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MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:

Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation

<http://www.maryknoll.org>

Maryknoll Sisters

Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Maryknoll Mission Association of the Faithful

Marie Dennis — *Director*.....mdennis@maryknoll.org
Judy Coode.....jcoode@maryknoll.org
Yamileth Coreas.....ycoreas@maryknoll.org
Sr. Jean Fallon, MM.....globalconcerns@mksisters.org
Rev. Carroll Houle, MM.....choule@mksisters.org
Rev. Jim Kofski, MM.....jkofski@maryknoll.org
Kathleen McNeely, MMAF.....kneels@igc.org
Mercedes Roman, MMAF.....mroman@mksisters.org

MOGC Washington

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

MOGC UN Office

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

**Maryknoll
World Productions**

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

MOGC Maryknoll NY

P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
(914)941-7575 phone
(914)923-0733 fax
globalconcerns@mksisters.org

Maryknoll AIDS Task Force

Susan Weissert
P.O. Box 311
Maryknoll, N.Y. 10545-0311
(914)941-7575 phone
sweissert@mksisters.org

Orbis Books

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

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

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

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

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

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

Donald Rumsfeld
Secretary of Defense
The Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301
(703) 695-5261 phone
(703) 679-9080 fax

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

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

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

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

Capitol Switchboard:
(202) 224-3121

Senator _____
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
www.senate.gov

Representative _____
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
www.house.gov

U.S. elections 2004

Maryknoll missionaries approach the U.S. presidential elections recognizing their enormous impact on the communities around the world where we live and work. We evaluate the proposals of political parties and their candidates through a lens held by these communities and by the values articulated in the Gospel and in Catholic social teaching. Daily, we experience the richness of living in a global context; we understand the value of global solidarity; and we suffer when relationships in the global community are broken.

We are both fearful of and hopeful about the future. We see great promise in the burgeoning social movements around the world that proclaim with deep wisdom and enormous energy that another world is possible. And we see great danger in a superpower United States that lacks a commitment to the global common good.

We yearn for a world that is peaceful because we have seen with our own eyes the human and ecological cost of war and violent conflict. We yearn for a world where the basic right of every person to a life of dignity is honored and where the rest of creation is valued and its integrity safeguarded. We have accompanied too many communities where this is not the reality and we have observed too many political leaders without the vision or the courage to make it so.

So, following instructions given to the prophet Habakkuk, we write down the vision – or at least a portion of it for our times. We believe that concrete political decisions can move this vision closer to reality or impede the possibility of its realization. In the following paragraphs we allude to some of the key policy decisions that will be made by the next U.S. president – policy decisions with enormous impact on peace, social and economic justice and the integrity of creation around the world. In future issues of *NewsNotes* we will develop these areas that concern us greatly and propose some questions for

presidential and Congressional candidates to make visible their proposals for policies on national security, the economy and ecology.

**We experience the richness
of living in a global context;
we understand the value of global solidarity;
and we suffer when relationships
in the global community are broken.**

Peace and security

In a world where power and wealth are increasingly concentrated, where millions of people live without hope, and where violence is rampant,

security, including national security, must be radically re-conceptualized. A new understanding of security in terms of meeting basic human needs and respecting human rights, access to food, clean water, healthcare, education, employment and respect for the integrity of creation must be developed. Based on traditional notions of national security, our country will remain tied to failed policies and experience perpetual vulnerability. Until we shift our thinking and transform policies, peace will be elusive, and fear and fighting, our future.

Any presidential or Congressional candidate should satisfy our serious concerns about:

- U.S. authority taking precedence over diplomacy -- as U.S. missionaries working in 40 countries around the world, we know the importance of diplomacy and believe that U.S. relationships with other peoples should be respectful, shaped by global solidarity, and directed toward the Millennium Development Goals and the global common good. Ours should not be a militarized presence in the world, but a cooperative one. Our foreign aid should contribute to sustainable development.
- U.S. unilateralism, which undercuts the kind of cooperation necessary for addressing global problems.
- U.S. response to the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 – a response that does not address the root causes, allows the U.S. government broad powers to detain “enemy combatants” without charges or due process, and grants the U.S. gov-

ernment unprecedented powers of surveillance, investigation and detention.

- Weapons proliferation - the United States admonishes or attacks those seeking weapons of mass destruction (WMD) while maintaining its arsenal and developing more “usable” nuclear weapons.
- Arms sales by the U.S., the number one arms dealer in the world – arms sales to dictators like Saddam Hussein; arms sales that divert scarce public funds from urgent needs in poor countries; sales of small arms and landmines that have become weapons of mass destruction, taking limbs and lives every day.
- The U.S. defense budget, now over \$400 billion per year, not including the supplemental spending authorizations for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, nor the intelligence budget, nor funds for maintaining the nuclear arsenal.
- U.S. military training programs around the world, including at the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (formerly the School of the Americas) at Ft. Benning, GA, whose graduates have been implicated in murders, rapes, and torture.
- U.S. immigration law and practice that destroys lives, opens doors to the exploitation of immigrant workers and deports crime and violence.

Economic justice

Maryknoll missionaries live on the margins of society, in slums, rural villages, refugee camps, indigenous communities and other dynamic places where people work hard not only to survive but to live a life of dignity. Around the world Maryknoll missionaries have witnessed the disastrous impact of decisions made in distant or disconnected places and see it happening once again as people in increasingly centralized positions of power negotiate trade agreements and determine macroeconomic policies that place profit and growth before human and environmental well-being.

We will ask candidates about their positions on:

- Debt cancellation, including illegitimate debt (from loans to corrupt governments, for failed projects, or to pay for extravagant weapons purchased

from creditor country companies), proposals for a fair and transparent debt arbitration mechanism, and macroeconomic policy conditionality.

- Trade - how they propose to ensure that trade agreements uphold the dignity of the human person and the integrity of creation. In particular, we want to know what they think about a just process for pricing commodities, the social mortgage on intellectual property rights, access for poor people to essential medicines, food sovereignty and the controversy around genetically modified organisms

Ecological issues

Without a substantial transformation in U.S. lifestyles and energy policy, the integrity of all creation will be forever compromised. We are very concerned about current U.S. energy policy, which supports new nuclear energy plants, gives enormous subsidies for extractive industries (oil, gas and coal), provides negligible support for renewable sources (solar and wind) and offers exemptions and tax shields for polluting industries.

Exploration/exploitation is valued over conservation and rehabilitation of damaged ecosystems. Missing are values of environmental justice, creation stewardship and intergenerational responsibility.

Global warming is both a human and an environmental health issue, a matter of survival, a threat to the entire planet.

Water is essential to all life and is therefore a global common good and a human right. As water becomes more scarce, private sector profit-driven control of water management and distribution becomes increasingly problematic, as is the privatization of all essential services.

We will ask candidates:

- to define a comprehensive energy policy that would meet today’s needs and not undermine resources on which future generations will depend.
- about their willingness to sign on to and support the Kyoto Protocol to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- for their opinion about the privatization of essential goods and services.

Zimbabwe: A country unravels

As Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe makes world news for "quitting" the 54-nation Commonwealth (an organization predominantly made up of Britain and its former colonies), claiming that it had been "hijacked by racists," civil society, church and community leaders in Zimbabwe and in southern Africa question Mugabe's government policies that have contributed to the country's economic decay and have promoted impunity and human rights violations.

In November 2003, more than 52 civil society leaders and activists were arrested in Zimbabwe's capital city, Harare. They were detained for two days and released without charge while protesting high levels of taxation, increasing costs of living and the violation of human and trade rights. The protest was organized by the Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions (ZCTU) to push Mugabe's government to address Zimbabwe's economic meltdown now.

Zimbabwe is in the midst of its worst economic crisis since independence from Britain in 1980. Due to economic sanctions and their impact on lowering production, little foreign currency enters the country. The inflation rate is over 500 percent. Food prices have increased as high as 400 percent for some staples, and educated professionals are fleeing the country on a daily basis. Unemployment hovers around 85 percent. In 2002, 400 industries closed, adding another 300,000 urban workers to the 400,000 farm workers out of work due to farm takeovers which are still occurring.

Zimbabwe's economy suffers in part from political isolation. The U.S. is one of many nations unwilling to do business with Zimbabwe in reaction to a "fast track" land distribution policy which involved the violent take-over of farm lands owned by Zimbabwean white farmers. While Mugabe defended the farm take-overs as a means of "righting the injustices of racist colonization," fast track land reform was critiqued by many Zimbabweans as Mugabe's desperate attempt to cling to power.

Those same critics gained credibility with the passage of repressive laws like the Public Order and Security Act (POSA), which authorizes police brutality to suppress dissent, essentially corrupting the Zimbabwean constitutional principles of free association and free speech. The Broadcasting and Citi-

zenship Acts were also used to justify shutting down the only daily independent newspaper in the country last October, giving the government control over the dissemination of public information.

In the context of these events, a moving report published in September by the Solidarity Peace Trust details problems with Zimbabwe's National Youth Training Service Program. While the program claims to enhance skills, patriotism and moral education for the nation's youth, the Solidarity Peace Trust decries this program as compulsory, large scale, paramilitary training.

The Solidarity Peace Trust, composed of southern African church leaders promoting the rights of victims of human rights abuses in Zimbabwe, contends that since January 2002, youth militia members have been accused of murder, torture, rape and destruction of property. Youth militias are indoctrinated and then used to intimidate those who would dissent from government policy. Their violent activities, such as mounting roadblocks, disrupting opposition party rallies, and intimidating voters, all advance ZANU-PF party objectives. When it comes to seeking justice for the damages, youth militia members are treated with impunity.

Interviews with youth who were once part of the Youth Training Program are included in the Solidarity Peace Trust's report. The testimonies reveal that during training some youth militia members became victims of human rights abuses themselves. Training camp conditions are severe, especially in the first year. Systematic rapes were reported among female youth militia sometimes involving girls as young as 11. Pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, were the reported results of youth militia training courses. Camp instructors, as well as other youth militia members are implicated as rapists.

The Solidarity Peace Trust is especially concerned that Zimbabwe's social fabric is being destroyed as young people commit crimes against their fellow citizens with impunity.

To read the Solidarity Peace Trust's September report, go to www.zim-movement.org and click on "Special Reports." For an ecumenical church leaders statement on Zimbabwe, see www.maryknollogc.org/peace/zimbabwe.htm.

AIDS: New promise for treatment access

The HIV/AIDS pandemic has claimed nearly 30 million lives over the past 20 years. Only two years ago, people living in the most affected regions had no hope for receiving anti-retroviral (ARV) treatment. Several new initiatives announced at the end of 2003, outlined in the following article, promise to increase treatment access for people living with HIV and AIDS.

