

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

NewsNotes

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MARYKNOLL OFFICE FOR GLOBAL CONCERNS:

Peace, Social Justice and the Integrity of Creation

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Lent in the Sabbath year: Fasting from violence

This spring, the war in Iraq will rage past a four year marker; the war in Afghanistan is well into its fifth year; the violence against the people of Darfur seems without end; violent conflict continues in the D.R. Congo, Colombia, the Middle East and in dozens of other places; and local or “street” violence abounds in many corners of the world. Hundreds of billions of dollars are spent each year on military readiness. Small arms and light weapons are a worldwide plague. Eighteen years after the end of the Cold War, nuclear weapons are proliferating and being readied, at least by the United States, for battlefield use. Huge profits flow from the relentless pursuit of personal, public and national security. What would it mean this Lent to fast from violence? What can we do to build respectful, nonviolent relationships in this Sabbath year?

Jonah, with God’s urging, suggested to Nineveh a place to begin. Perhaps we can translate his story (Jonah 3:1-10) into our own context.

Jonah began his journey across the United States, and had gone but a single day’s walk announcing, “Forty days more and the United States shall be destroyed,” when the people of the United States believed God; they proclaimed a fast and all of them, great and small, put on sackcloth.

When the news reached the president of the United States, he walked out among the people whose lives were shattered by violence, covered himself with sackcloth, and sat in the ashes.

Then he had this proclaimed throughout the U.S.: “Neither human nor beast, neither cattle nor sheep, shall taste anything; they shall not eat, nor shall they drink water.

“All the people and beasts shall be covered with sackcloth and call loudly to God; every person shall turn from his or her evil way and from the violence ... in hand.

“Who knows, God may relent and forgive, and withhold the blazing wrath, so that we shall not perish.”

When God saw by their actions how they turned from their evil way, God repented of the evil that God had threatened to do to them; and did not carry it out.



How many pictures have we seen of Iraqi women and men wailing over the bodies of loved ones? How many times have we seen broken-hearted Afghans carrying the bleeding bodies of their children? How many stories have we heard about children in Lebanon or Israel or Palestine blown apart by unexploded munitions?

We are a country at war. Ask soldiers and former soldiers; the children and parents, husbands and wives of soldiers; the loved ones of men and women who have died in Iraq and Afghanistan. Ask those who have come home forever wounded – in body and spirit. Ask the people of Iraq and Afghanistan. But it is so far away to many of us that press reports and political debate almost always fail to make it real.

Like too much of life on the “other side of reality” – the other side of the world, the other side of the border, the other side of town, the other side of the tracks, it is two dimensional to us, apersonal, ahistorical. We don’t really pay attention because we don’t understand the details of what’s going on, who is involved or why.

Yet, we are literally surrounded by situations that violate the values we claim to hold dear. We are surrounded by a global reality that insults our most deeply held convictions. Violence and wars are a big part of that reality - with all their causes and consequences.

We are not responsible for every violence, every war, every injustice, but we – by policy or lifestyle – are responsible for far too many of them. How many times has the United States started a war or supported an oppressive government or signed a trade agreement that maintained our privileged way of life at the expense of other people? To keep the supply of oil or coltan flowing into our cars and cell phones? To keep abundant water available to satisfy our bottled water fetish? To open markets to the products our companies wanted to export at the expense of local businesses employing local people?

What is the fast to which we are called in this seventh year after the turn of the millennium? “Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?” (Isaiah 58:6) To build right relationships, to nurture global solidarity, to become global good neighbors – that is the fast to which we are called.

Africa: U.S. plans military command center

By September 2008, the Department of Defense will create a new U.S. Africa Command headquarters, to be known as AFRICOM. According to an article by Vince Crowley on the State Department web site, it will coordinate all U.S. military and security interests throughout the continent. President Bush said it will “enhance our efforts to bring peace and security to the people of Africa and promote our common goals of development, health, education, democracy, and economic growth in Africa.”

The Defense Department uses its unified regional commands to coordinate U.S. military interests worldwide. The new AFRICOM will encompass the entire continent of Africa except for Egypt, which falls under U.S. Central Command. AFRICOM also will include the islands belonging to Equatorial Guinea, as well as the islands of Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe, and the Indian Ocean islands of Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and the Seychelles.

U.S. officials claim that by creating AFRICOM, the Defense Department will be able to coordinate better its own activities in Africa, as well as the work of other U.S. government agencies, particularly the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development. Regional commands are typically focal points for all U.S. government interactions in a given region.

Officials say that this decision reflects the long-term strategic value of Africa and is not aimed at protecting oil, fighting Islamist militants or countering China’s growing involvement on the continent. Theresa Whelan, deputy assistant secretary of defense for Africa affairs, specifically said that the creation of AFRICOM is not a response to recent military actions in Somalia.

At the same time, official documents and statements referring to AFRICOM discuss the importance of a coordinated U.S. government effort in sub-Saharan Africa to “mitigate ungoverned regions and promote development and health polices.” The draft mission statement for the new command emphasizes “working with African nations to encourage stability and help prevent future conflicts.” It reads in part: “U.S. Africa Command promotes U.S. national security objectives by working with African states and regional organizations to help strengthen stability and security in the AOR [area of responsibility].”

Many U.S. policy observers are worried about an increased militarization of U.S. policy toward Africa.

The Center for International Policy (www.ciponline.org) writes about the “establishment of an African military command – AFRICOM— to spearhead an ‘oil and terrorism’ policy, which will oversee the deployment of U.S. forces in the area and supervise the distribution of money, materiel and military training to regional militaries and proxies. Pentagon analysts and generals claim that vast ‘uncontrolled spaces’ in Saharan and Sahelian Africa ... are rife with terrorists seeking to damage the United States, even though the evidence for such claims is woefully thin.”

CIP raises the specter that given internal security problems and existing tensions in several African countries, newly acquired skills and equipment are more likely to be directed against domestic opponents than against global terrorists. Some would say that democracy and civilian rule in some countries will be in jeopardy. Furthermore, the U.S., in its relentless pursuit of oil, it is likely to “replace one set of insecurities with another.”

While the new command’s assigned tasks will include building partnerships, enhancing humanitarian assistance, disaster mitigation and response, fostering respect for human rights, and supporting African regional organizations, it also is charged with “increasing counter-terrorism skills of partner nations, conducting region-wide security cooperation and military operations, if necessary.”

The Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is deeply concerned about this development. In extreme emergencies and natural disasters, logistical support from the U.S. military can be very helpful, but we strongly oppose the militarization of U.S. foreign policy. We have seen the deadly impact in Latin America when “newly acquired skills and equipment” from U.S. government military maneuvers and training programs (from, for example, the U.S. Army School of the Americas - now the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation) were viciously “directed against domestic opponents.” U.S. relationships with the people of Africa and their governments and U.S. foreign assistance programs should be based on global “good-neighborliness,” not on U.S. national security or economic interests.

For additional information, see *Convergent Interests: U.S. Energy Security and the “Securing” of Nigerian Democracy* by Paul M. Lubeck, Michael J. Watts and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, February 2007, http://www.ciponline.org/NIGERIA_FINAL.pdf

Kenya: Small arms, light weapons fuel instability

The following is abridged with permission from an interesting article by Mbugua Njoroge in AfricaFiles (Volume 5, January-May 2007) "At Issue." The full article is available at <http://www.africafiles.org/atissueezine.asp>.

The proliferation of small arms and light weapons is one of the biggest security challenges currently facing Kenya and the East African sub-region (Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya). The trafficking and wide availability of these weapons fuel instability, conflict and pose a threat, not only to security, but also to sustainable development. The widespread proliferation of small arms is contributing to alarming levels of armed crime, in both rural and urban areas, which exacerbates armed cattle rustling and conflicts in pastoralist areas.

Armed violence disproportionately affects the poor population and is an important factor undermining development and poverty reduction efforts in Kenya. Chronic insecurity impedes the provision of services to the poor in the vast urban slum areas as well as in Kenya's under-developed peripheral regions. Much of this insecurity is fuelled by the widespread availability of small arms....

Kenya shares porous borders with some of the most politically unstable countries in Africa such as Somalia and Sudan. Kenya's long and isolated borders with Tanzania, Uganda, Sudan, Somalia and Ethiopia – and its 536 km coastline – are difficult to patrol owing to

limited resources and insufficient training. Poor and corrupt policing of the borders between Kenya and its neighbors has facilitated the influx of large quantities of small arms into Kenya. Individuals have been able to acquire weapons for overt criminal purposes. The fact that the borders are not properly and effectively policed means that arms traffickers and bandits find easy entry points along the porous borders. Specifically the rebel movements in Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda benefit from this state of affairs. Towns on or close to the borders of these countries are major entry points for illegal firearms. (Kizito Sabala)

According to those living in communities in northern Kenya and North Rift such as Samburu, Pokot, Turkana, Borana, Rendille, Somali and Gabbra, national law is not adequately enforced by Kenya police in their marginalized regions. The only option they have is to arm themselves for personal, communal, clan or larger family defense requirements. They do this as a defensive measure against bandits and other clans as well as to advance their own interests, as they define them.

The introduction of modern weaponry into northern Kenya is a direct outcome of the post-independence Shifta conflict. Access to guns grew out of the linkage between the abortive war of Somali self-determination and the banditry which replaced it....

A further source of conflict stimulating arms flow stems from livestock keeping, the only viable occupation

Author Mbugua Njoroge identifies several ways in which Kenya is responding. These include:

- the Fire Arms Act of Kenya (revised 1972), which regulates licensing, certification, acquisition, maintenance of premises, and the forfeiture of certificates and firearms;
- the Community Policing Initiative, launched in 2005;
- the June 2005 destruction of over 3,800 assorted illicit and recovered firearms;
- formation of the East African Police Chiefs Organization (EAPCO)
- the 2006 voluntary disarmament among the warring communities in Rift Valley, Eastern and North Eastern provinces
 - the Nairobi Protocol for Prevention, Control and Reduction of Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa, which was adopted in 2004 and entered into force in May 2006;
 - the National Action Plan (NAP), covering a wide range of security and safety issues.

In addition, Kenya has entered into a cooperation pact, courtesy of the East Africa Community, with member states (Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda and Burundi) and has improved border security particularly with Tanzania and Uganda. The pact aims to deal with cattle rustling and small arms proliferation. The cooperation includes sharing of information, intelligence and ad hoc operations.

The article concludes with several recommendations and references. Again, for the full article, see <http://www.africafiles.org/atissueezine.asp>.

in much of the region. By nature, livestock keeping tends to generate conflict over grazing land, access to water and rustling. All of these increase demand for small arms in Kenya (Rukia Subow)

Kenya, like many countries in the Horn of Africa, does not have the capacity to guarantee the security of her citizens. Facing this reality, Kenya has, overtly or covertly, opted to arm groups in frontier districts which

suffer from marginalization and underdevelopment. This policy has sent unambiguous signals to communities that they should take care of their own security and it has solidified the belief among opinion leaders and heads of ethnic groups that the government itself is unable to take care of this basic need ... (Kiflemariam Gebre-Wold, et al)

Africa: Number of health care workers dwindles

The following article is based on information from Global AIDS Alliance.

