price. Furthermore, the bill also addresses the ongoing issue of bribes being paid by vulture funds while pursuing collection of defaulted debt claims.

Thus far, HR 2932 has accumulated 18 co-sponsors and is beginning to receive considerable attention in Congress. A hearing is scheduled during September; Jubilee USA has been assigned the task of finding witnesses to testify at the hearing.

Faith in action:

In order to apply this pressure to Congress, call your representative and senators and encourage them to 1) consider becoming a co-sponsor of this bill, and 2) support and vote for the bill. Be sure to express your concern about the devastating effects of vulture funds. More information can be found on Jubilee USA’s website, www.jubileeusa.org.

Resources

1. **In the Land of the Living: Prayers Personal and Public:** Written by Ken Sehested. Designed both for personal use and community worship, these prayers “are jumper cables from the pew to the world” (Maren Tirabassi). With riveting use of images drawn from the Bible—imaginatively applied to a contemporary context—Sehested’s exquisite poetry illustrates how “faith is always personal but never merely private” and affirms that “redemption is for the world, not from the world.” \$15.00, 108 pages, Catawba Publishing Company, 5945 Orr Road, Suite F, Charlotte, NC 28213; info@catawbapublishing.com; (704)717-8452.
2. **Stretching the Imagination: Co-Creating A New World:** Pace e Bene will celebrate its 20th anniversary **September 25–27** in Las Vegas. For two decades, Pace e Bene has fostered nonviolent change through education, community, and action. Dr. Vincent Harding will join the founders of Pace e Bene -- Rosemary Lynch, Alain Richard, Julia Occhiogrosso, Louis Vitale, Peter Ediger -- and others for a weekend of celebration, reflection and witness. The celebration will begin at 7 pm Friday, with reflections and workshops on Saturday, and an anniversary dinner and party on Saturday night. Sunday will include worship in the desert and nonviolent witness at Creech Air Force Base, home of the U.S. drones fleet. Registration: \$150 includes all events and Saturday’s meals/snack. Scholarships are available. Limited housing and sleeping bag space may be available. For information call (702)648-2281 or email paceebene@paceebene.org.
3. **Immigration reform convening and training:** Sponsored by Justice for Immigrants, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ campaign for immigration reform, this convening will be held **October 7-9** in Philadelphia PA, and will include workshops and training sessions on Catholic social teaching and migration; current political and policy overview; immigration myths and facts; tools on communicating a compassionate and pro-immigrant message; tools to organize parishes and communities around immigration reform; and tools to effectively advocate for immigration reform. The convening will end with Mass celebrated by Cardinal Justin Rigali of Philadelphia. Participants are invited from the mid-Atlantic region; all are welcome. Fee: \$85-210, depending on housing needs. For more information, contact Antonio Cube at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, acube@uscbb or call (202)541-3000.
4. **Education and solidarity delegation to Chile:** Sponsored by SOA Watch and the Marin Task Force on the Americas, **October 8-18**. Experience the magic of springtime while grasping how the deep wounds of Pinochet remain raw. Learn how the Mapuche people still struggle after 500 years to keep their vibrant culture and traditions alive. On October 12 we will join Mapuches in marching for their rights and their dignity on the date celebrated as the “Day of the Indigenous Resistance.” The group will also visit Mapuche communities in southern Chile, in the slums of Santiago, and meet with Mapuche political prisoners to learn how their natural resources are still being looted and their lands increasingly militarized. The group will meet with family members of the disappeared and survivors of torture and visit places that are important to the memory of these victims. The delegation fee (yet to be determined) will include itinerary, guides, housing, at least two meals a day, and in-country transportation. It does not include travel to and from Chile. For more information and an application, contact: Dale Sorensen, (415)924-3227 or geodale1@earthlink.net.
5. **2009 Gandhi-King Conference on Peacemaking:** To be held **October 23-25** in Memphis, TN. Featuring Mubarak Awad, Rudy Balles, Kathy Kelly, Barbara Love, Michael Nagler, CT Vivian with dozens of workshops, panel discussions, trainings, and other happenings. This three day conference will bring together modern visionaries on nonviolence and social change with community leaders, activists, academics, and organizers to train, learn, plan, and organize to create a culture of liberation and justice for all. For more information visit <http://www.gandhik-ingconference.org/>.