The World Health Organization (WHO) reports that “an estimated 40 million people are now living with HIV/AIDS, 95 percent of them in developing countries, and 14,000 new infections occur daily... In the most severely affected regions, the impact of disease and death is undermining the economic, social and political gains of the last half-century and crushing hopes for a better future.” A central economic issue is the fact that only 400,000 of the world’s 5,900,000 people who need ARV treatment can access the needed drugs. While not revealing details of how it will work, WHO announced an initiative which promises to treat three million people suffering from HIV/AIDS by 2005.

South Africa’s Cabinet adopts a comprehensive treatment plan: According to a new plan introduced in a November 19, 2003 Cabinet statement, the South African government is committed to substantially upgrading the national healthcare system increasing ARV treatment across the country. The upgrade will involve recruiting thousands of nurses, doctors, laboratory technicians, counselors and other health workers for a massive training program to give them knowledge and skills “to ensure safe, ethical and effective use of medicines.” The South African government also committed to a substantial public education campaign, improved prevention efforts and improved treatment of opportunistic infections.

Currently there are 600 AIDS-related deaths and about 1,500 new HIV infections a day in South Africa. The first year the new program will only reach about 20 percent of those who need the medicines. In the future the number of those on medication will increase. South African AIDS activists have long argued that the high death toll of AIDS patients who do not receive medication represents broader inequalities in the distribution of resources. This new plan overturns President Thabo

Mbeki’s stubborn resistance to pursue ARV therapy for his people and takes a step to address the economic inequities existing in South Africa.

Clinton Foundation secures lower prices: The Clinton Foundation’s plan is to lower ARV prices to make them more affordable, and therefore more accessible to poorer countries impacted by AIDS. In November, former President Bill Clinton’s foundation announced that it had secured guarantees of new low prices (\$136 per patient per year) from generic companies agreeing to supply ARV triple-drug cocktails to treat people with HIV. Compared to \$15,000 or more paid for AIDS medications in the U.S., Clinton’s initiative could provide cheaper ARVs to about two million people in the Caribbean and Africa by 2008.

The Clinton Foundation projects that prices will drop even lower as the demand for cheaper drugs increases the volume of sales. The aim is to lure multinational brand name drug companies into competition and drive prices even lower. While health advocates see the importance of price cuts, they emphasize that present patent policies limit sustainable access to a variety of essential medicines needed in poor countries. (See *NewsNotes* November-December 2003 for a description of current patent law problems.)

Multinational corporations to join the fight against AIDS: While getting brand name drug companies to drastically lower their prices is a goal yet to be realized, it is heartening to learn that seven multinational companies have responded to health activists’ pressure to use employee infrastructure to help fight HIV/AIDS. AngloAmerican, ChevronTexaco, Daimler Chrysler, Eskom, Heineken, Lafarge and Tata Steel will all use company resources to improve workplace HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment programs in the communities where they operate.

Faith in action:

The steps outlined above can lead to greater access to medicines around the globe, but pressure must continue. See Doctors Without Borders’ website at <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/> for information and advocacy ideas on keeping the pressure high.

African oil: Blessing or curse?

A report published by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) in June 2003 projected that very soon the United States will be importing 20 percent of its oil from the African continent. The following article looks at the findings of two recent reports: the CRS report entitled Bottom of the Barrel: Africa's Oil Boom and the Poor, and a November 2003 Human Rights Watch report, Sudan, Oil and Human Rights. Given the immense poverty existing in oil-producing areas as well as a history of little transparency in the use of oil revenues, experts question whether oil reserves in Africa are a blessing or a curse.

CRS cautions that Africa's sudden new expansion of oil production and export "is a moment of great opportunity and great peril for countries beset by wide-scale poverty." Coming at a time when foreign aid to Africa from donor countries in the north is being replaced by an emphasis on trade as a means for African "development," Africa must now make the best use of its oil to alleviate poverty. The CRS report offers some policy changes, which if implemented, may promote the management and allocation of oil revenues in a way that will benefit Africans now living in poverty.

New money coming from the sale of oil must be managed well. Currently some African governments receiving oil revenues are not transparent, accountable or fair. Since multinational oil companies are not in the habit of publishing what they pay to host governments, it is impossible to track the amount of oil revenue and how it is being spent.

Recognizing transparency as a key step, CRS supports the "publish what you pay" campaign. The campaign proposes that market regulators require oil companies (and other publicly listed natural resource companies) to disclose aggregate information about tax payments, royalty fees, license fees, share purchases, revenue sharing payments, etc. with government and public sector entities.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) contends that in the Sudan, the government is responsible for severe human rights abuses in oil-producing areas. *Sudan, Oil, and Human Rights* is a 754-page report that describes the specifics of how oil revenues contributed to lengthening the civil war and causing displacement, death and destruction in southern Sudan.

It documents how the Government of Sudan (GOS) used roads, bridges and airfields built by oil companies to launch attacks on civilians in the southern oil region of Western Upper Nile.

HRW's report, like the CRS report, seeks to hold western oil companies accountable for their complicity in human rights abuses and the prolongation of poverty. In Sudan, HRW reports that "oil company executives turned a blind eye to well-reported government attacks on civilian targets, including aerial bombing of hospitals, churches, relief operations and schools."

Living conditions in oil-rich areas of Sudan worsened when the Canadian company Talisman Energy Inc. and Lundin Oil, a Swedish energy company, became partners in two concessions in southern Sudan (see *NewsNotes* July-August 2002). After years of pressure from rights groups, Talisman Energy Inc. and Lundin sold their interest in its Sudanese concessions by June 2003 only to have their investments replaced by those of state-owned companies from China, Malaysia and India.

Sudanese government statistics from 2001 show that nearly 60 percent of the US\$580 million in oil revenues were absorbed by the military either to purchase weapons or to further develop the domestic arms industry. HRW's report comes as peace talks continue in Kenya between the GOS and the SPLA. So far there is no agreement on what shall be done for the hundreds of thousands of persons displaced from the oilfields, nor has there been any agreement reached on a means of sharing revenue from the mostly southern oil reserves.

For more information, visit these websites. If you do not have access to the internet, contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for a hard copy of the CRS and/or HRW reports:

- CRS's report *Bottom of the Barrel: Africa's Oil Boom and the Poor* is available at http://www.catholicrelief.org/get_involved/advocacy/policy_and_strategic_issues/oil_report.cfm
- HRW's report *Sudan, Oil and Human Rights* is available at <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sudan1103/>
- For more on the "publish what you pay" campaign, see <http://www.publishwhatyoupay.org>

Kenya: A closer look, one year after elections

The following article takes a close look at Kenya one year after historic fair and peaceful elections marked the end of Daniel arap Moi's 25-year presidency and put President Mwai Kibaki of the National Rainbow Coalition (NARC) in power.

Before the 2002 presidential elections, any Kenyan on the street might have told you that Kenya's major problem was corruption. Moi's KANU party was known for corrupt leaders who clung to and manipulated power. Hopes were high that violence and corruption would disappear the day that Kibaki was seated as president (see *NewsNotes* March-April, 2003). However, once imbedded in a culture, corruption takes more than a day to eradicate.

The average Kenyan on the street today would tell you that it seems that there is less corruption, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) must believe it. In early December 2003 the IMF approved a \$252.8 million loan to Kenya, ending a three-year aid freeze initiated in 2001 in response to widespread corruption and Moi's resistance to economic reforms (see *NewsNotes*, September-October 2000). The loan will reportedly be used to support a three-year reform program under the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility. Currently, around 60 percent of Kenyans live below the poverty line, unemployment is on the rise and the country's budget deficit exceeds \$800 million.

Kenya also received three grants totaling \$52 million from the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. \$37 million will go to combat HIV/AIDS. According to the Global Fund, more than 200,000 died of AIDS in Kenya last year, there are nearly one million AIDS orphans and more than three million Kenyans are HIV-infected.

By the looks of it, Kenya is being rewarded for good behavior, and Kibaki's government appears to have said the right things at the right time. On September 29, 2003, Kibaki became the first Kenyan leader to publicly declare his wealth. His cabinet

followed suit and members of Parliament were encouraged to do the same. This makes a big impression on international donors at a time when transparency in business and government dealings is being scrutinized.

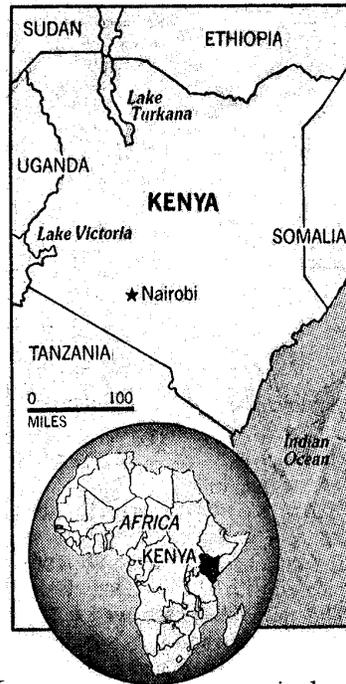
Kibaki followed this move with a pledge to clean up the judiciary. Within weeks a number of judges were actually sacked. This radical move, while instilling confidence in some, leaves questions about how and when judges will be replaced.

Court cases in progress at the time of the sacking, like the inquest into the death of Father John Kaiser, are suspended, leaving witnesses who gave some damaging evidence worried about their personal safety in the months it might take to get the court proceedings back on track. After the judge hearing the Kaiser case was sacked, rumors flew that the lawyer carrying the case for the Kaiser family would be named a

judge, and that the entire inquest might have to be retried from the very beginning.

Kibaki made a visit to the United States in October 2003. Kenyans hoped that he would be successful in getting the U.S. to lift its travel advisory. Kenya's tourism industry is suffering an all-time low since the May 16, 2003 travel warning was issued by the U.S. Department of State. The advisory responds to concerns about Kenya's safety mounting since a November 28, 2002 hotel bombing in Mombasa.

The travel advisory remains, but it seems that President Bush may have persuaded Kibaki that a strong anti-terror policy (now being discussed in the Kenyan Parliament) might help Kenya's case. The "Suppression of Terrorism Bill 2003" will allow police to hold a suspect incommunicado. Civil society, human rights organizations and church leaders have launched a campaign that rejects the bill for its potential to deny Kenyans their constitutional rights, claiming that it will bring back an era of indefinite detentions.