The World Health Organization has identified 57 countries, including 36 in Africa, where the health-related Millennium Development Goals are “very unlikely” to be achieved with their current level of health workers. Last year, an estimate of the funds needed to double the health workforce in sub-Saharan Africa placed the cost at an additional \$2 billion in the first year, and more in ensuing years.

In Africa, people are dying unnecessarily because there are simply not enough health care workers. Health workers – nurses, doctors, pharmacists, community health workers, laboratory technicians, physician assistants, nurse assistants, mental health workers, and many more—are at the core of health systems everywhere. But in Africa, a mere three percent of the world’s health workers struggle against all odds to combat 24 percent of the global disease burden. The World Health Organization estimates that sub-Saharan Africa is suffering a shortage of more than 800,000 doctors, nurses, and midwives, and an overall shortfall of nearly 1.5 million health workers. At present, sub-Saharan Africa has little over one million health workers, and fewer than 600,000 doctors, nurses, and midwives.

Shortages of health care workers have a number of different causes, including HIV/AIDS, which is taking a major toll on the health workforce; a lack of sufficient training capacity to produce the number of health workers required; inability to retain health workers due to

lack of funding for adequate salaries and wage caps imposed by international financial institutions; and “brain drain,” the large-scale emigration of health care workers seeking better paying and more secure jobs in countries with greater resources.

Faith in action:

Last year, Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) introduced the African Health Capacity Investment Act, urging the U.S. to take the lead in helping African countries establish a stable health infrastructure and end their health crises. The bill, soon to be reintroduced as the African Health Capacity Investment Act, offers an excellent model for the U.S. government to help countries in sub-Saharan Africa build the capacity and develop the human resource infrastructure to secure and maintain the health of their citizens.



Photo by Sean Sprague, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

If your senator is one of the following co-sponsors of the African Health Capacity Investment Act, please contact his office and thank him for his leadership: Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL), Sen. Norm Coleman (R-MN), Sen. Thad Cochran (R-MS), Sen. Russell Feingold (D-WI), Sen. Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), and Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

If your senator is not yet a cosponsor, urge him/her to endorse the African Health Capacity Investment Act soon.

To reach your senator, call the Capitol switchboard at 202-224-3121 and ask to speak to your senator’s office. Also find contact information at www.senate.gov.

For more information, visit the Global AIDS Alliance, www.globalaidsalliance.org.

Sudan: No solutions in sight for Darfur

Despite significant international attention to the tragic situation in Darfur, violence against the civilian population, including child conscription and sexual abuse, continues unabated. The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy to Sudan, Jan Eliasson, and the Africa Union's special envoy to Darfur, Salim Ahmed Salim, agree that a military solution is not an option in ending the crisis and that the parties to the Darfur conflict must engage in a peace process. Yet, despite repeated promises by both the Sudanese government and rebels, there is little evidence on the ground to demonstrate that either side is committed to a peaceful solution to the crisis.

According to IRIN (2/16/07), the violence in Darfur has continued to escalate, threatening humanitarian operations across the vast region. Sudanese military planes, for example, bombed two villages in North Darfur in direct violation of two ceasefire agreements. Sudanese officials said the bombardment was a defensive maneuver against rebels.

According to aid workers, violence in Darfur has escalated since the signing of the Darfur Peace Agreement between the government and one faction of the rebel Sudan Liberation Movement. Two factions refused to sign, complaining that it did not meet their basic demands of wealth and power-sharing. The rebel movements later fragmented and shifting alliances between rebel groups have resulted in continuing clashes with government forces.

Over the past year, a significant number of attacks have been directed at humanitarian workers, severely curtailing aid operations. Observers say the culprits remain largely unidentified due to growing confusion over which groups are politically motivated rebels and which are mere bandits.

Millions of people have already been killed in Darfur. Aid workers estimate that at least two million have been made homeless by the conflict. The fighting has also spilled over into eastern Chad and northeastern Central African Republic, with the three countries trading accusations of supporting each other's rebels.

In a KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives' briefing paper (www.kairos.org), John Lewis describes international efforts to respond:

The Security Council passed Resolution 1706 on 31 August, 2006, extending to Darfur the mandate of the UN mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which currently has 10,000 in-country personnel monitoring the 2005 peace agreement for southern Sudan. This resolution "in-

vited" Khartoum's consent to the deployment of 20,600 UN peacekeepers to the region, including Darfur. A reinforced UN mission in southern Sudan would support and expand the African Union's currently overstretched mission in Darfur, which although threatened with expulsion in September, has now been extended through the end of March 2007.

The UN has begun providing the first phase of a "light support package," releasing \$21 million to AMIS along with equipment and military advisers, police officers and civilian staff. The second phase of the UN's support ... should include additional staff and equipment. The UN hopes that a force of 17,000 peacekeepers and 3,000 police officers will eventually be deployed to support the 7,000 African troops in the region.

Nevertheless, the government of Sudan continues to send conflicting signals about its support for a UN presence, declaring that only African peace-keepers will be allowed into Darfur regardless of which hat (UN or AU) they are wearing. ...

Divisions have now emerged within the international community over whether to drop the UN-AU mission proposal in favor of a strengthened AU-led mission. The UN Human Rights Council, for example, appears unable to agree on how to resolve the crisis other than sending investigators back to the region. The final decision from December's Special Session on Darfur largely absolves the government of Sudan of its responsibility toward civilians. Unless these divisions are quickly reconciled, the government in Khartoum will exploit them to continue to neutralize international pressure.

An immediate priority is to make AMIS as effective as it can be, but that mission, whose credibility in Darfur is decreasing, is not a substitute for the more robust joint AU-UN peacekeeping force

Faith in action:

The SaveDarfur Coalition (www.savedarfur.org) is asking for letters to President Bush urging him to:

- Enact and enforce stronger sanctions;
- Prepare and oversee the deployment of international peacekeeping forces;
- Implement the UN authorized no-fly zone;
- Fully fund the United States' share of peacekeeping and humanitarian aid; and
- Develop a military contingency plan to respond to the potential collapse of security and humanitarian aid networks in Darfur.

Venezuela: Freedom of press or abuse of power?

Late in 2006, Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez announced that the concession for Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) would not be renewed when it expires at the end of March. Immediately a cry arose from the international community claiming that the action was (yet another) attack on the freedom of the press in Venezuela. But was it? Here is a little history leading up to the decision. The following article is written by Sami Scott, a Maryknoll lay missionary who has lived in Venezuela for several years.

In 1998, when Chavez was first elected president, the traditional, prominent political parties self-destructed. They had lost contact with the common people and were more interested in their own gain. Part of the vacuum left was filled by Chavez; another part was filled by the media, both print and broadcast, which constantly attempted to discredit Chavez and refused to publish anything positive about his government.

In 2001, when Chavez tried to reform the large labor federations, the last bastion of the old political parties, the economic powers including the media began plotting a coup. The anti-Chavismo was stepped up in the press and TV personalities began planning the coup with a dissatisfied sector of the military. Often they used the TV stations for that purpose.

When the coup finally happened on April 11, 2002, the broadcast media played a crucial role by falsifying events, hiding support for Chavez, and broadcasting the military leaders' statements. It is important to note that the only TV stations to be closed down in the past 10 years were the government station, Venezolana de Television, and a pro-government community station, Catia-TV, during the coup. The latter had grown out of a Maryknoll project. During the coup, the media broadcast cartoons instead of showing the increasing unrest as the poor people came down from the hillside barrios to demand the return of "their president." Even after Chavez was return to the presidency, the media was unrepentant but evidence of their actions was slowly revealed including the lies used to manipulate the public and especially international opinion.

In late 2002 to early 2003, during the misnamed general strike, which was really an illegal management lock-out, the media also played an important role. The



dissident military officers, the head of the labor confederation, and the head of the managers of the petroleum industry were given full coverage but nothing was shown of the response or opinions of the common people. During live shots, camera angles were used to create tension or to make crowds appear more or less populated depending on whose side the crowd was on. Subliminal messages were also reported.

Again and again, after the strike was over, the media acted as a political party. But they were also quick to claim an attack on the freedom of the press if their actions were questioned or if any action went against their interests like a demand to pay taxes as well as back taxes. Never mind that all industry was receiving the same request from the Seniat, the Venezuelan IRS.

As time went on and people continued to show their support for Chavez in the polls, the other TV stations and print media began to give up their role as a de facto political party and to dedicate themselves to their stated purpose, but not RCTV. Just before the recent presidential elections, there were rumors of another coup attempt with RCTV again playing a crucial role. Despite a prohibition by the National Election Council on broadcasting partial results before they had issued their first official bulletin, there were plans to broadcast exit poll results showing the opposition candidate in the lead. This was part of a larger strategy, used with success in other parts of the world, to build a matrix of opinion showing that Chavez stole the elections from the opposition candidate. The hope was to mobilize people to protest in the streets. This could have either brought down the government or justified international intervention.

However, the support for Chavez was too great and the strategy used too often to be effective in Venezuela. Intelligence work supposedly uncovered the active role that RCTV and its General Director had in the plot. This was the last straw. The government is *not* closing down the station but is not renewing its broadcast concession when it expires at the end of March not because of the content of the broadcasts but because the concession was used to play an extra-political role in overthrowing a legitimately elected government.

RCTV knows that it would get very little internal support for its plight if it claims an attack on freedom of

the press. The Venezuelan people have shown that they are tired of the abuses of the press and would like to continue building their country in peace. An example of this is that El Nacional, once the premier newspaper in the country and rabidly anti-Chavista has seen its circulation and advertising revenue drop dramatically. They are currently on the verge of bankruptcy. The in-country campaign of RCTV is focusing on the fate of all the employees who will be out of work. Only to the interna-

tional community hears the freedom of the press argument.

How this plays out in the coming months is yet to be seen. Chavez is not given to making idle threats but keeps his word. The station would not be closed down but would lose its broadcasting license. It would be able to produce shows and *telenovelas* which it could sell to third parties. Perhaps a last minute agreement will be reached.

Bolivia: Paradigm shifts for justice

The following article is the first in a series on the current developments in Bolivia, written by Maryknoll missionaries serving there. Future articles will address key themes—such as the nationalization of natural resources, the Constituent Assembly and regional conflicts—in greater detail.