DRC: Seeking economic justice and peace

Western development philosophy presupposes that economic development follows peace and good governance. If one looks closer at history, other truths surface. For example, U.S. crime decreased dramatically in most cities following an economic boom in the mid-1990s. Observers of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) note that economic betterment must be an essential ingredient to bring peace and good governance. Since both local and global actors have contributed to severe economic destruction in the DRC, the international community must take more responsibility.

At a November 2003 meeting, the superiors of men and women religious of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) released a statement denouncing the silence of major international institutions. In their statement, they grieved the deaths of over 3,000,000 Congolese and other citizens of the Great Lakes region, caused by the thirst for power and money by their leaders and their leaders' allies.

They condemned the systematic looting of the natural resources of the DRC by multinational companies and called them predators of death and devastation. They decried the impunity of the massacres as well as the assassinations, robbery, rape, desecration of sites of worship, and destruction of hospitals and schools perpetrated since 1996.

The superiors deplored the lack of prophetic witness in the face of situations of injustice and demanded that the truth be told and reparations be given for the crimes committed. They hailed the courage of all consecrated men and women, lay or religious, who share the suffering of the Congolese people in this time of war and insecurity. They were pleased with the progress made toward peace and encouraged all to reconcile communities divided by conflict.

Just a few days before the November conference of the religious superiors of the DRC, Pax Christi groups from the Great Lakes region of Africa met in Kinshasa and appealed for peace in the region. They looked at the origins and causes of the multiple conflicts and proposed solutions toward a sustainable peace, noting that what happens in one country affects the others. They recom-

mended reviving the Great Lakes Economic Community and setting up cross-border security structures, demobilization of armed groups, democratization of power and good governance, and the end of impunity across the region. To this list, they added the importance of revitalizing civil society institutions as well as the need for training in transitional justice, truth and reconciliation, nonviolence and peace building.

Both local and international actors must share the blame for massive murder, rape and destruction because they were aware of and cared little about the suffering and death they caused with the plunder of resources. In September 2000, a UN panel of experts presented their findings on the exploitation of resources in the country, accusing especially Uganda and Rwanda of "looting" the far east of the country and Zimbabwe of supporting Laurent Kabila (DRC's then president, killed in a 2001 coup attempt) in exchange for resource exploitation concessions.

Two years later the panel recommended that financial restrictions be placed on 29 companies based in Belgium, Rwanda, Uganda, DRC, Zimbabwe and South Africa, and that a travel ban and financial restrictions be imposed on 54 persons, including high-ranking government officials and businesspeople, for exploitation of resources.

On November 20, 2003, the UN Security Council condemned exploitation of natural resources in DRC. The Security Council's president, Ambassador Ismael Abrao Gaspar Martins of Angola, emphasized the connection between the ongoing conflict in the DRC, the illegal trafficking of arms in the region and the exploitation of natural resources. The DRC has reserves of gems, gold, cobalt, copper, timber, uranium and coltan (a component for electronic chips in laptop computers and cell phones). Four-fifths of the world's tantalum, one of the two necessary components which make up coltan, is found in Africa, of which 80 percent is located in the DRC's eastern region. Through our use of computers and cell phones, we are not innocent bystanders to the violence in the eastern DRC, nor should we pretend to be.

Nicaragua: Powell visit stirs controversy

During and on his return to Washington from a short visit to Nicaragua in early November, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell caused a tempest by a bold effort to interfere in Nicaragua's forthcoming elections. The Nicaragua Network (nicanet@afgj.org) described it in a colorful manner:

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the U.S., in the person of Secretary of State Philander Knox, had a letter delivered to the then-president of Nicaragua, José Santos Zelaya, requiring him to step down as the country's leader. Current U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell effectively delivered yet another "Knox Note," this time to Arnaldo Alemán, when he warned all "democratic forces" in Nicaragua to come together, but without Alemán, the controversial former president and leader of the Liberal Constitutionalist Party (PLC), currently in jail.

Leandro Marín, secretary to the president, revealed that the U.S. message had been "clear and unequivocal, dramatic and direct," calling on the various Liberal and Conservative political parties to leave their differences to one side and to unify their efforts in order to succeed in the coming electoral struggles. Marín clarified that, while Powell had called for the unification of what he termed "all democratic forces," he stressed most particularly the bringing together of all Liberal parties of whatever stripe.

Powell dismissed any idea of an electoral victory for the Sandinista Front, "since he considered that the 'democratic forces' will strengthen their unification and therefore carry the next elections." Powell used as an example the fact that the Civil Service Bill had been accepted unanimously in the legislature, apparently not noticing that the Sandinistas had been part of that consensus - although, according to *La Prensa* (Nov. 6, 2003), they did walk out later at what they saw as government interference.

An article in the *Washington Post* (Nov. 6, 2003) described Powell on the way home to Washington as having "expressed satisfaction that 'the dictatorial Sandinista regime at least isn't in power.... And we hope to keep them out of power and to help the

Nicaraguan people have power.'" The *Post* continued, "The Sandinistas, who seized power in a coup in 1979, lost the presidency in 1990 and now hold about 40 percent of the seats in the National Assembly. Powell paid his first visit to Managua to show solidarity with President Enrique Bolaños, who is pushing anti-corruption laws and economic reform. Powell told reporters ... that Nicaragua 'had 11 straight years of the worst kind of leadership under the Sandinistas, with a totally communist-oriented, state-controlled environment where the leaders thought all they had to keep doing was printing money. They created a society of dependency on the government and the government funded it by debt and money.' Powell said he recalled going to Congress when he was deputy national security advisor 'and fighting all night long with opponents of contra aid, to keep these guys alive and going with food and ammunition.'"

The Secretary of State should remember that the Sandinista government won in free and fair elections in 1984 and was recognized by the entire world with the exception of the United States. In 1990 they handed over power in the first peaceful transition of government to another party in Nicaragua's history. The reason Nicaragua had to "print money" in the 1980s was that Anastacio Somoza, backed by the U.S. until the bitter end, had left the national treasury bare and the government was putting schools and clinics in every village and barrio in the nation while the United States was conducting a proxy war against it. The World Court found the U.S. guilty of crimes against Nicaragua in 1986 and ordered the payment of reparations estimated by different experts to run between US\$12-17 billion in 1986 dollars. The first President Bush demanded withdrawal of the claim for reparations as a condition for resuming U.S. aid to Nicaragua in 1990.

Faith in action:

Call or write Secretary of State Colin Powell. Remind him that the U.S. government must not interfere in Nicaragua's national elections (coming in 2004 and 2005) as it did in 1984, 1990, 1996 and 2001.

Venezuela: "Reaffirmazo"

The Venezuelan Constitution of 1999, considered by most experts to be one of the most democratic constitutions in Latin America, stipulates that all public positions elected by popular vote are subject to revocation once one-half of the term of office has been served. Venezuelans are now in the middle of applying this provision to the office of president and to a number of other elected offices in the country.

On October 15 Venezuela's *Consejo Nacional Electoral* (CNE) set November 28-December 1 for opposition sectors to gather signatures to initiate a recall referendum against President Hugo Chavez. Pro-government sectors gathered signatures a few days earlier to try to begin a similar recall process against opposition lawmakers in the 165-seat single-chamber *Asamblea Nacional* (AN). The CNE had previously rejected referendum efforts against seven opposition governors and Caracas mayor Alfredo Pena because they are up for re-election in June or July 2004 and it would be a waste of time and money to have a recall vote when the election itself will serve the same purpose. The CNE did uphold the process against 38 opposition deputies.

In order to avoid fraud and to be as transparent as possible, the CNE produced a special form for collecting signatures on security paper used to print money. Each form includes a serial number, and requires each signer to include their thumbprint as well as their signature.

International observers, including the Organization of American States, the Carter Center, and members of the U.S. House of Representatives, agreed that the recall efforts were for the most part clean, with 50 of the 55 observers classifying the conduct of the signature drive as "good" (the other five called it "reasonable"). State Department spokesman Richard Boucher called the signature gathering process a positive step towards the fulfillment of the May 29 agreement signed between Chavez supporters and opponents. In the accord, all sides agreed to respect Venezuela's constitution.

However, both Chavez and his vice president, Jose Vicente Rangel, accused the opposition of sending people to sign multiple times and distributing fake identification to facilitate repeat signing. They also alleged that employers had threatened

employees with dismissal if they did not sign the petition, and that hospitals and retirement homes had refused treatment and even food to people who would not sign the petition.

Five people were arrested on charges of using false identification to sign the petition and of using computers in the vicinity of petition gathering tables, which the CNE had prohibited.

At the same time, Chavez, in a private meeting with Jennifer McCoy, the head the Carter Center's Latin America program, agreed to abide by the decision of the CNE.

The CNE has 30 days for verification of signatures once all the forms have been submitted. The CNE requested that the OAS and the Carter Center monitor the process of verifying signatures.

The U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs Peter DeShazo expressed support for the CNE, which he said should ensure that the verification process is transparent and well organized.

If the campaigns to collect signatures have been successful, the referendums will be held in March or April 2004. The CNE will also have to decide whether a referendum to recall Chavez would be held at the same time as any referendums against other elected officials.

Under Venezuela's constitution, a recall against Chavez would succeed only if the number of people voting to oust him equaled or exceeded the number of votes he received in the last election. When he was reelected in 2000, Chavez received 3,757,773 votes, or about 31 percent of registered voters. The Supreme Court has ruled that to be successful, the number of votes for a recall referendum must also exceed the number of votes against the revocation.

In a country that typically produces a low turnout and where polls show that Chavez retains the support of about 35 percent of the populace, mostly among the poor, reaching that threshold might prove difficult.

Faith in action:

Write to U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell, urging U.S. support of the Constitutional process in Venezuela, no matter the outcome of the vote.

Ecuador: Lawsuit against Chevron/Texaco

Following an important ruling by a federal appeals court in New York, international human rights attorneys, representing indigenous and campesino communities in the Amazon, filed a case against Chevron/Texaco in the town of Lago Agrio, Ecuador.

They are seeking damages for environmental degradation resulting from the company's operations in the country from the early 1970s through the 1990s, during which time Texaco and state-owned PetroEcuador extracted 1.5 billion barrels of oil from the region. A New York court had ordered that the Ecuadorian courts try the case with the condition that the final decision would be binding in the U.S. and enforced by the U.S. court system.

The plaintiffs in the case, many of whom are Secoya, Siona, Cofan or Huaorani indigenous, maintain that Texaco, which has since merged to form Chevron/Texaco, contaminated their water and soil with millions of barrels of noxious discharge and open waste pits of highly toxic and cancer-causing chemicals. According to Jose Miguel Goldarez, a Capuchin Franciscan priest who has worked in the area for 30 years, a study carried out by his mission group found high rates of cancer and stomach and skin problems in the population. (*Latinamerica Press*, Nov. 5, 2003.)

Chevron/Texaco claims to have already spent \$40 million to repair damage to wells and production sites after terminating its operations in the country. They also provided about \$5 million for community development projects in the affected area. Attorneys representing the affected indigenous and campesino groups, however, are estimating the full cost of clean-up to exceed \$1 billion. If the judge in Ecuador, Alberto Guerra, rules against the plaintiffs, they could ask that the case be returned to U.S. courts.

On the other hand, this lawsuit raises issues much more important to the indigenous communities in Ecuador than the clean-up of

toxic materials and restitution for damages to the health of the community and the ecology of the region. Although the indigenous territories have been legally recognized, "the government reserves the right to grant concessions for subsoil resources like oil, gas and minerals ... the communities see none of the wealth that those resources represent."

(*Latinamerica Press*, Nov. 5, 2003.)

Their concerns echo the concerns of Bolivians who ousted former president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada in October (see *NewsNotes*, November-December 2003) and other impoverished peoples in Africa, Asia and elsewhere in Latin America. Many communities are watching the on-going exploitation of rich and abundant natural resources from their lands without local participation in decisionmaking or benefit. This legacy of colonialism is entrenched in global economic relationships

that further enrich a few at the expense of many.

For information, contact Frente de Defensa de la Amazonia at admin@fda.ecuanex.net.ec and *Latinamerica Press* (Nov. 5, 2003 and Jan. 18, 2003).



Death threats continue

The Ecumenical Human Rights Commission (CEDHU) in Ecuador has again denounced death threats against five people by the White Legion. Over the past two years, threats have been delivered to human rights activists, leaders of social organizations, those expressing concern about the impact of Plan Colombia in Ecuador and progressive teachers (see *NewsNotes* January-February 2002). This time the recipients were journalists, an economist, and a member of a group monitoring Plan Colombia. According to *Latinamerica Press* (Oct. 8, 2003) CEDHU called on authorities to uncover whether the threats were meant to intimidate the press in general – and to guarantee the safety of those threatened.

Guatemala: What to ask of the new president

Many Guatemalans exhaled a sigh of relief when the FRG (Guatemalan Revolutionary Front) candidate, General Efraín Ríos Montt, came in third behind two other presidential hopefuls and was excluded from the second round of elections December 28, 2003. This article, written before the conclusion of the second round, looks at technical problems that the Supreme Electoral Tribunal (TSE) was challenged to resolve before the December run-off, and advances some recommendations for the new president based on Amnesty International's September 19 "Open Letter to the Guatemalan Presidential Candidates for the November 2003 Elections."

In spite of concerns about violence and intimidation, Guatemala's first electoral round held on November 9, 2003 was relatively peaceful. Election observers raised concerns over technical problems that surfaced on election day, beginning with registration lists. Voters carrying valid ID cards were sent from one polling center to another or were told that they were not registered. Although the TSE tried to address this problem by keeping polling centers open past scheduled closing times, the TSE's instructions did not reach all polling stations and many people were turned away unable to vote.

Observers noted that polling centers were understaffed leaving inadequate information to guide voters to the appropriate voting booths. Also, Vote Receiving Boards (JRV - *Juntas Receptoras de Votos*) were without sufficient and trained personnel to adequately handle a large influx of voters. This problem contributed to long lines, especially for those voters with updated records. Reports from observers also indicate an uneven supply and the quality of indelible ink (used to mark people who voted). Some polling centers ran out of ink and in other centers it was easily removed.

The TSE was urged to ensure that these problems not persist during the December 28 round of elections, but many were looking ahead to when a new Guatemalan president takes power. The following, for example, are just a few recommendations adapted from Amnesty International's *Open Letter to Guatemalan Presidential Candidates for the*

November 2003 Elections.

Guatemala's 36-year armed conflict contributed to structural violence, militarization and social fragmentation that are manifest in pervasive violent crime and an ongoing culture of fear and impunity. In this context, human rights defenders have been killed and are constantly subjected to harassment and death threats. **Guatemala's new president must uphold international human rights standards and principles and the rule of law.**

Guatemala's ineffective judicial system weakens its ability to administer justice. **The next president should support domestic and international initiatives to bring to justice those responsible for past human rights violations, to ensure adherence to national legislation and international law, and to prevent any further deterioration of the judicial system.**

During the armed conflict Guatemalan Armed Forces and members of the Civil Patrols (PACS), were responsible for systematic atrocities against the civilian population. While Guatemala has taken steps to reign in military power, **the next president must make a strong commitment to consolidate civilian power over, and oversight of, the armed forces. One positive first step would be to bring the Armed Forces budget in line with commitments preserved in the Peace Accords.**

Guatemala's indigenous majority remains marginalized socially and economically and is most impacted by Guatemala's unequal system of land distribution. In recent years indigenous and non-indigenous people living in rural Guatemala have experienced widespread malnutrition and chronic unemployment. **Guatemala's next president must commit to rural development and poverty alleviation programs that facilitate access to resources, including land, for *campesinos*.**

For more information, see Amnesty International USA's website, www.amnestyusa.org. For Guatemalan election analysis, see the websites of the Washington Office on Latin America, www.wola.org, and the Latin America Working Group, www.lawg.org.



Has the SOA really changed?

Over 10,000 people participated in the November 22-23 vigil at the gates of Ft. Benning, GA calling for the closure of the School of Americas (SOA), now known as the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (WHISC).

Many people throughout the Americas are very skeptical about any change in the SOA. However, according to Col. Richard Downie, the commandant of the institution in question, it has changed. Closed in 2000, the SOA metamorphosed into WHISC in 2001 when it re-opened with a “new” mandate. Downie stated in a November 21 Columbus *Ledger-Enquirer* article that many protesters come to Ft. Benning with “deaf ears.”

One of the techniques previously taught under the mandate of the SOA was to confuse the public with dis-information. That, it seems, has not changed. In the second half of the same article, a headline banner stated, “Protesters more extreme,” and to make sure that this dis-information made an impression, the commandant is quoted as saying, “More extreme, more antagonistic... Father Roy [Bourgeois has] stepped aside; there is a new group running things...” This is another tactic taught by the SOA: put doubt and enmity between organizers and between other organizations.

The commandant’s words in the newspaper about the protesters’ deaf ears turned out to be prophetic. On Saturday the military drove a truck

equipped with large speakers to the gates of the fort, just a few yards from the main stage, and began harassing the crowd with loud music. Sr. Helen Prejean, one of the presenters, declared, “I have never yelled so loud in my life!” There was justified anger at this well-used SOA strategy, but, instead of the protesters being “more extreme,” a group of young folks gathered near the gate and danced to the music. Roy Bourgeois, very much a central presence at the vigil, expressed his joy at their creative nonviolence. When the “people in black” were named as causing trouble, everyone decided to wear black at the vigil as a sign of mourning for those killed by graduates of the SOA. If extreme is a word that can be used, protesters’ nonviolence has become more so. It has become the explicit spirit of the protest and vigil and the direct action of crossing the fence onto the base.

Ask your representative to sign HR 1258: Close WHISC/SOA

After the long holiday recess, contact your member of the U.S. House of Representatives to ask him/her to sign onto HR 1258, the 108th Congress's legislation, sponsored by Jim McGovern (D-MA), to close the WHISC/SOA.

The text of the bill: "To repeal the statutory authority for the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation (the successor institution to the United States Army School of the Americas) in the Department of Defense, to provide for the establishment of a joint congressional task force to conduct an assessment of the kind of education and training that is appropriate for the Department of Defense to provide to military personnel of Latin American nations, and for other purposes."

For updates on bill status and co-sponsors, visit <http://thomas.loc.gov>
U.S. Capitol switchboard: 202-224-3121

If your representative is not yet a co-sponsor:

-- Call and tell them why you want them to co-sponsor the bill to close the SOA/WHISC.

If your representative has already signed on:

-- Call to thank them.

-- Ask them to do everything they can to make sure the bill passes next spring, like calling other members they have relationships with and asking them to sign on too.

For all senators:

-- Call and ask them to sponsor a senate companion bill.

Before you call, check out the contents of the SOA Watch website (www.soaw.org) for details on the bill, tips, talking points, and lots more. If you would like more information, want to know what your member has said about this issue in the past, or just want to practice your talking points, feel free to contact Jacqueline Baker, jbaker@soaw.org, 202-234-3440.

To paraphrase a chant of peace protests: “Tell me what nonviolence looks like? This is what nonviolence looks like!”

During the vigil, 44 people, acting as responsible citizens, were arrested for their nonviolent direct action protesting the existence of such military institutions as the SOA.

The experience of some of those arrested gave an unsettling indication of what the SOA teaches, not only to the foreign soldiers who come here to study “human rights,” but to our own troops. Kathy Kelly, one of those who crossed the line, a slight woman about five feet tall, was pushed to the floor by the MPs processing the nonviolent protesters. She was hogtied with a knee on her back, dragged off and threatened with pepper spray, because, the MP said, she was combative. When asked to describe how she had been combative, the soldier could not answer. (Kelly is the founder of Voices in the Wilderness; info@vitw.org; www.vitw.org)

WHISC is merely a euphemism. The SOA is alive and well and multiplying around the world. Every year U.S. forces train about 100,000 foreign soldiers in at least 150 institutions within the U.S. and in 180 countries around the world.

According to SOA Watch, the SOA has declared in its own publications that “economic development along free market principles” is one of the key foreign policy goals of the U.S. and “SOA strategy is ‘to prepare military and police forces to respond to current threats to the achievement of those goals.’” The pursuit of economic power through the projection of military power is not new, but the cover provided by the so-called wars on drugs and terrorism gives the U.S. unprecedented opportu-

nity to do so.

For more information, contact SOA Watch at www.soaw.org or call (202)234-3440. Read Amnesty USA’s report on the SOA at www.amnestyusa.org/stoptorture/msp.pdf. Two other good resources to read more are Common Dreams at www.commondreams.org, and Democracy Now at www.democracynow.org.