“We are President!” proclaimed a jubilant Evo Morales to a massive crowd of supporters celebrating his election, which he won with 54 percent of the vote, in December 2005. The nation’s first indigenous president was telling Bolivia’s impoverished people, and its majority indigenous, that the almost unthinkable had become a reality. For the first time in more than 500 years of domination, first by the Spanish and in more recent years by Bolivia’s European elite who maintained close friendships with the U.S. government and foreign transnationals as their primary constituency, Bolivia would be led by one of “their own.” The boy from an impoverished pueblo in Oruro, who herded llamas and dreamed of one day riding a bus, had become president, to fulfill the demands of Bolivia’s social movements for a radical shift in the political, economic and social vision of the country. Evo’s years of formation as a coca leader in the Chapare had served him well in the preceding five years, as Bolivia’s coca farmers, campesinos, miners, immigrants and laborers had realized the power that comes with unity, clear demands and a nonviolent show of political will that led them to the streets countless times to block roads and shut down the country’s major cities and transportation routes. Now they had arrived in force at the nation’s highest levels of government, and things will never be the same.

In this first year and two months of Evo’s presidency, the Bolivian people have witnessed a fundamental reordering of the nation’s economic and political priorities, and perhaps more important, have made the

psychic leap toward believing in a Bolivian society that looks more like them, that welcomes them into the halls of power, that imagines economic, political and social relationships structured on a foundation of Andean values of complementarity, reciprocity, solidarity and inclusion. In just a short time, the Morales government has made significant strides toward policy shifts that previous governments had said were unthinkable.

On May 1, 2006, with a dramatic gesture of sending the Bolivian armed forces to Bolivia’s gas fields in order to “secure” them for the Bolivian people, Evo publicly announced the nationalization of Bolivia’s natural gas resources in order that the people could finally sell their gas under terms more favorable to the national interest. The country had been living for years under illegal contracts with giant transnational companies (illegal for never having been approved by Congress) that allotted a mere 18 percent of the proceeds to the Bolivian people, and a whopping 82 percent to the foreign companies. In recent months, new contracts have been approved which shift the majority of proceeds to the Bolivian economy.

After thousands of campesinos marched for days to La Paz from Bolivia’s land rich east, the Congress approved (not without a battle which included an opposition politician punching a police officer guarding the door of the Senate chamber) a land reform bill that would redistribute unproductive lands which had been handed out by corrupt governments to the wealthy elite.

A Constitutional Assembly was convened on Aug. 6, 2006, to rewrite the Constitution and lay the groundwork for a more fundamental restructuring of the processes for citizen participation and decision making.

Other significant initiatives include the drastic reduction of government salaries, major steps toward the reorganization of the country’s most infamously corrupt departments, the delivery of an educational benefit—in

cash—to primary school children, and a concerted effort to identify other international markets for Bolivian products, so as to break the cycle of economic dependency on U.S. aid which has always come with onerous requirements which undermine Bolivia's right to sovereignty and self-determination.

Month by month, the Morales administration is fulfilling its pledge to the social movements that put them in power, to create a nation that is more just, that is dedicated to creating opportunities for all of the people as opposed to a small group of privileged citizens.

The Morales government recognizes that it is in uncharted waters, that it is new to this kind of power and learning as it goes. It is engaging powerful forces that will take time to redirect into a force for right relationship and for the decolonization of every element of authority in Bolivian society—from education to health care to the role of the Church.

Evo faces fierce opposition from the right, led by the wealthy elite of European descent who have lived well under the previous system and refuse to relinquish their former power. This elite is joined by many in the middle class who perhaps had less to gain under the previous system but because of their social status have yet to fully understand the plight of Bolivia's majority who lived for centuries in a society that seethed with racism and economic violence.

From his left, Evo faces a more meaningful critique, and one that could challenge the legitimacy of his government. Some social movement leaders have been raising their voices in recent months to demand that the Morales government more willingly accept criticism and guidance from “the base.” They charge that now in power, Evo refuses their counsel, and treats them as opponents when they raise their voices in concern and critique. They remind him that it is by their authority that he became president, and it is from these movements that he must draw his real power and credibility.

Recent events in which the government acted against, or failed to support, social protests in a coca growing region, a mining community, and in the city of Cochabamba, illustrate the dilemma of a government brought to power by social movements that is trying to effect change as a governmental authority.

Bolivia will continue to negotiate profound tensions across racial and economic lines for years to come, as the shifts imagined by Bolivia's majority cannot be achieved overnight. But whatever the outcome, what is certain is that a paradigm shift is taking place, one that brings new hope and imagination to the country's majority and to movements of people all over the world who are engaged in a struggle for justice and dignity. “We are President,” says Evo, and once people believe that, they are changed forever.

Migration: Legislation to be considered this spring

The following brief alert is circulated by the Justice for Immigrants campaign, a project of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Congress will soon consider comprehensive immigration reform legislation. It is expected that the Senate will consider legislation in late March/early April, with the House of Representatives taking up a bill during the summer months. During March, it will be important to communicate with legislators about what elements are required in a comprehensive immigration bill.

A comprehensive overhaul of the U.S. immigration system should include the following elements: 1) an earned legalization program for undocumented immigrants, regardless of nationality, which includes a path to citizenship; 2) a future worker program (i.e. “temporary” worker program) which includes protections for both U.S. and foreign-born workers with an option for a path to citizenship; 3) family-based immigration reform which reduces family backlogs and waiting times

for family reunification; 4) the restoration of due process protections for immigrants; and 5) policies which address the root causes of migration. Any just and humane immigration bill should contain these basic elements.

Specifically, any legalization program must be workable (easily administered) and achievable (with requirements that are not onerous) and should not divide the undocumented population into groups. Any future worker program must contain worker protections, adequate wages, and a path to citizenship for participants.

Faith in action:

Contact your members of Congress and urge them to support legislation that includes the points listed above. Visit the MOGC website for more resources on this critical issue. Also, consider purchasing “Lives for Sale,” Maryknoll's latest DVD, which deals with the intertwined issues of migration and human trafficking. One hour, \$19.95. Call 800-227-8523 to order.

Thailand: Stubborn insurgency defies government

The leader of Thailand's junta faces a stubborn challenge in the south as a three-year-old Muslim insurgency shows no sign of weakening. Gen. Sonthi Boonyaratkalin said the coup d'etat he launched Sept. 19, Thailand's 18th since World War II, was aimed at fighting government corruption and healing rifts in society. He promised to restore democracy in a year.

However, 28 bombs exploded Feb. 18 in Thailand's southernmost provinces of Yala, Narathiwat and Pattani. The explosions killed eight people and wounded nearly 70. Two schools were also burned.

Fatal shootings and bombings have claimed more than 2,000 lives and injured even more since the insurgency began in the three provinces, which border Malaysia. The area was an independent Malay sultanate until it was annexed by Buddhist Thailand in 1902.

Sonthi, 59, came under criticism from human rights groups after the junta dissolved Parliament, banned large political gatherings and imposed an interim constitution. Human Rights Watch says Thailand's 1997 constitution guaranteed a wide range of human rights. It says the junta's interim charter is too vague, stating only that "the human dignity, rights, liberty and equality of Thai people, which have been protected in accordance with Thailand's tradition in the democratic government with the king as head of state, shall be protected by this constitution."

Meanwhile, the government says it might allow wider application of Muslim Sharia law in the three southern provinces to help stem the insurgency. Prime Minister Surayud Chulanont made the announcement Jan. 24 to Thai diplomats and ambassadors to Muslim countries. The three provinces already observe the traditional Muslim law in some family issues, such as divorce.

As violence continued, however, the military extended emergency rule in the south for another three months. Emergency rule, which was to have ended in January, allows the state to detain suspects without charge for 30 days in the three southern provinces.

Killings in the south have increased in recent months despite peace building efforts by the military government. On Jan. 18 two Buddhist villagers, 43 and 45, were shot and killed. On Jan. 10 a 39-year-old Muslim female teacher was shot to death in Pattani. Two days earlier death claimed a teacher who had spent eight

months in a coma after she was taken hostage and beaten at a school in Narathiwat.

The violence has seriously affected education among the predominantly ethnic Malay-Muslim population. About 65 teachers and 10 students have been killed in the three provinces, and more than 100 schools – seen as easy targets representing the government – have been burned. Last November all 944 government schools in Patani, Yala and Narathiwat were temporarily closed after a string of arson attacks and shootings left two teachers dead.

Human Rights Watch says many ethnic Thai teachers have been shot in their classrooms and their lodgings. Insurgents have ambushed both teachers and security patrols trying to convoy students safely to their schools. Teachers have also been held hostage in exchange for the release of insurgent suspects from government custody.

To date, 60 percent of the victims of the violence in the south have been civilians, including government employees and local officials, according to a study released by the Thai Journalist Association and Prince of Songkhla University. Sixteen percent of the victims have been police, and 12 percent soldiers. Even religious figures have not been spared. Buddhist monks in Narathiwat decided to stop taking alms after a bomb ripped through a column of monks, along with the soldiers guarding them, Oct. 22.

Militants' leaflets claim the southern border provinces are not the land of Buddhist Thais, but a religious conflict zone that must be divided between Muslims and infidels. According to the leaflets, only force can liberate the so-called "Islamic Land of Patani" from what the insurgents call the Buddhist-Thai occupation.

Last November Prime Minister Chulanont publicly apologized to residents of the south, admitting they had legitimate grievances against the government. He promised to investigate complaints from the Muslim population about corrupt, abusive or inept government officials.

However, the government might not be going far enough. Brad Adams, director of the Asia division at Human Rights Watch, says neither side in the conflict is paying enough attention to human rights. In his view, failure to address human rights issues only adds to the growing hostility, making peaceful conflict resolution through dialogue "an impossible goal."



South Korea: Free trade opponents fear job loss

Opponents say a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) between the U.S. and South Korea should be scrapped based on the negative results of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1993. Nevertheless, leaders of both countries hoped an eighth round of talks March 8-12 in Seoul would result in an agreement. They say the FTA would provide more jobs and cheaper goods in both the U.S. and South Korea, whose annual trade tops \$70 billion.

The 1993 NAFTA agreement led to the loss of more than one million high-paying manufacturing jobs in the U.S., according to the Economic Policy Institute in Washington, D.C. Unemployment also rose six percent in Mexico, and 1.5 million Mexican farmers had to leave the land because they could not compete with cheap U.S. corn imports. Dr. Ki-woong Lee, chairman of the Department of Agriculture Economics at Sunchon National University, says the proposed FTA would similarly force as many as 140,000 South Korean farmers to give up their livelihood.



The proposed agreement covers many areas of trade, but its provisions on rice trample particularly sacred ground. The Korea Policy Institute in Los Angeles explains that much of South Korea's culture is based on customs that arose in an agrarian society. Consequently, it says, South Koreans "protect indigenous agriculture and support measures that they view as preserving South Korea's national heritage."

South Korea's 3.5 million farmers comprise 7.5 percent of the population, and most of its rice is grown on small to medium-size farms. The U.S. has 435 million acres of land under cultivation, compared with 4.2 million acres in South Korea. From 1995 to 2004 the U.S. paid rice farmers an average subsidy of \$140,000 – more than the total income of the average South Korean farmer.