U.S. military training around the world

Since September 11, the Bush administration has offered police or military training to a growing list of countries said to be at the front lines in the fight against global terrorism—including Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Ethiopia, Yemen, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Indonesia, the Philippines, and Colombia. Critics are very concerned that many of the countries receiving this training have extensive records of ongoing human rights violations, including torture and assassination, and that there are frequent training deployments of U.S. Special Operations Forces (SOF), which operate in small commando units and utilize unconventional warfare tactics. Training conducted by covert intelligence units and the trend toward outsourcing training to private companies have created huge problems for oversight. (Foreign Policy in Focus Special Report, May 2002)

Beyond efforts to close the former School of the Americas, human rights advocates are tracking U.S. policy and practice relating to

- the integration of human rights and humanitarian law training into the training of military, security forces or police;
- the investigation by an independent commission of past human rights abuses perpetrated by graduates of U.S. training programs;
- establishment of a post-training tracking program to monitor the human rights record of U.S.-trained forces;
- ending training programs for military, security forces and police in countries where there have been human rights violations by U.S.-trained forces;
- stopping any training programs to countries that use child soldiers.

For a copy of Foreign Policy in Focus (FPIF) Special Report, go to www.fpif.org/papers/miltrain/. For a copy of the Latin America Working Group (LAWG), Center for International Policy (CIP), and the Washington Office on Latin America’s joint publication “Paint by Numbers: Trends in U.S. Military Programs with Latin America and Challenges to Oversight,” go to www.ciponline.org/facts/PaintByNumbersFinal.pdf. To receive a hard copy of the reports, contact FPIF at (202)234-9382 and/or LAWG at (202)546-7010.

Nepal: Hopes for new ceasefire in 2004

The new year brought hope that violent confrontations between Nepali government forces and Maoist rebels would subside and peace talks would resume after a four-month hiatus.

Three rounds of talks during 2003 came to an abrupt halt Aug. 27 amid allegations of extra-judicial killings by the military and of arms smuggling and extortion by the rebels. More than 500 persons died in escalated fighting in the ensuing weeks.

The fighting brought to an end a ceasefire declared on Jan. 29, 2003. Ironically, hope for a new ceasefire and for resumption of peace talks hinges in part on the perception that neither side is likely to win an outright military victory. (See March-April 2003 *NewsNotes*.)

The immediate cause of the failure of the talks was the Maoist demand for a constituent assembly. The proposed gathering was envisioned to bring delegates together from around the country to write a new constitution.

However, security in Nepal actually had deteriorated since the January ceasefire was declared. The Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) and the Maoists suspected each other of using the ceasefire to strengthen their respective positions, and numerous infractions were alleged on both sides.

The RNA felt the Maoists were using the ceasefire to smuggle arms, expand recruiting, intensify extortion and plan new attacks. The Maoists felt equally concerned about the king's unwillingness to meet with them directly, and about the steady flow of foreign military assistance to the government.

The most disturbing security incident occurred on Aug. 17, just as the third round of peace talks got under way. More than 60 RNA troops reportedly raided the eastern village of Doramba, took 20 individuals into custody and marched them out of the village. Nineteen were subsequently shot, and their bodies - most with hands still bound - were pushed off the side of the steep trail.

Whether those taken away were Maoist fighters is disputed. Some reports said the group had gathered for a wedding. However, the incident left the Maoists feeling outraged, and the third round of talks was largely stillborn.

Nepal ushered in democracy in 1990 after 30

years of absolute monarchy. By 1996, however, Maoists concluded that the democratic experiment had failed, and they launched a struggle to overthrow the king. The insurgency had already claimed some 7,000 lives before the renewed violence in late 2003.

Since 1990 Nepal has had 13 governments. In October 2002 King Gyanendra, assailing the "incompetence" of the political parties, dismissed Prime Minister Sher Bahadur Deuba, who had earlier dismissed the lower house of parliament. The king then appointed former premier Lokendra Chand as prime minister, but Nepal's large political parties refused to recognize the Chand government.

Chand stepped down in May 2003 and was succeeded by Surya Bahadur Thapa. The political parties remain frustrated after being shut out of power for more than a year, and the palace meanwhile has resisted setting a timetable for new elections.

In many ways the present crisis reflects the failure to cement broad reforms agreed to in 1990. The constitution drafted after the democratic uprising left the monarchy with considerable but ill-defined powers. The Maoists have resorted to widespread extortion, bomb attacks and assassinations. The army and police have not been held accountable for earlier human rights abuses. Political parties have engaged in systematic corruption.

Differences among all the parties could still be bridged to pave the way for new peace talks. The palace should form an all-party government. The Maoists should realize that using lawless tactics puts them at risk of being branded as terrorists by the international community. The RNA must be held accountable for abuses in the field. Political parties cannot expect to play a major role in national issues until they set aside partisan wrangling and corruption.

Without a peace settlement, Nepal's tourist revenues will continue to decline, and fearful villagers will continue to flee to Kathmandu for safety. Failure to reach an agreement risks a protracted conflict even more widespread and devastating than before.

A terrorist act soon after the last peace talks collapsed could be a foreshadowing. Six bomb blasts rocked Kathmandu on Sept. 7, wounding a dozen people and killing a 12-year-old boy.

Philippines: An Asian "Love Canal"?

When the U.S. returned the sprawling Clark Air Base and Subic Naval Base to Philippine sovereignty in 1992, it relinquished buildings and structures valued at \$763 million. It also bequeathed a toxic legacy of pollutants including unexploded ordnance, solvents, pesticides and heavy metals.

Residents of nearby communities have been alarmed over an increase in childhood leukemia and other cancers, nervous system disorders, skin problems and mental retardation in children possibly linked to the pollution - besides injuries and deaths from the unexploded bombs and landmines left behind. However, the U.S. has resisted investigating possible health hazards at Clark and Subic.

A federal lawsuit has been filed on behalf of 36 of those residents to force the U.S. Department of Defense to conduct environmental assessments of the contamination and its possible threat to health.

The plaintiffs sued under the so-called Superfund law of 1980. The U.S. military maintains that the law - The Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act - does not apply to the release of contaminants on properties outside of U.S. territorial boundaries.

The plaintiffs disagree, noting that the Superfund law extends to territory "under the jurisdiction of the United States," including that "provided by international agreement to which the United States is a party."

The lawsuit was filed in December 2002 in U.S. District Court in northern California against the Air Force and the Navy. The non-governmental organizations Arc Ecology and Filipino/American Coalition for Environmental Solutions joined the action. (See "Opposition to U.S. military bases in Asia grows" in January-February 2003 *NewsNotes*.)

Arguments on a government motion to have the case dismissed were scheduled Nov. 3, 2003. As of mid-December, no decision had been handed down.

The health and environment issues arose after Mount Pinatubo, adjacent to Clark, erupted in June 1991. Thousands of families fleeing the volcano were given shelter at Clark, where they drank contaminated water and farmed contaminated soil around the base. Only later was it learned that the U.S. military had dumped toxic wastes and buried armaments at both Clark and Subic.

Contaminated sites at the bases were documented by the U.S. General Accounting Office, the World Health Organization and independent U.S. and Philippine experts. Heavy metals and contaminants including oil and petroleum lubricants and pesticides were reportedly found at levels exceeding national standards. Many of the contaminants are carcinogenic and can cause irreversible damage.

At first, reports of possible health problems stemming from pollutants at the bases were slow to be made public after the exodus of the U.S. military. The Philippine government did not want to acknowledge the problem for fear that it might scare off investors. The U.S. did not want to admit responsibility because it might set a precedent with respect to military bases in other countries.

Since closing, the bases have been transformed into economic free ports with duty-free shops, golf courses and recreational areas. A number of domestic and foreign companies have also re-located there.

Many of the permanent buildings on the bases have been converted into export processing sites where computer parts, furniture and clothing are assembled. Subic, with its rich rain forests and its location on the coast, has become an eco-tourist destination for hiking, fishing and scuba diving.

The U.S. military operated the bases for nearly a century, including the post-war era from about 1947. Clark - about the size of Singapore - is in Pampanga province, and Subic - larger than the San Francisco Bay Area - is in Zambales, north of Manila.

Unfortunately, the U.S. observes two standards toward issues of health and the environment. In recently released documents, the Environmental Protection Agency cites a risk to public health from pollution at inactive military ranges in the U.S., and says it could require the largest environmental cleanup program ever. By contrast, the Pentagon budgeted just \$16 million in a recent year to clean up overseas bases.

Meanwhile, health fears continue to mount as Filipinos await the outcome of their lawsuit. Philippine news media estimated in mid-2003 that a thousand persons had died of ailments triggered by toxic waste contamination at Clark and Subic, and more than a thousand others were believed to be suffering from related conditions.

Middle East: Pitfalls of Geneva Accord

The so-called Geneva Accord, signed Dec. 1, 2003, in Switzerland, has been hailed as a boost to the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Indeed, it has been endorsed by large segments of both populations. In contrast to the proposed Road Map (backed by the U.S., the UN, Russia and the European Union), the Geneva Accord would establish a Palestinian state - with borders principally based on the lines of June 4, 1967 - as soon as the Accord is adopted. Details of other crucial issues including settlements, refugees and the status of Jerusalem are treated in the text. While no accord is perfect, Phyllis Bennis - co-chair of the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation, and a Fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C. - has expressed reservations about the Geneva Accord that negotiators might be wise to keep in mind. The following points are based on her critique. (See the complete text of the Geneva Accord on the website of Churches for Middle East Peace, www.cmep.org.)

- The Accord calls for UN Security Council and General Assembly resolutions “endorsing the agreement and superceding the previous UN resolutions” - including those reiterating Palestine refugees’ right to return, identifying East Jerusalem as occupied territory and calling on Israel to dismantle settlements.

- Palestinians, led by Yasir Arafat, have unofficially endorsed the Accord. As a result, Palestinian concessions on borders and refugees, for example, would become the permanent starting point for any future official negotiations. The Israeli government has condemned the Geneva process. Thus, the Israeli government would likely view concessions made in the Accord as irrelevant to their new starting point in any future negotiations, giving Israel a significant negotiating advantage.

- There is no mention of the word “occupation” in the Accord. Despite references to UN resolutions 242 and 338, there is no express commitment to end the occupation. Instead there is a statement that fulfillment of the Accord “will constitute the settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in all its aspects.” Thus, any further struggle for a broader level of sovereignty would be deemed illegitimate.

- The Accord fails to acknowledge Israeli responsibility for the Palestinian catastrophe of 1947-48, widely recognized as a necessary precondition to any negotiations over the right of return. Language that the agreement would supercede all existing UN

resolutions means giving up the rights guaranteed in resolution 194.

- Many of the security arrangements in the Accord would undermine the sovereignty of a Palestinian state. Palestine would be demilitarized, but there is no parallel restriction on Israel. Israel would be allowed to set up Early Warning Systems on Palestinian territory in the northern and central West Bank, and it could keep its military forces in the Jordan Valley for three years. The Israeli Air Force would be entitled to use Palestinian airspace “for training purposes,” undermining claims of upholding “the inviolability of each other’s territory, including territorial waters and airspace.”

- Palestinian authorities and a Multinational Force would share official control on the borders, but Israel would be allowed to maintain an “unseen” presence at airports and border crossings for two and a half years. No such Palestinian (or international) involvement would be allowed at crossings into Israel.

- The Accord accepts the annexation of settlements in Jerusalem as well as some outside of Jerusalem, allowing half of all settlers and many of the settlements to remain in Israeli hands. While the Accord calls for a one-to-one exchange of territory for Palestinian land lost to those settlements, it requires Palestinian acceptance of largely infertile land abutting Gaza in exchange for the built-up urban areas surrounding Arab Jerusalem that would be annexed to Israel.

- The Accord fails to directly acknowledge the right of return. It does provide that “Refugees shall be entitled to compensation for their refugeehood and for loss of property.” However, it allows Israel, Palestine, present host countries and third countries to each determine for itself how many Palestinian refugees the country would accept.

- The Accord recognizes both Palestine and Israel as “the homelands of their respective peoples.” However, Israel is recognized in accordance with “the right of the Jewish people to statehood” rather than referring to the right of “Israelis” to a state. This, despite the language of “without prejudice to the equal rights of the Parties’ respective citizens,” seems to effectively accept as legitimate the existing discrimination against Palestinian citizens of Israel.

Iraq: Finding a way out of the quagmire

Successful resolution of the crisis in Iraq will be determined not by swift timetables and U.S. exit strategies, but by the quality of future peace, stability and democracy in the country. A significant change of course is needed - away from military occupation toward international cooperation, the rule of law and Iraqi self-determination. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (www.fcnl.org) offers the following recommendations to help the U.S. find a way out of the quagmire without abandoning its responsibility toward the Iraqi people.

1. Admit problems and mistakes. The Bush administration should admit the magnitude of problems in Iraq. Viewing the rising violence and instability through rose-colored glasses and glossing over the deaths of U.S. troops and Iraqi civilians only helps prolong a manifestly failed policy. The administration should concede that mistakes were made and that a new strategy is needed.

2. Apply the rule of law, not the law of force. Responding to increasing attacks against U.S., international and Iraqi targets through heightened military action - such as air strikes, razing of buildings or orchards and assassination of suspected guerrillas - can only escalate the violence, put civilian lives at risk and increase discontent among the Iraqi population. Instead, the U.S. should seek a new UN resolution putting any foreign security forces in Iraq under a UN mandate, though not necessarily a UN force. Training for new Iraqi security structures should also be placed under a UN mandate.

3. Seek multilateral assistance and significant participation. The U.S. should seek international assistance through the UN Security Council to devise a new strategy for establishing security and moving forward with the process of political transition and economic reconstruction. Without a legitimate international mandate the UN, NATO and many other U.S. allies will withhold contributing significant resources to help rebuild Iraq.

4. Support democracy at the local level. Iraqis should be given greater decision-making authority, particularly with regard to local policing and public safety, planning for a constitution and elections, and economic reconstruction. The administration proposes to create a provisional government in Iraq and dissolve the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) by June 2004. However, if the process is perceived as a

U.S. hand-over of power to a hand-picked few, the legitimacy of any provisional government and future elections will be undermined. Authority for facilitating a political transition to a sovereign, independent Iraq should be turned over to the UN.

5. Put Iraqis back to work. The process of deep "de-Baathification" went too far. The U.S. should employ former professional Iraqi civil servants to help reopen Iraq's ministries and restore public services. The U.S. should also remobilize Iraq's army up to the level of lieutenant colonel. Iraqi troops could be deployed to help in major reconstruction projects, provide security for humanitarian workers, and find and secure lost munitions and arms caches.

6. Stop war profiteering. The U.S. should ensure greater transparency in the reconstruction process and give priority to Iraqi contractors, not hand-picked U.S. firms. The CPA should fully cooperate with the newly constituted International Advisory and Monitoring Board (IAMB), and the IAMB should be expanded to include broad Iraqi representation. The U.S. should turn the administration of Iraq's economic and financial recovery over to the UN until a legitimate provisional government is in place.

7. Pursue human rights, justice, and reconciliation. The CPA and the Iraqi Governing Council have proposed an Iraqi war crimes tribunal to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations under Saddam Hussein. However, the plan does not follow international or human rights standards for war crimes tribunals, and it threatens instead to deepen the cycle of violence in Iraq. The UN should be invited to work with the Iraqi people to design an international tribunal. The UN could also be asked to work with Iraqis to design a truth and reconciliation process.

8. Ensure congressional oversight. Congress has given the administration nearly \$165 billion for operations in Iraq, with little accountability as to how the funds are being spent. Congress must provide careful oversight of the administration's use of taxpayer dollars and work to transform U.S. policy in Iraq. Congress should also hold the administration accountable for its handling of intelligence to make the case for war against Iraq. So far no evidence has been found that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction posing an imminent threat, or that the regime had ties to al Qaeda.

Education reconstruction slow in Sri Lanka

The following article was written by Avis Sri-Jayantha, the UN representative in New York for Defense for Children International, www.defence-for-children.org.

A ceasefire between the Sri Lankan government (SLG) and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) has been in effect for two years, but reconstruction of the education system destroyed by two decades of war has been slow. Rebuilding for the education of the children of the war-affected areas should not wait for a final political settlement, but should begin right now.

The education of children in the Northeast suffered immensely as a result of Sri Lanka's protracted conflict. All aspects of the education system are severely damaged. Major problems, such as non-enrollment, drop-outs, absenteeism and low teaching/learning quality are the direct result of displacement, lack of teachers, nutritional deficiencies, health problems and damaged infrastructure.

According to UNICEF the most urgent needs are 1) rehabilitation of remote and rural primary schools, and provision of basic supplies, 2) catch-up education classes for those who missed school due to war, and 3) reinforcement of good school management practices. International funding agencies estimate that US\$56 million is required to cater to urgent education needs in the Northeast. Another \$61 million is needed for medium-term activities.

Sri Lanka's overall literacy rate is 91 percent; the Northeast's literacy rate was comparable to or higher than the rest of the country before the war. Today, the region's dropout rate is 15 percent, almost four times the national average. A recent survey calculated that there are 655,000 students in the Northeast, with another 94,000 school-age children not in school, many of them children of the 700,000 internally displaced people. In the worst-affected areas UNICEF estimates a third of the children are not in school. In Mannar, a western district, 85 percent of the schools are destroyed, and 60 percent of those in northern Jaffna. Of Jaffna's 485 schools, 321 function in displaced locations. Of the 2,002 schools in the North-

east, 151 have yet to reopen after the ceasefire. Military occupation of schools remains a problem. There are 5,000 teacher vacancies due to lack of funding and the current uncertainty. The World Food Program estimates that 20 to 25 percent of school-age children in the Northeast "suffer from acute malnutrition."

Bruno Wamsler, senior advisor to the German aid agency GTZ says, "The drive for education amongst the Jaffna residents [and the rest of the Northeast] is very high. Returning refugees first ask if the area school is functioning. Only if the school is operating will they

return to their homes."

The situation for children in the Northeast is improving only gradually for several reasons, even after a two-year ceasefire. The SLG has budgeted almost no money itself for reconstruction or rehabilitation, pleading poverty. Most foreign aid donors are waiting for the political situation to resolve itself before committing aid. Which administration - that of the SLG or that of the LTTE - will be the recipients of aid is a matter of contention. Currently the war-affected areas are divided between the two, with the worst conditions in those held by the LTTE. Assistance at the moment is mostly from small- to medium-scale projects by a few charities and from the Tamil diaspora.

Children should not be made to wait until long-drawn-out political negotiations are resolved. Aid for the reconstruction of the educational system is one of the most important paths on the road to peace. The U.S. government, through USAID, the Asia Foundation, donations to UNICEF or direct funding, can play a big role in assisting the re-establishment of the once solid education provided to the children of the war-affected areas of Sri Lanka.

Faith in action:

Please contact your U.S. representatives; urge them to support aid to the Northeast of Sri Lanka and to make this support known to the State Department.



School children in Jaffna; photo from UNHCR

Debt cancellation: Still on the justice agenda

Debt cancellation is a necessary step towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for most of the world's impoverished countries, but a thorough revision of present mechanisms for negotiating debt relief remains essential. In 2004, the 60th anniversary year of the World Bank and IMF, advocates for economic justice will raise again their demands for a lasting resolution to the debt crisis in which too many countries continue to find themselves caught.

A recent paper by CAFOD gives the example of Uganda, the first and highly celebrated graduate of the Highly Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). After only a few years, Uganda is a HIPC “drop-out,” with debt-to-export ratios far exceeding the debt sustainability threshold defined by HIPC, thanks in large part to plunging coffee prices that have dramatically reduced Uganda’s foreign exchange earnings. As was predicted by critics of HIPC, the future economic growth projections of HIPC countries were overly-optimistic. Most impoverished countries export only basic commodities that are highly vulnerable to dramatic price fluctuations. Furthermore, the debt-sustainability threshold set by HIPC at 150 percent debt-to-exports was an arbitrary and inadequate marker for level of debt relief to be “granted” to a given country, falling far short of anything that would resemble justice. CAFOD argues for an alternative human development approach that would incorporate development goals in determining appropriate levels of debt relief, as well as for foreign aid and new borrowing.

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns and many others would make much more radical demands. Consider Bolivia’s strict compliance with the process of and conditions attached to the HIPC process, including development of a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and years of structural adjustment. This long-term “good performance” has not translated into real benefits for impoverished rural and urban indigenous communities. Rather, conditions attached to debt relief have exacerbated the situation of Bolivia’s impoverished majority.

Is debt cancellation worth pursuing at all? Many say “yes,” noting that debt relief is more predictable than bilateral aid; has a longer-term horizon; reduces the transactions costs of manag-

ing aid and acts as direct budget support, therefore increasing recipient ownership. Participants at a recent meeting in Dakar organized by the Economic Commission for Africa and the Republic of Senegal also agreed, however, that debt relief on its own will be “woefully insufficient” if African countries are to achieve the MDGs.

Experts emphasized that a lasting solution to Africa’s external debt problem will require a prudent strategy for future borrowing tailored to country-specific circumstances, taking into account the quality of its institutions, and its vulnerability to shocks, plus good economic governance and management. Resource transfers beyond countries’ sustainable debt-servicing capacities should be in the form of grants, not debt flows that could lead to future debt problems.

The Dakar meeting also urged the international financial community to consider the debts of “semi-HIPC” countries like Angola and Kenya, non-International Development Association countries like Nigeria and severely indebted middle-income countries like Gabon.