The Korea Policy Institute says South Korean farmers are wary of the example of Haiti, which was largely self sufficient in rice production. In 1986 the country was pressured to lift its trade barriers, and cheap rice flooded in from the U.S. Within a decade Haiti was importing 196,000 tons of rice at a cost of \$100 million per year, and Haitian rice production essentially disappeared.

The proposed U.S.-South Korea FTA also covers trade in other areas including automobiles and pharmaceuticals. South Korea exported more than 73,000 cars

and light trucks to the U.S. in 2005, capturing 4.3 percent of the U.S. market. The U.S. exported about 5,800 vehicles for a little more than three percent of the South Korean market. Ford, General Motors and Chrysler have long complained about such an "imbalance," citing South Korea's "discriminatory" use of tax, tariff and non-tariff barriers to protect its automobile industry. There are decidedly fewer "complaints," apparently, about the fuel efficiency of South Korean vehicles as a possible factor. Nevertheless, as a precondition to starting FTA talks, South Korea in November 2005 relaxed exhaust fume standards that Detroit's "Big Three" saw as impediments to South Korean market share.

South Korea boasts low-cost universal health coverage. Care itself is largely administered by the private sector, with 90 percent of its doctors and most of its hospital beds being private. As in many countries, the South Korean government supports the domestic production of generic drugs to help contain costs. U.S. negotiators are pushing to extend the expiration date for patents on new drugs, arguing that it is necessary to help pharmaceutical firms recover the high cost of research. However, pharmaceutical multi-nationals reportedly spend two to three times as much on marketing and administration as they do on research and development. FTA opponents fear that, since extending the patent expiration on drugs would delay the development of generic substitutes, the cost of health care in South Korea would rise, opening the door to those who seek to privatize the entire South Korean health care system.

The Bush administration hoped for an FTA agreement in March in Seoul to speed approval in the U.S. Congress under so-called fast track legislation. This process allows lawmakers 90 days to review a proposed agreement before they vote it up or down. As this authority will expire on July 1, U.S.-South Korea negotiations must conclude by April 2.

U.S. labor unions fear a repeat of the 1960s, when U.S. firms moved to South Korea to take advantage of workers' six-day work weeks, low pay and high productivity. Lee Hae-Young of Hanshin University in Seoul says South Korea's economic benefits from the FTA would accrue largely to four conglomerates with interests in the electronics, digital technology, automobile and textile industries. That hardly sounds like a formula for more jobs and cheaper goods for all, as promised by both governments.

Australia: Church seeks justice for Aboriginals

The Church in Australia is speaking out on behalf of the country's Aboriginals, who suffered historic wrongs – including stolen wages and stolen children – through policies of state institutions. “One of the longest lasting effects of the non-payment of wages has been the pauperization of whole Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across generations,” says the Australian Catholic Social Justice Council. The ACSJC advocates a national forum to help set the record straight and try to make amends.

An Australian Senate committee is examining the underpayment of hundreds of millions of dollars in wages to Aboriginals who worked under state government-controlled schemes from the 1890s to the 1980s. Pope John Paul II expressed the Church's concern in 1986 during a visit to Alice Springs when he said, “Christian people of good will are saddened to realize – many of them only recently – for how long a time Aboriginal people were transported from their homelands into small areas or reserves where families were broken up, tribes split apart, children orphaned and people forced to live like exiles in a foreign country.”

The ACSJC provides an overview of the issue in its background paper “Stolen Wages – An Opportunity for Justice?” The text can be found at www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au.

Historian Ros Kidd says Aboriginals in Queensland were paid as little as 31 percent of the wages paid to whites. Wages and savings went directly to government agents – usually police protectors – in a system so fraudulent that thumb prints were required in 1904 and again in 1921. Cheating was still rampant, however, and there is evidence the government itself raided Aboriginal monies. The advocacy group ANTaR (Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation) estimates that in Queensland alone as much as \$500 million was lost or stolen from Indigenous families.

“Because we hold so much detailed and incriminating evidence, Queensland leads the way in the fight for justice over stolen wages,” Kidd says. For example, in 2002 the state government appropriated \$55.4 million for anyone whose finances had been controlled. “But this is an insult,” Kidd says. “It is only \$2,000 for people between ages 45-49, and \$4,000 for those aged 50 and over.” In four years – the application period has now expired – only half of the 16,400 expected claimants applied, and the state awarded just \$20 million.

In Australia's Northern Territory (NT), Kidd says, “Between 1910 and 1957 the NT chief protector was legal guardian of all Aboriginal children under 18 years; hundreds of children were sent to town compounds and government stations and then apprenticed out. While apprenticed boys were free from 18 years of age, after 1918 unmarried girls and women were controlled till death; they could be sent to work for no wages and had no rights over their own children.”

Elsewhere, in New South Wales Aboriginal boys and girls over 14 could be sent to training homes and eventually onto stations and domestic service. Victoria's Aboriginal Protection Act regulated where people could live, work and have contact with their children. In South Australia Aboriginal children deemed “neglected” could be placed in industrial schools and apprenticed to work. In Western Australia children as young as five could be signed on as servants.

One reason offered for removing Aboriginals from their homelands was that it was for their own benefit and welfare, the ACSJC says. “But the proceeds of Aboriginal wages were spent maintaining people on reserves and missions where the basic needs of life were often unmet,” it says. “Substandard health care, education, food and shelter were often hallmarks of institutional life.”

In view of the historical injustices in many areas of life, advocates for Australia's Aboriginals insist that a distinction be made between strict repayment of lost pay, and compensation for other wrongs such as social, cultural or physical abuse. For example, ANTaR says separating children from their families had a profound effect on Aboriginals' attachment to the land as well as on their spirituality, language, and family and community functioning. These abuses, it says, have contributed to poverty, poor health, inadequate housing and significant overrepresentation in juvenile justice and adult prison systems.

“The taking of wages often occurred through the actions of the state ... in the collective name of the Australian people,” the ACSJC says. “It can also be remedied in the collective name of the Australian people.”

There is much to be remedied. As international human rights lawyer and former federal judge Marcus Einfeld puts it, “We stole their land. We stole their children. Now we admit to stealing their money, too. Is there anything left to take?”

Iraq: U.S. invasion unleashed torrent of refugees

While U.S. audiences view televised images almost nightly of car bombings and other violence in Iraq, a related human tragedy has only recently begun receiving more attention in this country – what Refugees International calls the fastest-growing refugee crisis in the world.

At least two million Iraqis have fled their country's internecine warfare, mostly to Jordan, Syria and Egypt. Another 500,000 Iraqis are displaced in their own country. "I can't live in Baghdad any more. It's turned into a city for dead people, and I'm not ready to have my children grow up as orphans," says Asam Rifaat, a criminal lawyer who planned to leave Iraq with his family.

Iraq's neighbors have been welcoming. Jordan, for example, has admitted more than 750,000 Iraqis, pushing its population up nearly 13 percent. Syria is hosting one million Iraqis, or about five percent of its population. By contrast, the U.S. accepted only 202 Iraqi refugees in 2006 and planned to do the same this year, even though many of the refugees risked their lives and their families' lives to assist the U.S. military in Iraq.

Only in mid-February did the Bush administration, coming under heavy international criticism, agree to allow 7,000 Iraqi refugees into the country this year. The announcement marked a departure from U.S. policy, under which only about 600 Iraqi refugees have been admitted to the U.S. since the occupation began nearly four years ago. The administration also announced it would contribute \$18 million to the UNHCR (Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees) to help those who are refugees or displaced due to the conflict in Iraq.

Unfortunately, many Iraqis who found sanctuary in neighboring countries still face monumental challenges. Most of their host governments consider them visitors, not refugees, and do not allow them to work. Medical services for Iraqis in Jordan are limited to emergency care. In Syria, medical services were free to Iraqis until 2005; now they must pay. Iraqi children may attend government schools in Jordan on a space-available basis, but a headmaster has the final say in whether to admit a student. Iraqi children may attend public school in Syria, but many families cannot afford the cost of school uniforms and supplies.

Some Jordanians and Syrians are beginning to

resent the presence of the large number of Iraqis in their midst. Some residents of Amman say the Iraqis are to blame for a doubling or even tripling of property prices and for pushing prices up for many other commodities. A similar feeling is growing in Damascus, where rents have doubled even in poor areas.

This criticism is not entirely fair, however. For example, many professional Iraqis fled to Jordan after the First Gulf War in 1991 and after the U.S. invasion in 2003, investing billions of dollars in the local economy. As current price increases make life more uncomfortable for their hosts, earlier contributions Iraqis made to the economy seem to have been forgotten.

Nevertheless, there are indications in Syria and Jordan that patience with the influx of Iraqi refugees is wearing thin.

Until recently Syria granted Iraqi refugees – about 50 percent of them children – three-month permits that were renewable by simply crossing the border. Now, on a case-by-case basis, refugees will receive 15-day permits, after which they must leave the country for a month before returning.

The Amman-based *Jordan Times* commented Feb. 12 that Jordan historically hosted thousands of Palestinian refugees with financial support from the international community. "For some reason, Jordan is now left to cope alone with the heavy burden of accommodating tens of thousands of Iraqis," the daily said. "This happens at a time [when] Jordan has to adjust for losing the Iraqi market for exports and the Iraqi oil, which, for 12 years, was flowing at favorable terms."

UNHCR head Antonio Guterres has said the ongoing crisis in Iraq has sparked the largest population shift in the Middle East since the mass movement of Palestinians after the State of Israel was established in 1948.

Nevertheless, as long as the violence continues in Iraq, many will continue to leave. "Iraqis who are unable to flee the country are now in a queue waiting their turn to die," as one Iraqi journalist puts it.

Meanwhile, U.S. willingness to admit many more Iraqi refugees is long overdue. After all, the U.S. triggered the refugee crisis with its invasion of Iraq, and its new policy can help to alleviate at least one humanitarian aspect of that conflict. As many as 3,000 of Iraq's brightest citizens flee their country daily. Devastated by war and increasingly bereft of its best talent, what sort of country do we hope to bequeath to its survivors?



Little boy at al Huda refugee camp/Photo by Linda Panetta, www.opticalrealities.org

Iraq: Advocates ask economic aid, better oversight

Increased economic assistance to Iraq and closer oversight of funded programs would help promote the country's peaceful development, two advocacy groups believe. NETWORK, the National Catholic Social Justice Lobby, and the Education for Peace in Iraq Center (EPIC), cite challenges such as the flight of Iraqi professionals, young people's need for education and jobs, and the millions of Iraqi refugees and displaced. The background and proposals below, prepared for the 110th Congress and the administration, are taken from the paper "Peacebuilding and Economic Development in Iraq" recently drafted by NETWORK and EPIC. For more information, visit www.networklobby.org

Stability in Iraq "requires rapid economic development that creates meaningful jobs and opportunities for the people of Iraq," the paper says. It refers to the conclusion of one study that a two percent increase in job satisfaction among Iraqis in Baghdad correlated to a 30 percent decline in attacks on allied forces and a 17 percent decrease in civilian deaths from sectarian violence.