Two major proposals regarding debt – to declare odious and illegitimate debt null and void, and to establish a fair and transparent debt arbitration process (FATP) - were notably absent from the Dakar conversation.

Faith in action:

Please write to the U.S. executive directors at the World Bank and the IMF, urging them to move forward the agenda for meaningful and just debt cancellation, including

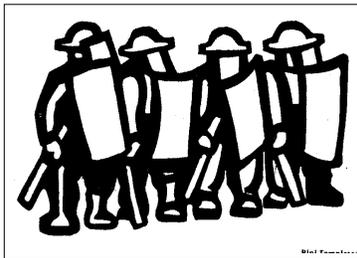
- 100 percent cancellation of impoverished country debt held by the World Bank and IMF;
- serious attention to the composition of debt held by other countries, especially those struggling with high levels of poverty, in order to identify and annul illegitimate debts;
- the creation of a fair and transparent process for arbitrating disputes over debt; and
- an end to creditor-imposed reforms that include privatization of water and essential services, user fees, and other measures destructive to impoverished people and their communities.

FTAA: Report from Miami

After witnessing the Brazilian plebiscite in September 2002, in which 98 percent of 10 million voters opposed the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Maryknoll lay missionary David Kane encouraged the Maryknoll community to participate in the U.S. postcard campaign preceding the FTAA negotiations in Miami. Organizations such as the AFL-CIO, Witness for Peace, and Jobs with Justice, as well as Maryknoll, collected half a million postcard/ballots from U.S. citizens opposing the FTAA. David was in Miami representing a coalition of Brazilian nongovernmental organizations during negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) in November, when the postcards were delivered to trade ministers from the hemisphere. The following article is based on his report, as well as reports from Alexandra Spielloch (Center of Concern's Global Women's Project), Walden Bello (Focus on the Global South) and Sarah Anderson (Institute for Policy Studies).

Taking advantage of the U.S. desire to avoid the kind of impasse that occurred in Cancun during the recent World Trade Organization ministerial meeting, Brazil proposed changing the structure of the FTAA to an "FTAA Lite." "FTAA Lite" is based upon a "flexible" process by which different countries can assume different levels of commitment and certain topics can be negotiated in either multilateral or bilateral fora. The content of the "FTAA Lite" will be determined at the next meeting of the Trade Negotiations Committee (TNC) in Puebla, Mexico in February 2004 when countries will address certain substantive issues that have not been resolved (including agriculture and investment) and will work to identify the specific flexibility mechanisms.

The Miami meeting was a victory for Brazilian diplomacy, but did not satisfy Brazilian organizations opposing the FTAA that did not want any type of FTAA, whether it be all-encompassing or "lite." The U.S. accepted the idea of an "FTAA Lite," something that U.S. business vigorously opposed, but in terms of content, the specific negotiations were merely delayed.



Outside the meeting, following a peaceful official march, police in riot gear fired rubber bullets, beanbag bullets and teargas at demonstrators. It began after a small group of protestors were playing percussion instruments, chanting and dancing in front of the police line.

David wrote, "This went on for 3-4 minutes and was starting to get boring and people were beginning to disperse. Then a police officer with a bullhorn came out and said that as long as the protest was nonviolent, it could continue, if not it would be stopped immediately. Nothing happened for a while longer. I don't know what happened - could be that someone threw something, but the police began beating on their shields and advancing slowly on the crowd. People got worried and began running away ... Basically, the police would advance some 20-30 feet and then stop for a minute or

so during which they would shoot rubber bullets at whomever and shoot tear gas ... They continued pushing us back until we encountered another line of police and were forced up a little side street. Here it continued the same way. They would advance a little, shoot everybody and then advance

again. The problem was that the anarchist kids were taking advantage of our numbers and throwing things at the police from behind us ... That was when I decided that I wanted to get out of there as things were only going to get worse."

But David was not able to leave. He and at least 140 other people were arrested. According to medics, about 100 were injured by tear gas and rubber bullets.

"Of the 50 or so people that I met at the processing center, the vast majority were also arrested trying to get home. There were two AFL-CIO guys who had spent the whole day helping the police with security and then were arrested trying to get back to their hotels. There were also two other guys who didn't even know about the protests - they had been in Miami for about 45 minutes and were arrested trying to go to a hotel."

Read David Kane's full account of his experience in Miami at www.maryknollogc.org.

Could more women leaders bring peace?

When peace brokers discuss obstacles to ending an armed conflict, they often seem to focus on symptoms: the drug trade and kidnappings in Colombia, the dividing wall that Israel is building on the occupied West Bank, tribal and ethnic friction in Liberia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo. In nearly every case, however, they overlook a critical resource: the wisdom of women's voices.

“Security has been almost exclusively defined in military terms,” says executive director Noeleen Heyzer of UNIFEM (UN Development Fund for Women).

By contrast, she says, “Women insist on a broader vision, one which puts human life and human rights at the forefront. One that includes lives free of violence, including violence against women and HIV/AIDS. And one that fully recognizes women’s participation and leadership in peace processes and reconstruction.”

In reality, we have the option of paying for 1,000 M-16 rifles (\$586,000) or rent subsidies for 1,000 families; fighting for an hour in Iraq (\$46 million) or modernizing 20 schools; testing the U.S. missile defense system three times (\$275 million) or eradicating polio worldwide; buying one Stealth bomber (\$2.1 billion) or hiring 38,000 elementary school teachers. And we consistently make the wrong choice.

That the peace perspective is little heard is perhaps reflected in the number of women serving in high government positions worldwide. After the 2002 elections, the U.S. had just 13 women in the Senate and 62 in the House.

Elsewhere, women comprised 17 percent of parliament in the United Kingdom in 2001. Colombia counted 29 women among 768 lawmakers in 2002. In Afghanistan only one to two percent of the women even have identity cards, meaning that some 98 percent of the women lack formal citizenship.

Gro Harlem Brundtland, who was prime minister of Norway for 10 years, related the following story at the 1995 Beijing conference on women. She said many Norwegians were shocked at first at the idea of a woman holding the key leadership post, and they predicted disaster and a short tenure for her. Many years later she was told of a conversation overhead on a primary school playground. A small boy had boasted to his friends that he was going to be prime minister when he grew up. Several girl playmates laughed and told him, “Don’t be silly! A man can’t be prime minister. It has to be a woman!”

The UN estimates that women fill more than 40 percent of ministerial-level positions in Denmark and Sweden. India has reserved one-third of local government positions for women and was considering expanding that target to other levels of decision making.

Of course, there is more to the issue than simply numbers. For example, most countries in which women hold top ministerial positions do not have comparable representation at sub-ministerial levels, suggesting that women senior ministers are not yet pioneering a new trend.

Women are frequently marginalized in decision-making and leadership roles for cultural reasons. In most societies, girls - in contrast to boys - are socialized to play passive roles and have little opportunity to make decisions or develop leadership skills outside of the family context. Limited education represents another handicap. In most countries women have higher levels of illiteracy and fewer years of schooling than men.

In addition, modern work patterns and practices are geared toward men who have a supportive wife to assume the family responsibilities at home. The hours of the typical workday, overtime, location of work and commuting time all make it difficult for women to fulfill both their family and work roles.

Nonetheless, it is essential that women assume larger leadership roles. Since women and men often do play different roles in society (and therefore have different needs, interests and priorities), it follows that women cannot be adequately represented in decision making by men.

We won’t know for some time whether electing or appointing more women to decision-making positions in the U.S. government might yield a peace dividend in itself. However, it’s hard to imagine a woman president taunting an adversary with “Bring ‘em on!” - so typical of the present commander in chief’s braggadocio that has helped “bring on” the debacle that is Iraq.

Women’s equal participation in conflict prevention, management and conflict resolution and in post-conflict peace-building is one of two themes for the 48th session of the UN’s Commission on the Status of Women, scheduled for March 1-12, 2004 in New York City.

Vatican studies GMO use in agriculture

The following piece, contributed by Fr. Roland Lessups, SJ of the Kasisi Agricultural Training Centre in Lusaka, Zambia, reports on a November 10-11 study seminar entitled "GMO: Threat or Hope?" held at the offices of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (PCJP). The seminar was designed to prepare the PCJP to draft a Vatican statement on using GMOs (genetically modified organisms) in agriculture. Fr. Lessups attended the seminar and presented a paper (written with Fr. Peter Henriot, SJ, of Lusaka's Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection) showing how Catholic social teaching supports Zambia's 2002 decision to reject GMO seed donations.

Cardinal Renato Martino, president of the PCJP, announced that the purpose of the study seminar was to help the PCJP "deepen its knowledge of each aspect of the GMO issue from the scientific, ethical and humanitarian perspectives." The seminar was not designed to make a conclusion, and in fact at the end of the seminar there was no session at which the participants even tried to reach consensus. Martino said it may be a long time, months or years, before the Vatican makes a statement about using GMOs in agriculture.

Cardinal Martino seems to be leaning in favor of using GMOs in agriculture. Before the seminar he said that he lived in the U.S. and "ate everything that was offered to me, including genetically modified products. They had no effect on my health. This controversy is more political than scientific." I think he does not realize that almost all the GM food raised in the U.S. goes into cattle feed or into export and that only a very, very small percentage of U.S. food contains GM products.

Most of the approximately 20 speakers whom Cardinal Martino invited to the study seminar supported the use of GMOs in agriculture. Only three speakers, myself included, plus the Italian minister of agriculture, spoke out strongly in opposition to using GMOs in agriculture. It seems that the initial composition of the speakers was even more biased in support of GMOs and that opponents were added later, perhaps due to pressure from some quarters such as from Bishop Dinualdo Gutierrez,



Chair, Episcopal Commission on Social Action, Justice and Peace, Bishop of Marbel, the Philippines. We know that some of the speakers received their invitation to the seminar at least a month in advance, but Fr. Henriot received the invitation only two weeks before the seminar (which gave us very little time to prepare our presentation).

Another indication of the bias of the PCJP comes from the composition of the press conferences organized by the PCJP. Only selected speakers (not including anyone who opposes the use of GMOs in agriculture) were invited to attend the

press conferences with Cardinal Martino. Reporters were not allowed to be present during the seminar sessions, but only at the two press conferences, one each day. Many reporters, including some from CNN, AP, and Reuters, did gather around me

after the second press conference, which explains something you may have noticed [due to] the many media reports about our paper.

Our paper was in the last session of the study seminar on the ethical perspectives illuminated by the Church's social teaching. We also reflected on GMOs from the broader theological framework of creation. If you would like to read our paper you may find it at the European Jesuits' website, www.jesuits-europe.org; click on "News Service," and look for the November 13 press release. The entire document is available in Word.

My own opinion and the general consensus is that the few voices speaking out during the study seminar against use of GMOs in agriculture will probably not, in themselves, influence the decision of Cardinal Martino, but the hope remains that the ethical and theological issues we and many others have raised may continue to be discussed around the world and that our human family will more and more promote non-GMO approaches to meeting the problem of hunger.

For more information, see *NewsNotes*, September-October 2002, page 11, and www.maryknollogc.org/ecology/index.htm. To see research done by the Kasisi Centre in Zambia see its website at www.jctr.org.zm/gmos.htm

UN International Year of Rice: Pushing GMOs?

The year 2004 has been named the United Nations' International Year of Rice, which follows 2003's International Year of Water.

The first move towards this designation was made through a resolution drafted and presented to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) by 44 UN member nations. They are deeply concerned about rice development, and predict a pending crisis.

In response, the FAO's director-general, Dr. Jacques Diouf, promoted the cause of rice, calling it "a symbol of cultural identity." He pointed out that rice is the staple food for more than half the world's population. "Almost a billion households in Asia, Africa and the Americas depend on rice systems for their source of employment and livelihood." Dr. Diouf further told the UN delegates: "About four-fifths of the world's rice is produced by small-scale farmers and is consumed locally. Rice systems support a wide variety of plants and animals, which also help supplement rural diets and incomes. Rice is therefore on the front line in the fight against world hunger and poverty."

On October 31, 2003, the United Nations General Assembly, responding to this urgent warning by the FAO, decided for the first time to set aside an entire year to a single crop. In its Declaration, the UN states that land and water resources for rice production are diminishing even as the world population continues to grow.

However, there is another side to the FAO's promotion of rice that gives cause for concern: "We aim to engage the entire community of stakeholders, from rural farmers to the scientific institutions that mapped the rice genome, in the mission to increase rice production in a manner that promotes sustainability and equity." This statement opens up serious questions:

- Does the International Year of Rice mean that the energies generated by this UN focus will be aimed down the path of more agrochemicals and genetically modified crops?
- Will the new strategies used truly result in less

- hunger or in the creation of new profit systems?
- If the poor do not have the power to buy food or seeds, how can the single focus of increased production help them? (India's "Green Revolution," from 1967 to 1978, raised wheat and rice production in India, where granaries are now overflowing. Yet, 5,000 children die each day of malnutrition because 1/3 of their population cannot afford to buy what has been produced.)

During 2004, the FAO will lead a number of international agricultural organizations in organizing a campaign under the motto of "Rice is Life." There is a need for NGOs and civil society to closely monitor the activities of agribusiness, petro-chemical industries as well as "agricultural organizations" around the world. Individuals and groups can start with following the activities of the UN and the FAO during the International Year of Rice and by learning more about the original "Green Revolution" and its effects. Also, a continued study and discussion of the genetic interference of GMOs, their ethical implications and effect on nature is called for. Parish communities can link with sister-parishes in countries targeted by the FAO to learn first hand about what is happening. Become "partners" with groups already involved in monitoring agriculture, and work together so that the International Year of Rice truly will result in alleviation of the poverty and hunger of those who rely on rice, or on any other staple, to sustain life.

For more information on the establishment of the 2004 International Year, check the FAO's website at www.fao.org. Also see the website of the Asia Rice Foundation at www.asiarice.org.

To learn more about the Green Revolution, read *Lessons from the Green Revolution*, Tikkun magazine (March-April 2000), written by Peter Rosset, Joseph Collins and Frances Moore Lappe, available at Food First's website, www.foodfirst.org; and *The Real Green Revolution*, written by Nicholas Parrott & Terry Marsden and published in London by the Greenpeace Environmental Trust February, 2002; ISBN 1 903907 02 0.



Stop marketing violence to children

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) says that violence is the most prevalent health risk for children and adolescents. One factor contributing to violence is entertainment media products such as violent video games. Dr. Michael Rich of the AAP says, "Unlike many of the complex social issues that contribute to violence, [violent video games] can be easily addressed."

With the rise in popularity of video games, particularly games that depict extreme violence, grassroots groups, religious institutional investors and legislators are addressing the inappropriate marketing of violent video games to children and youth. Corporations must assume greater responsibility for education about, and enforcement of, rating systems and guidelines applicable to violent interactive videos.

According to the American Academy of Pediatrics, media violence can lead to aggressive behavior in children. Over 1,000 studies confirm this link. Two studies that appeared in the April 2000 issue of the American Psychological Association's (APA) *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* concluded that violent video games may be more harmful than violent television and movies because they are interactive, very engrossing and require the player to identify with the aggressor. The studies found that playing violent video games can increase a person's aggressive thoughts, feelings and behavior both in laboratory settings and in actual life. A review of the scientific literature in *Psychological Science* in 2001 showed a consistent pattern of results in 35 studies of video games: exposure to violent games increased aggressive thoughts in children and adults, as well as aggressive feelings, physiological arousal and aggressive behaviors.

"Mature"-rated games (for persons 17 or older) are now the fastest growing segment of the video game industry). About one-third of video games now purchased are rated "M." About 40 percent of those who play "M"-rated games are under 18, according to the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). Many of these games are known as "first-person shooters" where the player advances in the game by killing.

The best-selling games glorify and award extreme violence, particularly violence against women. Among the most popular video games is *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*, which encouraged players to kill Haitians. The Haitian government is pursuing legal action against the game's developers, Rockstar Games Incorporated, which recently agreed to remove language from the game that directed players to shoot islanders.

While video game developers have established a self-regulatory group, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board, to rate video game products by content and age appropriateness, the FTC has said: "The aggressive marketing of violent games to children undermines the credibility of the industry's ratings and frustrates parents' attempts to make informed choices."

A recent FTC "mystery shopper" survey found that 69 percent of teenagers were able to buy "M"-rated games. The 2002 Media Wise Video Game Report Card, issued by the National Institute on Media and the Family, gave video game retailers an "F" for ratings enforcement.

On a positive note, the toy retailer Zany Brainy last year pulled all video games off the shelves of its 170 stores. A spokesperson for the store, a subsidiary of FAO Schwarz, said, "We didn't carry any of the games with violence, and it seemed to us that those are the most popular games and the games that the industry was focusing on."

What we can do: Write to leading retailers and renters of video games (e.g., Wal-Mart, Best Buy, Blockbuster, Toys R Us, Circuit City, Target) and find out what their policies are to prevent children's access to violent video and computer games, and what they are doing to ensure their policies are enforced.

For more information: 1) Lion & Lamb Project (www.lionlamb.org; (301) 654-3091) publishes a Dirty Dozen list of video games, DVDs and toys with violent messages for parents to avoid, as well as a Top 20 list of games and toys that encourage creative and imaginative play. 2) The National Institute for Media and the Family (www.mediafamily.org; 888-672-5437) rates movies and video games for their appropriateness for children.



Resources

- 1) "I Will Feed Them with Justice" Ecumenical Advocacy Days for Global Peace with Justice: You are invited to participate in the second annual ecumenical gathering in Washington, D.C., concerning urgent global issues, **March 5-8, 2004**. This event expands our focus in 2003, Africa and the Middle East, to include four regional tracks: Africa, Asia (Korea), Latin America, and the Middle East (Israel and Palestine, Iraq), and two thematic tracks: Jubilee and economic justice, (trade and debt), and nuclear disarmament. The event will offer challenging speakers, issue briefings, and advocacy training workshops. Comprehensive briefings will help you prepare for effective visits with your senators and representatives, or their key foreign policy staff. For further information contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, or go to www.advocacydays.org
- 2) *The Free Trade Agreement Between the United States and Central America: Economic and Social Impacts*. This study, written by Raul Moreno and published by the American Friends Service Committee, Sinti Techan Network and the Hemispheric Social Alliance, is a helpful guide to the FTAA and its bearing on Central America. Chapters include an overview of FTAA objectives and principles, myths and truths of CAFTA, and analysis of the trade agreements on labor, health care and food sovereignty. For a free copy, contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns with your mailing address. ogc@maryknoll.org; (202)832-1780.
- 3) *The Way of Peace: Nonviolence for the 21st Century*. Revised and expanded by Shannon McManimon, based on the original text by Gerard Vanderhaar and Mary Lou Kownacki, OSB. Published by Pax Christi USA. This manual is an introductory guide to the spirit and practice of nonviolence in recent decades as practiced by Mohandas Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Dorothy Day, Cesar Chavez and others. Perfect for classroom or parish study groups during Lent. \$15.00. Contact Pax Christi USA, www.paxchristiusa.org; (814)453-4955.
- 4) *Challenging Conventional Wisdom: Debunking the Myths and Exposing the Risks of Arms Export Reform*. Edited by Tamar Gabelnick and Rachel Stohl, this collection of essays on the arms industry dissects the notions and arguments used to justify policy changes that would weaken controls on dangerous military technology. It probes the justifications for major changes to the export system; examines the potential risks associated with these changes; and provides suggestions to strengthen the arms export control system. 223 pages; \$29 plus shipping. Contact the Center for Defense Information to order: (800)CDI-3334 or (202)332-0600. www.cdi.org
- 5) *The Wall in Palestine: Facts, Testimonies, Analysis and Call to Action*. Edited by the Palestinian Environmental NGOs Network (PENGON). To date, some 300,000 people are affected by the caging off of their communities, throughout the northern West Bank, Jerusalem and Bethlehem, with concrete walls and electric fences. This book is critical in surfacing what the Wall is, its impacts, and its reshaping of the entire West Bank. It includes photos, detailed reports, resources and an anthology. A comprehensive section on the Wall and international humanitarian and human rights law provides a gateway into the illegality of this offensive. This is a great tool for learning about and taking action on the issue of Palestinian rights. 199 pages. Contact PENGON at P.O. Box 25220 Beit Hanina, Jerusalem, 972-2-6565890/87. The cost of the book is \$20, including shipping costs.
- 6) "Coming to Say Goodbye": From Maryknoll World Productions, this documentary is about courageous people living with HIV/AIDS in Kenya and Tanzania. Their stories are a personalized journal of the spread of this modern plague. Included are commentaries by church workers, medical professionals, social workers, and educators who stand by those suffering, especially the thousands of children orphaned by AIDS. The video leads to reflection on the personal and structural aspects of the AIDS pandemic in Africa: poverty, lack of access to treatment, and the extraordinary social cost. A study guide is also available. \$14.95, 30 minutes. Contact Maryknoll World Productions at (800)227-8523.