The paper also says large no-bid contracts awarded to U.S. corporations have led to corruption and poor performance, while community-driven projects conceived and executed by Iraqis have been highly successful. These programs "promote stability through the rebuilding of diverse communities by bringing together local stakeholders from diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds," it says. "Conflict management and negotiation skills training is essential to their success."

Unemployment in Iraq is estimated to be 40 percent or higher. The paper says Iraqi factories are not functioning and employment opportunities are minimal. An estimated 40 percent of Iraq's professional class has fled the country since 2003. In the health sector alone, more than 2,000 doctors have been kidnapped or murdered, and 12,000 doctors have fled the country.

"The latest UN estimates are that 3.8 million people have been displaced; two million have fled to surrounding countries, while another 1.8 million have abandoned their homes for safe areas within Iraq," the paper says. "Monthly 50,000 Iraqis are fleeing their homes."

The neediest are most at risk. Infrastructure is inadequate to meet the needs of widows and orphans, the paper says, "and their numbers are rapidly growing due to a disproportionately high rate of violent deaths among men. Many Iraqis are traumatized daily by

violence and ethnic conflict."

NETWORK and EPIC summarize their proposals to Congress and the administration in terms of funding, programs and oversight:

Funding

- Increase U.S. economic assistance to Iraq to \$5 billion per year, as recommended by the Iraq Study Group Report (Recommendation 64). Regardless of when troops are redeployed or withdrawn, economic assistance must continue. Direct more U.S. assistance through multilateral channels and agencies, including NGOs.
- Restore full funding of the Community Action Program (CAP) and the Marla Ruzicka Iraqi War Victims Fund (Marla Fund) and support expanded operations. Ensure the Marla Fund has adequate geographic coverage in all areas and provinces affected by the conflict.
- Provide funding to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian groups as recommended by the Iraq Study Group Report (Recommendation 66).
- Engage the international community to aid in the funding of all of the above proposals.

Programs

- Plan and implement peace building strategies that include training of Iraqis in conflict management and dealing with trauma.
- Ensure that Iraqi civil society is actively engaged throughout the economic development process and fund Iraqi NGOs that address humanitarian needs of Iraqis.
- Ensure that there is an increased focus on the different needs of the different regions in Iraq and create and fund peace building/development programs that reflect those diverse needs and circumstances.
- End the over-reliance on national ministries for delivering services, rebuilding infrastructure and promoting economic recovery. Direct more aid to provincial directorates and other Iraqi agencies with proven track records.
- Develop mechanisms for safely reintroducing Iraqi professionals back into the country. Medical personnel, including trauma specialists, are most urgently needed.

Oversight

- Develop oversight mechanisms that can ensure performance of funded programs by expanded use of SIGIR (Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction).

World Social Forum 2007: Declaration on Debt

Some 66,000 people from around the world gathered in Nairobi from January 20-25, 2007 for the seventh World Social Forum (WSF). Well over 1,000 separate workshops and events were planned under the theme "Another World Is Possible: People's Struggles, People's Alternatives."

Initiated in Porto Alegre, Brazil as an alternative to the annual meeting of the world's financial elites in Davos, Switzerland, the World Social Forum has gathered an amazing and creative challenge to the assumptions of neo-liberal globalization and systemic injustice with its emphasis on social justice, international solidarity, gender equality, peace and ecological justice.

Africans describe the WSF using a Kiswahili expression: a global *Jukwaa*, "an international platform, an open meeting place where groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism, but engaged in building a planetary society, centered on the human person, come together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action." (from the Porto Alegre Charter)

Organizers promised that the WSF in Nairobi would be an opportunity to showcase Africa and her social movements; Africa and her unbroken history of struggle against foreign domination, colonialism and neo-colonialism; Africa and her rich heritage of natural wealth, cultural, linguistic and ethnic diversity; Africa and her reputation for embracing communities from around the world; Africa and her contributions to world civilization; Africa and her role in the quest for another possible, more progressive global human society.

It succeeded to some extent, but no meeting of that size is without its challenges – especially the challenge of unmitigated inclusion. For too many people from the slums of Nairobi, registration fees and transportation costs were prohibitive. At the same time, the dominance of big international nongovernmental organizations, the very visible presence of private corporations like Celtel and of expensive food concessions was disconcerting.

The results of the Nairobi World Social Forum were, nevertheless, important. The following declaration on debt cancellation is one good example, but probably the most important fruit of the huge gathering was in the countless encounters of people from every corner of the world and the exchange of great ideas, large and small, for making another world possible.

Declaration on Debt

1. ... Together, we the undersigned participants of the World Social Forum are determined to achieve an end to debt domination. ... Indebtedness is still robbing the peoples of Africa, Latin America and Asia of their rights – their rights to independence and political autonomy, as well as to health, education, water and all the other essential goods and basic services which should be available to all.

2. The debt crisis is not just a financial problem for the countries of the South. It is also a political problem that is based on and reinforces unequal power relations: debt continues to be used as an instrument of control, through conditions attached to loans and debt relief. It is an instrument of leverage used by lender countries and lender-controlled institutions to: aid the entry of their transnational corporations; enforce their foreign policy options and military and invasive strategies; secure favorable trade deals; and promote resource extraction from recipient countries.

3. It is also a responsibility of the North: their reckless, self-interested, irresponsible and exploitative lending has fostered this crisis, and their imposition of policies has deepened it. ...

We also recognize the role of unaccountable and corrupt governments of the South in creating this debt. These governments must make restitution for their theft from and exploitation of peoples in the South.

4. We applaud the Norwegian campaigners, working in partnership and solidarity with Southern movements, who succeeded in convincing Norwegian government to be the first lender to cancel debts on the grounds of its own irresponsible lending. We know that their years of hard work have brought the Norwegian government to this position. We call on the G8 governments and other lenders to look at the debts which they are claiming, to question the justice and legitimacy of these claims, and to recognize their own responsibility. All lenders – governments, financial institutions and private companies – must take up this challenge.

5. We know that our strength lies in the commitment and determination of social movements, campaigns and individuals working in solidarity around the world. ... This, over many years, has forced the debt crisis from being an issue that few knew about, and that many governments did not acknowledge, to being a subject of debate around the world. It has also brought successes such as that in Norway, and the realization of official debt audits in Ecuador and other countries. We,

Southern and Northern people's movements and organizations, are determined to work and raise our voices together until our call for an end to debt domination becomes irresistible.

6. ...We assert that the South is the creditor of an enormous historical, social, cultural, political and ongoing ecological debt. This must be acknowledged, and restitution and reparations must be made.

7. We are calling for just economic relations between and within countries. ... We assert the rights of peoples to hold their own governments to account, and call on governments to uphold those debts. We are calling for official and citizens' audits of debt and a

citizens' audit of the international financial institutions. We are calling for systematic social control of public indebtedness. We are calling for debt cancellation without the imposition of conditions by lenders and for restitution and reparations. We stand in solidarity with governments who choose to repudiate illegitimate debt. We are calling for the total elimination of illegitimate, odious, unjust and unpayable debt.

Faith in action:

To read the entire declaration and the actions planned for 2007 in support of its aims, see www.maryknollogc.org

Trade: Policy space in trade agreements

By definition, international trade agreements result in a loss of signing countries' sovereignty. The hope is that this political loss will result in larger economic gains. However, what happens in trade agreements, especially since 1994, is the increasing curtailment of governments' ability to use policies proven to help generate employment and development resulting in decreasing growth rates. These restrictions are especially detrimental both to countries in the global south and to some U.S. state and local governments with much higher unemployment and poverty.

Starting in the early 1980s, when the economic policies now promulgated in today's trade agreements began to be used, growth rates have plummeted in those global south countries. From 1960-1980, real per capita income in Latin America grew by 75 percent, but from 1980-2000, this rate plunged to a mere six percent. (Real per capita income is the average after-tax income after dividing by population. This number is adjusted for inflation to allow comparison across different time periods.) In sub-Saharan Africa, real income per person actually shrank by 15 percent after adopting the policies that trade agreements promote today. Those policies have not produced benefits in the U.S. either; the U.S. has experienced a pathetic 0.28 percent rise in real per capita income since Fast Track was introduced in 1974, despite average productivity almost doubling. (Fast Track is a negotiating tool used by the executive branch whereby Congress loses its authority to amend trade agreements and can only approve or disapprove them.) In fact, the only countries that have had strong growth rates in the last 20 years are the ones that have used policies considered illegal in today's trade agreements (China, India,

Malaysia, Chile, and Vietnam).

Today's trade agreements increasingly affect state and local governments' autonomy. Policies such as prevailing wage laws, local procurement policy, anti-off-shoring measures, food safety protections, land use and zoning laws, environmental and even local tax laws can be challenged through trade agreements signed with no consultation of these governments.

Another central problem with the current trade model is that it locks countries into a development model that is completely unsustainable, heavily dependent on petroleum and aimed at reducing environmental protections. As global climate change progresses, it is clear that governments will have to make significant changes in public policies and institutions if the human race is to survive. To make these changes more difficult is illogical. Countries need to be able to experiment with different policies, but today's trade agreements make any experimentation difficult if not impossible because foreign corporations can challenge these policies through dispute resolution mechanisms.

It is time to find a way to engage in trade without overly restricting democratically elected governments' policy space. Also, severe ecological changes are already starting, requiring new policies which are considered illegal in today's trade agreements. The current Bolivian government recently offered baseline negotiating positions for a trade agreement with the U.S. (see chart on page 18, adapted from the Institute for Policy Studies, www.ips-dc.org) This proposal represents an example of a new kind of trade agreement that benefits trade, but does not unduly undermine democratic structures and decisions.

Bolivia proposal

Current U.S. trade agreements

Investment

- Would allow governments to require that foreign investors guarantee “appropriate technology transfer; utilization of local raw materials and inputs; hiring of national labor and respect for domestic environmental and labor policy.”
- Investor disputes would be resolved “in the framework of the jurisdictions established by the Bolivian Constitution and national laws.”

- Although virtually all successful economies have used such mechanisms in the course of their development, existing U.S. trade deals ban such “performance requirements.”
- With the exception of the U.S.-Australia FTA, U.S. trade pacts signed since 1993 allow foreign investors to bypass domestic courts and sue governments in international tribunals. Investors can even sue over public interest regulations that diminish the value of an investment.

Agriculture

- Would not subject indigenous community and family farmers to free trade rules. This type of farming is valued “for its contribution to the protection of the environment, healthy food systems and cultural diversity.”

- The inclusion of products to be liberalized is based purely on competitive criteria, without considering implications for small farmers, the environment or food security.

Services

- Would “ensure universal access by Bolivians to essential services, including strengthening the regulatory capacity and provision of essential services by the public sector.

- Advocates full liberalization of public services while restricting requirements being placed on new service providers.

Intellectual property rights

- Would “guarantee access to affordable generic medicines and access to medical treatments.”
- Would ban patents on plants, animals and living materials to help protect the country’s “wealth of traditional knowledge and rich biodiversity.”

- Increase monopoly rights of pharmaceutical firms and limit access to affordable generic medicines.
- Require governments to make best efforts to provide patent protection for plants and maintain patents granted for plants and animals.

National treatment

- Would allow Bolivia to maintain “Buy Bolivian” programs and other mechanisms to strengthen domestic capacity.

- Require national treatment and most-favored nation treatment, undercutting the authority of governments to promote domestic development.

Reducing inequality

- Like the approach to integration within the EU, the Bolivian proposal includes proactive measures to reduce inequality. It calls for a “funding mechanism for concessional credits and/or grants to strengthen Bolivia’s productive base and market systems so that Bolivian producers could be able to take practical advantage of new U.S. market access.”

- Existing agreements assume that trade and investment liberalization alone will lift all boats. To the contrary, inequality has been on the rise in virtually all countries that have pursued these policies, including the United States.

Chart created by Institute for Policy Studies

MOGC core values, priorities for U.S. foreign policy

On the occasion of the installation of the newly elected 110th Congress, the staff of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns prepared the following document, which delinates some of our key issues and our expectations for legislative action. Staff members will visit with selected Congressional offices during the second week of March, in conjunction with the annual Ecumenical Advocacy Days (www.advocacydays.org).

Peace and security

We believe that traditional notions of national security have committed our country to failed policies, giving rise to deeper insecurity. We propose a redefinition of security in terms of basic human needs, rights and responsibilities. Human security, as opposed to national security, guarantees access to food, clean water, healthcare, education, meaningful work and full employment. It recognizes the right of people to participate in important decisions that affect their lives and respects the integrity of creation. Human security would emerge from a “globalization of solidarity” that promotes international cooperation to prevent conflict from becoming violent. Human Security must become the basis from which the United States engages the world.

The war in Iraq – End the war in Iraq

The U.S. war in Iraq was morally unacceptable from the beginning. Maryknoll leadership opposed it formally in 2003, again in 2005 and we oppose it now with even greater vigor. Much of what we feared has come to pass. The cost of war in terms of human life and suffering for the people of Iraq, for our own service people and their families, and for others involved in the conflict is unconscionable. War in Iraq has destabilized the Middle East, causing enormous loss of life and destruction in the region and increasing the threat of terrorist attacks throughout the world. The ecological damage is tremendous. The burden of war is always carried by the poor and vulnerable as military expenditures steal funds from social programs in the U.S. and other countries around the world.

U.S. troops must be withdrawn from Iraq quickly and in a manner conducive to the well-being of the people of Iraq. U.S. bases in Iraq and secret prisons in the region must be permanently closed. The U.S. should pay for reconstruction in Iraq, repairing damage caused by the invasion, occupation and years of U.S.-led sanctions and providing jobs for Iraqi workers and companies, not

windfall profits for U.S. firms.

Torture – Repeal the Military Commissions Act

The U.S. Congress must take steps immediately to repudiate torture in all its forms and under any circumstances. The Military Commissions Act passed by Congress in September 2006 must be repealed. The prison complex at Guantanamo should be closed.

U.S. multilateral cooperation – Support the globalization of international solidarity

Terrorism, weapons proliferation, hunger, global warming, resource depletion, migration, disease (especially HIV/AIDS) and other challenges transcend national boundaries and require cooperative action. The United States must join other nations in reducing greenhouse emissions; supporting the International Criminal Court; banning anti-personnel landmines; ratifying the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and halting traffic in small arms and light weapons

Military spending — Invest in conflict prevention and nonviolent conflict resolution

U.S. military spending exceeds \$500 billion per year, while spending for nonviolent means of conflict prevention and resolution is miniscule. Excessive and wasteful military spending has robbed from people in need, both in the United States and overseas, and built armed forces that cannot address the primary threats today. Investment in nonviolent, diplomatic and policing capacities to respond to threats and to protect threatened peoples deserves Congressional support.

Economic justice

Maryknoll missionaries live on the margins of society, in slums, rural villages, refugee camps, indigenous communities – dynamic places where people work hard not only to survive but to live a life of dignity. We have witnessed the disastrous impact on local communities of economic decisions made by well-meaning people in the U.S. and elsewhere, and we see it happening again as people in increasingly centralized positions of power shape the global economy, placing profit and growth before human and ecological well-being.

Corporate accountability – Support an enforceable code of conduct for transnational corporations

Transnational corporations are major players in the global economy – 51 of the world's 100 largest economies are corporations. Yet no enforceable corporate codes of conduct exist to hold them accountable for any negative impact of their business practices on the community of life, including human beings. In the United States and around the world corporations should be obligated to treat workers justly, to pay living wages, to protect the integrity of creation and to respect local culture and laws. The right of the private sector to benefit from patented products or business investments must be subordinated to the right of all people to human security.

Debt – Cancel illegitimate and odious debt and all debt for more countries

Many impoverished countries carry an overwhelming burden of foreign debt. Often the interest already paid far exceeds the original debt, much of which is illegitimate – from loans to corrupt governments, for failed projects or for extravagant weapons purchased from creditor country companies. Commitment to debt cancellation for more countries is essential.

Trade – Oppose Fast Track; change objectives of U.S. trade negotiations

As people of faith we believe that international trade should uphold the dignity of the human person and the integrity of creation, yet we see trade agreements that force an unsustainable and inhumane economic model on other countries. Furthermore, respect for the integrity of creation demands that we find ways to reduce, not increase, the distance that products travel from production to consumption. Trade agreements should be more limited in scope and provide policy space for countries to develop local and regional production capacities and markets. There is no one set of rules that will be adequate for all countries.

We oppose fast track legislation. The U.S. Constitution places commerce under the jurisdiction of Congress. Trade agreements must be negotiated in a transparent manner with opportunity for voices of the people and their representatives to be heard at every stage.

Social justice

Many Maryknoll missionaries understand well the consequences of living in poverty or extreme poverty like more than half of the world's population. They live

in communities with poor schools, nonexistent public health care systems, little infrastructure, no jobs and few social safety nets. Millions and millions of people are on the move – migrants seeking to escape grinding poverty, political violence or religious persecution. Too often the reality in which they live has connections to policies designed in or supported by the U.S. Our Gospel values call for a more generous and just response to the sick, the hungry and the dispossessed.

HIV/AIDS – Guarantee all people access to essential medicines for HIV-AIDS, TB and malaria

We support the continuation of PEPFAR and major, unconditional U.S. funding for AIDS-related programs around the world. Such programs should be developed in consultation with community-based organizations responding to the HIV-AIDS pandemic. In addition, the interpretation of Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) provisions has interfered with providing life-saving drugs to people suffering with diseases including HIV/AIDS in epidemic proportions around the globe. Compulsory licensing should enable the production of cheaper generic drugs, making pharmaceuticals more accessible to poor people. Unfortunately, provisions included in recently negotiated U.S. free trade agreements with countries and regions in the developing world have seriously hampered countries' ability to issue compulsory licenses and to secure medicines for people who need them.

Hunger and food sovereignty – Draft a U.S. Farm Bill that supports small farmers in the U.S. and around the world

U.S. policy assumes that increased food production will eradicate hunger. In reality, there is enough food to feed everyone in the world. Distribution problems and lack of access to good, nutritious food often play far greater roles in hunger and malnutrition. Ironically, increasing production has resulted in plummeting agricultural prices thus undermining the livelihoods of the 70 percent of the world's poorest that are farmers. The development of large-scale, capital-intensive, export-oriented agriculture often undercuts food self-sufficiency. We believe that all countries should be able to determine their own agricultural policy based on the needs of their people and communities.

At the same time, it is essential to remember that U.S. farm policy, especially subsidies, can have a tremendous negative impact around the world. The 2007 Farm Bill should reinstate some of the supply management policies including price floors, conservation programs

and commodity reserves. Congressional investigations should examine the increasing concentration in agricultural markets and enforce anti-trust laws.

Migration/immigration – Pass comprehensive immigration reform

Every day, in every corner of the planet, women and men walk across national borders to find work, shelter or safety, or to rejoin their families. To be just and effective, U.S. immigration law should recognize and address poverty and conflict as root causes of migration, which is a world-wide phenomenon. U.S. immigration law must provide a path to legal work for future workers, a path to citizenship for the current undocumented population and a way to expedite family reunification. Trade and investment policies must be coherent with immigration policy and border protection policies must be consistent with humanitarian values.

Ecology: Sustainable communities of life

We believe that U.S. dependence on oil from either foreign or domestic sources causes dangerous competition, pulls us into potential conflict with other countries and threatens the environment that sustains us all. The very survival of our community – all of creation, including human beings – is threatened by war and other forms of destructive violence, by poverty and degradation, by a global economy that is not ecologically sustainable and by the lifestyle of a wealthy minority that consumes the

future. Natural resources essential to life, such as water and air, are being poisoned or privatized. Movement toward a new way of life in right relationship with the rest of creation and new national priorities for protecting the integrity of creation must be urgent priorities.

Energy policy – Take serious steps to decrease U.S. dependence on fossil fuels, dramatically reduce production of greenhouse gases, and promote research, development and the use of renewable sources of energy

Base U.S. energy policy on values of environmental justice, creation stewardship and intergenerational responsibility. A recent *New York Times* (1/06/07) editorial wrote, “Saturating the atmosphere with greenhouse gases is like loading the dice in a dangerous game.” We agree.

Water – Oppose economic policies that promote the privatization of water in impoverished countries

Water is essential for all life. Clean, affordable water is part of the global commons and has long been recognized as a basic human right. Without it, life cannot be sustained. The management and distribution of water for profit by private companies – including in the U.S. – puts at risk the access of poor people and their communities to a resource that is fundamental to life. The intense promotion and sale of bottled water is highly profitable for a few corporations. This practice, which is unsustainable and unjust, often depletes local water supplies, robbing local communities of a basic resource.

Integrity of creation: Climate Change 2007

The United Nations recently published the findings of the Paris Conference for Global Ecological Governance, entitled “Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis.” The research for this paper was conducted by the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP). The importance of this document lies in the quality of its scientific data and analysis supported by related tools, leading scientists from 113 countries involved in the process to agree that warming of the climate system is unequivocal and that there can be little doubt that this is caused by humans.

The report summary for policy makers states,

“Recent progress in understanding how climate is changing in space and in time has been gained through improvement and extensions of numerous datasets and data analyses, broader geographical coverage, better understanding of uncertainties, and a wider variety of measurements. Increasingly comprehensive observations are available for glaciers and snow cover since the 1960s and for sea level and ice sheets since about the past decade.”

In February, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon sent a letter in response to the Paris document, acknowledging the findings of the report and stating that climate change will be one of his top priorities as Secretary General. He also wrote, “Much more must also be done

by governments, business and civil society. The world needs a more coherent system of international environmental governance. We need to invest more in green technologies and smarter policies. And we need to focus in particular on the needs of the poor, who already suffer disproportionately from pollution and disasters.”



During the second week of February, Sir Nelson Stern, author of the “Stern Review on the Economics of Climate Change,” met with President Bush and had the opportunity of engaging U.S. legislators regarding the conclusions of his report. The report states that “our actions over the coming few decades could create risks of major disruption to economic and social activity, later in this century and in the next, on a scale similar to those associated with the great wars and the economic depression of the first half of the 20th century.”

The economic lens through which the Stern Review frames climate change may be the motivating force required for the president, U.S. legislators and the business community to take global warming more seriously than in the past, in order to protect their financial and economic interests.

An interesting response to the Stern Review from the British business community was offered by Sir Richard Branson, an entrepreneur who plans to invest \$3 billion in fighting global warming. A February 13 *New York Times* article refers to Branson’s specific offer of a \$25 million prize to anyone who can remove a billion tons of carbon dioxide per year from the atmosphere.

While green technological improvements are clearly important and necessary, the fact of global warming calls for diverse responses. Seeing the present climate change threat merely as a market opportunity misses the larger understanding that has been impinging on human consciousness during recent decades, beginning with the 1970s publication of the Limits to Growth. This in turn, over recent decades, has become intertwined in human consciousness with the image from outer space of Earth as a single, fragile entity.

Today, our most fundamental experience, scientific understanding and spiritual insight confirm that all things are interrelated. All that we do affects everything else, both in the present and in the long term. The values that guide our actions must flow from this principle. Ecology, including the environment, is the functional

expression of deep penetration into the nature of the universe and, as such, is referred to as transformational. Transformational ecology is a way of seeing reality that comes to us precisely at the same time when the old way of doing business becomes unsustainable, empowering us toward choices that respect the integrity of creation. Establishing a new set of relationships for interacting with Earth is consistent with human history; as new ways of understanding

reality have become evident throughout the course of time, prior generations of humans have adapted. The overarching challenge of the present time is the configuration of a global value system that will under gird our ethical choices toward a truly sustainable future enhancing all forms of planetary existence.

Throughout the world there are outstanding people making inspiring choices and commitments that align with these thoughts. One such person is Dr. Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Nobel Peace Prize recipient, a powerful speaker who understands and eloquently expresses the scientific facts of global warming. Aside from this, Maathai has found her deepest expression of integral connection with Earth by planting trees – one tree at a time with all its attendant follow-up. The tree is a gift to the next generation – the child of tomorrow will enjoy its beauty, its fruit, its shade, the water it holds and the oxygen it recycles. Following Maathai’s example, thousands of Kenyan women, in like manner, take responsibility for re-greening their country, a country where the forest cover has been reduced to two percent of its former condition.

Summarizing, the recent UN Report on Climate Change tells us that human caused global warming is unequivocally serious. The response of Ban Ki-moon points out the interlocking effects of environmental degradation and calls for global environmental governance. The Stern Review calls for immediate economic adjustments in order to mitigate the predictable harsh consequences of climate change. Innovative technologies are one form of response. In addition, knowledge regarding the nature of reality calls for the application of intelligence, creativity and tenacity in all domains and aspects of life, in order that the present transformational moment may not be channeled into a narrow market oriented outlet deprived of the telescoping capacity and power of comprehensive ecological understanding, re-examined values and sustaining vision.

“Disaster capitalism:” Recovery by corporations

For more information on the growing trend toward corporate-based recovery efforts, see the Focus on the Global South website, www.focusweb.org.

Until the 1980s, the rebuilding of societies after large natural disasters or conflicts had been assumed principally by UN agencies and the Red Cross/Crescent. Their goals were simple – immediate medical help for victims, reduction of displacement of people, restoration of social structures and reconstruction of physical infrastructure. Since then, however, the U.S. government and the World Bank, heavily influenced by transnational corporations, have taken the lead role in disaster relief and post-conflict reconstruction with significantly different goals. Reconstruction has become the most recent method to force neoliberal economic changes on countries around the world. In her book, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, Naomi Klein identifies “the rise of a predatory form of disaster capitalism that uses the desperation and fear created by catastrophe to engage in radical social and economic engineering.” She calls it the Disaster Capitalism Complex. The final objective is no longer to return things to as they were before, but to make future foreign investments easier by removing people and/or legal barriers.

After the Sumatra tsunami of December 2004, most fishing villages on the coasts were destroyed, but instead of the government helping families move back to their homes, they have barred the repopulation of beaches and sold or given the land to hotels and shrimp fisheries. The Indonesian government passed a law banning people from rebuilding their beachside homes and has relocated them in military-like villages miles from the beach. In an article in *The Nation* magazine, Klein writes, “The coast is not being rebuilt as it was – dotted with fishing villages and beaches strewn with handmade nets. Instead, governments, corporations and foreign donors are teaming up to rebuild it as they would like it to be: the beaches as playgrounds for tourists, the oceans as watery mines for corporate fishing fleets, both services by privatized airports and highways built on borrowed money.” Public services are being privatized and turned over to international corporations and NGOs.

Most of the billions of dollars donated by people around the world to help the rebuilding after the tsunami flows in a “near-perfect circle, from Western treasury through Western aid agency/corporation to Western consultant, without ever even touching the people it is

allegedly being appropriated for,” writes Klein. “Foreign consultants live high on cost-plus expense accounts and thousand-dollar-a-day salaries, while locals are shut out of much-needed jobs, training and decision-making. Expert ‘democracy builders’ lecture governments on the importance of transparency and ‘good governance,’ yet most contractors and NGOs refuse to open their books to those same governments, let alone give them control over how their aid money is spent.”

The rebuilding of post-war Iraq is perhaps the best example of taking advantage of a hobbled society to bring about huge economic policy changes; what the *Wall Street Journal* called “one of the most audacious hostile takeovers ever.” When the U.S. turned over “sovereignty” to Iraq in the summer of 2003, it issued a series of orders called the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) Orders. In one of these orders, number 39 on foreign investment, the U.S. was able to impose investor protections (the “wish list of international investors” according to *The Economist*) that it has not been able to obtain through trade negotiations with any other country. Additional CPA Orders suspended tariffs and other taxes on imports; reduced tax rates on corporations and individuals from 40 percent to a flat rate of 15 percent (a worker will pay the same tax rate as multibillion dollar corporations); and introduced a very strong intellectual property regime completely different from what existed in Iraq before the war. At the same time, the U.S. adviser to the ministry of industry and minerals announced the privatization of 48 state-owned enterprises.

The experiences of Iraq and Indonesia are being repeated in the rebuilding efforts of countries from the Great Lakes region in Central Africa to Chad, Cameroon, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Haiti, Nicaragua and many other countries. Often the local population is completely unaware of the power grab going on in its country. As Klein points out, “The reconstruction industry works so quickly and efficiently that the privatizations and land grabs are usually locked in before the local population knows what hit them.”

In order to assure that wars and natural disasters are not used by corporations to strengthen their position in rebuilding countries, all forms of disaster relief should be carried out by the Red Cross/Crescent and UN and must include those affected in the decision-making process about reconstruction. This will be a slower process, but one that will result in more people and environment-friendly results.

Debt: G7 must cancel illegitimate claims

Eight nongovernmental organizations in the G7 countries released recently a damning new report, "Skeletons in the Cupboard," which argues that if the G7 is serious about corruption, good governance and transparency, it should apply these principles to the past.

The report highlights cases of illegitimate debts being claimed by the G7: Canada, France, Germany, Japan, Italy, the United Kingdom and the U.S. These loans were the result of irresponsible lending. Money was lent to regimes G7 governments knew to be corrupt or repressive to buy political allegiance, or to help rich country companies implement projects that were not viable.

The report argues that some debts should not be paid. Creditors should bear a large part of the responsibility for extending loans irresponsibly and negligently.

In October 2006, Norway unilaterally and without conditions agreed to cancel US\$80 million in illegitimate debts owed by five countries: Egypt, Ecuador, Peru, Jamaica and Sierra Leone. The claims originated from the Norwegian Ship Export Campaign (1976-80), under which Norway exported 156 vessels and ship's equipment totaling NOK3.7 billion to 21 countries. In announcing the cancellation, Norway's government admitted that the campaign represented a development policy failure and that, as a creditor country, Norway has a shared responsibility for the debts that followed. (See *NewsNotes* November-December 2006)

As "Skeletons in the Cupboard" was released, Gail Hurley, Policy Officer at EURODAD said, "[C]reditors need to be held accountable for the bad decisions they have made and share responsibility for mistakes. Northern politicians are obsessed about corruption and ensuring that taxpayers' money is well-spent and not wasted by corrupt elites. These are valid concerns. But our governments have no credibility unless they apply these principles to the past. It is not acceptable for the G7 to preach good

governance to developing nations while at the same time collecting debts that were corruptly made."

"Skeletons in the Cupboard" includes examples of illegitimate held by each of the G7 countries:

- Germany exported warships to Indonesia during the Suharto regime despite concerns over how the vessels would be misused in internal conflicts.

- Japan supported the development of an aluminum project in Indonesia designed to serve the interests of Japan's aluminum exporters and not benefit Indonesians.

- Italy sold three hydroelectric turbines to Ecuador when only two were needed and despite evidence that the hydropower plant was not viable and had devastated the local environment and communities.

- France was complicit in the stripping of Congo-Brazzaville's oil wealth by French banks. ElfCongo benefited from loans from France's development agency despite widespread concern that oil was disappearing.

- The United States supported the development of a nuclear power station on an earthquake fault line in the Philippines.

- The UK government guaranteed a commercial bank loan for a UK company which was providing consultancy services to Kenya at over five times the price the services should have cost.

- Canada supported the construction of the Yacyretá dam in Argentina and Paraguay despite widespread allegations that the military dictatorships were siphoning off billions of dollars from the project.



The Yacyretá dam in Argentina and Paraguay

Each case-study argues that these debts are illegitimate and should be investigated immediately via public and impartial audit processes. The report urges the G7 to follow Norway's bold lead and accept shared responsibility for the debts.

For a copy of the full report and additional information, go to EURODAD's website at <http://www.eurodad.org/> or to the website of Jubilee USA, www.jubileeusa.org.

UN: Preparations made for CSW meetings

On February 15, a roundtable panel was held in preparation for the 51st session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), scheduled for February 26 – March 9. This session's theme is the elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child, in accordance with the Commission's multi-year program of work for 2007-2009. For more information on the CSW and its meetings, go to www.unifem.org/campaigns/csw/2007/.

Carolyn Hannan, director of the Division for the Advancement of Women, opened the meeting by asking the audience to honor the memory of Angela King, a woman of great courage, who over many years, devoted her life and energies to the cause of gender equality, and in cooperation with ongoing UN agencies, was tireless in her efforts to bring about peace and security that only could be realized through gender equality between men and women.

Hannan cited the 1995 Beijing Declaration's "Platform for Action" as a source for on-going discussion and noted that government policies related to discrimination against the girl child are subject to review. She highlighted the risk factors related to girls in the areas of poverty, forced marriages, cultural genocide, lack of educational opportunities as issues still not sufficiently addressed or implemented. Governments, through their policies, must do more to insure that discrimination against our youth in families, in schools, and elsewhere be eliminated.

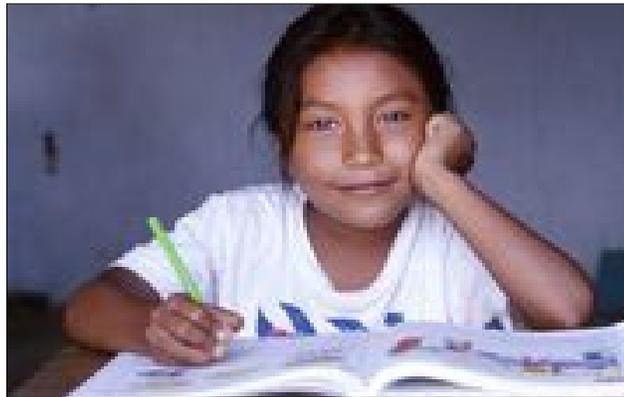
Joyce Kafanabo, Minister Plenipotentiary at the Permanent Mission of the United Republic of Tanzania to the United Nations, was next introduced. Kafanabo gave examples from her experiences as a youth in Tanzania. Although the Tanzanian constitution states that both male and female are equal, this is not played out in the home, at school, or in marriage. The expectation for girls is that they be domestic servants, subservient to males in the family. To use a metaphor, the girl is a stove, and the boy a lion – a protector, an inherited decision maker, the privileged one. At school, when girls and boys acted as leaders of their respective groups, the boy always had the final decision. The curriculum of studies offered arts for girls and science for boys to

enforce the tradition that girls skills must be geared only for the home. Female fetuses are often aborted, and if a wife does not give birth to a boy after several pregnancies, she is abandoned by her husband. On a more positive note, although tradition still remains strong in Tanzania, a deeper awareness is surfacing through a project entitled "Gender Transformation." Girls can now be part of remedial classes in engineering on first and second levels, but still must compete on upper levels for textbooks needed for study.

Kafanabo concluded her presentation by remarking that although awareness and progress has been fostered through the efforts of many, the conversation must continue. Men must become part of the solution before equality can be realized.

Ted Bunch, vice president of "ACT Men," an NGO committed to ending violence against women, was the next speaker. He affirmed that in our society discrimination against women is similar to that explored by Kafanabo. Men are socialized from birth to believe they are the dominant gender; this false belief is rooted in culture, tradition and social norms. Analysis has shown that male privilege continues to benefit even good men, and the present need is for all men to be educated in order for social change to be realized. Not only are white males privileged, but men of color also are part of the patriarchal system that discriminates against women and girls because of their gender. Bunch concluded by emphasizing that men are primarily responsible for ending violence against women. To do that, well-meaning men – men who, for the most part, don't see themselves as part of the problem – need to get involved.

Hannan summed up the session by highlighting some of the main points: Values, attitudes and language in cultures lead to discrimination against women and the girl child. The task before us is to change attitudes through better quality of education on all levels, offering more opportunities for girls' empowerment, socializing the boy child at an early age to understand girl-boy equality, and most importantly to change values, attitudes and behavioral patterns of men.



AIDS: Church leaders call on Novartis to drop case

The following is a recent press release from the Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance, a broad international network of churches and Christian organizations cooperating in advocacy on global trade and HIV and AIDS. For more information, see <http://www.e-alliance.ch/>

“People, not profits, must be at the center of patent law for medicines,” states Archbishop Desmond Tutu. Tutu is referring to the court case being brought by the Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis against the Indian government to challenge its patent law. Many civil society campaigners are pointing out that India’s law contains elements that help put people before patents, but Novartis is trying to force a change in the law.



Novartis has been refused a patent for a cancer medicine, Gleevec, on the grounds that the medicine was simply a new form of an old medicine with a trivial change, something which cannot be patented under Indian law. Novartis is not only seeking to overturn this decision but also to challenge the law itself and the way in which India has implemented international trade rules on intellectual property.

In other countries where Novartis has obtained a patent for Gleevec, it is sold at US\$2,600 per patient per month. In India generic versions of the drug are sold for less than US\$200 per patient per month.

Rev. Dr Ishmael Noko, General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation, declared “Novartis’ proclaimed mission is ‘to ease suffering and to enhance the quality of life’. But this case is not about prioritizing life. It has every appearance of protecting wealthy corporate interests at the expense of the health of millions for whom access to affordable medicines is a matter of life and death.”

A ministerial declaration of the World Trade Organization in 2001 affirmed that international trade rules on patents “...can and should be interpreted and implemented in a manner supportive of WTO members’ right to protect public health and, in particular, to promote access to medicines for all.”

India has designed a patent system that aims to reward genuine innovation and protect public health. India’s law says that it is not possible to patent “the mere discovery of a new form of a known substance which does not result in the enhancement of the known efficacy of that substance.”

Bishop Yvon Ambroise, of the Commission for Justice and Peace of the Catholic Bishop’s Conference of

India asks “How can Novartis justify asking for the right to patent changes to a medicine that brings no new benefit? We support practices that encourage and reward real innovation and progress in improving the health of people in need. We condemn practices that trivialize innovation for the sake of maximizing corporate profits.” Bishop Yvon continued to say that the Church is in solidarity with the millions of people in need in the country and elsewhere, and is committed to the right to health, especially for the poor and marginalized.

The decision in this case will affect access to thousands of other medicines in India, including anti-retroviral (ARV) medicines to treat HIV. Generic manufacture of older, first-line ARVs has made prices affordable, but as resistance and adverse reactions develop there is a great need for access to newer second-line drugs that are still very expensive.

Prawate Khidharn, General Secretary of the Christian Conference of Asia, explains that “Patent applications have been made in India for many second-line ARVs. However many of the applications are based on existing chemical entities. They are, therefore, ‘new forms of known substances’, just like Gleevec.” He emphasized the importance of the ruling in this current court case: “If Gleevec cannot be patented in India, it should not be possible to patent many second-line drugs either.”

Medicines manufactured in India are imported by many developing countries. Over half the medicines currently used for HIV and AIDS treatment in developing countries come from India.

“This case is not just about patenting one drug in India,” points out Albert Petersen, chair of the Ecumenical Pharmaceutical Network, who recently returned from Bangkok, “The result of the court case will be of great importance for the future of Thailand’s health program. The fear is that Thailand won’t be able to get the generic versions from India any more if Novartis wins. And it will take time until the Thai pharmaceutical industry is able to fill that gap.”

Bishop Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, emphasizes the principle at stake. “This case is about commitment to the right to health. It is about the responsibility of governments to protect the health of their citizens and the right of countries to give priority to public health over the private interests of corporations.”

Resources

- 1) **Interfaith Worker Justice, 2007 National Conference:** This annual conference will be held **June 16-19** in Chicago at North Park University. The program highlights will include skill-building; fundraising; student organizing; workers' rights centers; new sanctuary movement; a religiously inspired action to demand justice for low-wage workers; a banquet to celebrate our victories and build energy for the struggle ahead; and more. Contact Interfaith Worker Justice for registration information, www.iwj.org; phone: (773)728-8400.
- 2) ***The Little Book on Conflict Transformation:*** Written by John Paul Lederach, an internationally recognized figure, this book offers a hopeful and workable approach to conflict. Conflict transformation is a new perspective, which looks past the quick solution, and focuses on the deeper context, content, and structure of the relationship of the people involved. Conflict transformation, says Lederach, requires "both solutions and social changes." Lederach, now a scholar with the Joan Kroc Institute of Conflict Studies at the University of Notre Dame, writes out of his years of work in Central America, in Somalia, in Bosnia, and in Ireland. ISBN: 1-56148-390-7. Paperback, 64 pages. \$4.95. Call 800-762-7171 or visit the Little Books website at www.goodbooks.com.
- 3) ***Communities without Borders: Images and Voices from the World of Migration:*** In this new book, drawing on his experience as a photographer and a journalist and also as a former labor organizer, David Bacon portrays the lives of the people who migrate between Guatemala and Mexico and the U.S. He takes us inside these communities and illuminates the ties that bind them together, the influence of their working conditions on their families and health, and their struggle for better lives. His interviews with this first wave of guest workers are especially relevant in light of the current political focus on guest-worker programs as a model for reforming immigration, an approach with which Bacon strongly disagrees. Throughout *Communities without Borders*, Bacon emphasizes the social movements migrants organize to improve their own working conditions and the well-being of their enclaves. *Communities without Borders* makes an urgent appeal for understanding the human reality that should inform our national debate over immigration. Paperback, 248 pages. \$29.95. ISBN: 978-0-8014-7307-4. Contact Cornell Press for ordering information: 607-277-2211; www.cornellpress.cornell.edu/
- 4) ***African perspectives on China in Africa:*** Edited by Firoze Manji & Stephen Marks. China's involvement in Africa has provoked much debate and discussion. Is China simply the latest imperial power out to exploit Africa's natural resources, putting its own economic interests above environmental and human rights concerns? Or is China's engagement an extension of "South-South solidarity," enabling African countries to free themselves from the multiple tyrannies of Western debt, aid conditionality, unfair trading rules and political interference? In this collection of articles, independent African analysts and activists present social, cross-continental perspectives on Chinese involvement in Africa. The essays demonstrate that although there is no single "African view" about China in Africa at a continental level, the authors are united in the belief that Africans must organize their side of the story, together, in their own interests, and in the interest of social justice for all. ISBN: 978-0-9545637-3-8; 194 pages; approximately \$24. Order at www.fahamu.org
- 5) **"Out of the Wilderness: Building Christian Faith and Keeping God's Creation":** To help celebrate God's gift of land and wilderness, the National Council of Churches (NCC) announces a new worship and study resource, "Out of the Wilderness: Building Christian Faith and Keeping God's Creation." Developed by NCC's Eco-Justice Programs, this resource contains background information and theological reflections on wilderness, sermon starters, a bulletin insert for a themed worship service, suggestions for adult and youth study activities, ideas for personal and congregational action and service, and links to other resources. Copies of "Out of the Wilderness" can be downloaded for free on NCC's Eco-Justice Programs' website (www.nccecojustice.org/resources.html—additional resources addressing a range of environmental topics are available here, too), or copies can be obtained by contacting NCC Eco-Justice Programs, 110 Maryland Avenue, N.E., Suite 108, Washington, D.C. 20002, info@ncccojustice.org.