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

Ark, rainbow covenant are sent for all

And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh." (Genesis 9: 12-15)

As the International Decade for Action "Water for Life" (2005-2015) gets underway, we again open *NewsNotes* with a reflection on water, underscoring one of the Millennium Development Goals: to halve the number of people without access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation by 2015. As people of faith committed to life we cannot ignore the fact that billions of people on our planet have no access to clean water or proper sanitation. Nor can we ignore the severe ecological damage made evident by recent water-related disasters.

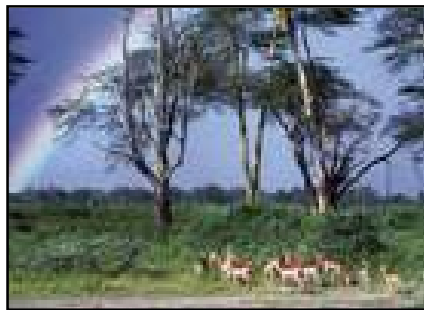
While no living creature can survive without the blessing of life-giving water, we have in the past year also witnessed water's destructive side – from the Indian Ocean tsunami that killed nearly 300,000 people to recent mudslides and floods that buried or displaced whole communities in Central America, to Hurricanes Katrina and Rita that wreaked havoc in New Orleans and on the Gulf Coast of the United States.

Much has been written about the lessons learned from these devastating events – about the vulnerability of impoverished communities and, at least in the U.S., the racism that contributes to poverty and exclusion. But the additional message sent by rampaging waters is about broken relationships between human beings and the rest of creation.

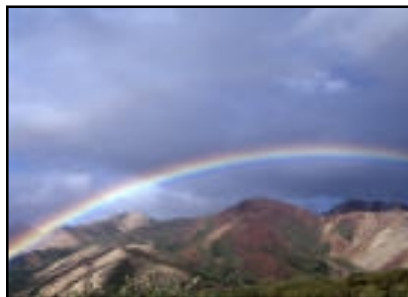
While arguments abound that natural cycles periodically bring huge storms and extreme weather to

populated areas, there is ample evidence that climate change - producing, for example, elevated tropical water temperatures - is a factor in the spawning of killer storms. Even more apparent are the consequences of human settlements that destroy the balance of nature in a given location. Indian Ocean islands that have preserved reefs and indigenous vegetation along the coast fared much better in the tsunami than those stripped of natural protections. Tourist facilities and other forms of development that destroy local or regional

bionetworks may themselves survive but will place the coast around them at risk. The concentration of land that forces indigenous farmers in Guatemala to plant on near-vertical hillsides or subsistence farmers in El Salvador to plant in flood planes leaves nearby communities extremely vulnerable. The location of growing population centers on river banks and beaches almost guarantees their periodic destruction.



"Noah and his sons and his wife and his sons' wives with him went into the ark to escape the waters of the great flood. Of clean animals and of animals that are not clean, and of birds and of everything that creeps on the ground, two and two, male and female, went into the ark with Noah" (Genesis 7: 7-10)



We live in a world in which too often only the wealthy and the powerful find a place in the ark. But the ark and the rainbow covenant were offered to all of creation. Any program for reconstruction in the wake of these disasters has to be socially just - with impoverished people and minority groups given full voice in future plans, access to safe and secure housing, and meaningful participation in a dignified life – as well as ecologically just, giving full protection to the integrity of creation.

(See "Killer Hurricanes and Climate Change" in this issue of *NewsNotes*.)

Bolivia: NED and the presidential election

With elections scheduled for December 4, polls in Bolivia indicate a tight race between three presidential candidates. Two months out, Evo Morales Ayma, candidate for the Socialist Movement Party (MAS, Movimiento Al Socialismo) leads in polls with close to 30 percent of the vote, while candidates representing the traditionally conservative parties both trailed with 24 to 26 percent. The following article is written by Tim Provençal, a Maryknoll lay missionary in Bolivia.

The U.S. State Department, through the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), spends millions of dollars each year influencing political situations in Latin America and around the world. Because the NED is a private, nonprofit organization, it can promote U.S. foreign policy free from congressional oversight and without implicating government agencies. Despite its status as an independent private organization, nearly its entire budget (98 percent in 2004) comes from a direct congressional appropriation through the State Department (\$60 million in 2005, \$80 million projected in 2006); three senators and one House member currently sit on its board of directors.

The NED distributes grants, mostly to four “core institutions”: the Center for International Private Enterprise (CIPE, an affiliate of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce), the International Republican Institute (IRI, the international arm of the Republican party), the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI, the international arm of the Democratic party), and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS, the international arm of the AFL-CIO).

The biggest issue in the election is the future of Bolivia’s oil and gas reserves. Under former president Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada, sovereignty over Bolivia’s hydrocarbons was sold to multinational oil companies and royalties due to Bolivia were slashed from 50 percent of market price to 18 percent. The majority of citizens want to



Evo Morales, candidate for Bolivia's presidency.
Reuters photo

nationalize Bolivia’s hydrocarbons, and a Morales victory in December would be a step in that direction. While full nationalization is unlikely, the prospect of seeing South America’s two largest oil producers (Venezuela and Bolivia) in the hands of populist socialist presidents has alarm bells ringing in Washington.

The NED has funded projects in Bolivia through all four of its core institutions over the past 15 years. It has funded big business lobbying campaigns, mostly through CIPE, and civic education campaigns through the IRI and NDI. In 2004, it made a grant of \$128,825 to CIPE to the Santa Cruz Chamber of Industry, Commerce, Services and Tourism (CAINCO) to lobby the government on Bolivian law 27040, which regulates the procurement of goods and services for state programs. In anticipation of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas, this law opens the doors to transnationals to bid on state projects and it declares that in international trade contracts, the trade agreements would have precedence over Bolivian law. Multinational oil companies, Petrobras (Brazil), Repso-YPF (Spain) are represented on the CAINCO board.

The IRI, in a joint project with the U.S. Aid for International Development (USAID), funds a civic education program in Bolivian high schools. In 2005 they planned to train 2,500 social studies teachers and distribute 20,000 copies of their manual *Towards a Democratic Culture: Authority and Responsibility*. The material emphasizes citizens’ responsibility to respect civil authority in a functioning democracy. One

way for the U.S. to teach Bolivian youth to respect civil authority would be by answering the Bolivia Supreme Court’s demand that the U.S. extradite ex-President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada to stand trial for the massacre of 80 civilians in October 2003. He currently lives in the U.S.

The U.S. government is by far the largest source of “soft money” in Bolivian politics. Rather than strengthening democ-



Bolivians protest government policies over natural gas resources

racy, this money destabilizes Bolivian society by imposing neoliberal economic policy and sabotaging democratic elections that don't embrace that policy. In reality, Bolivia's socialist movement is a legitimate, grassroots political movement whose growing popu-

larity is driven not by Venezuela's Hugo Chavez or Cuba's Fidel Castro, but by the economic devastation caused by 20 years of neoliberal market reform programs.

Faith in action:

Please contact the following members of Congress who sit on the boards of the NED, the IRI or the NDI. Write to tell them to stop using taxpayer dollars to undermine democratic processes in Latin America and around the world. Contact information for Congress is listed on page 2.

NED Board of Directors: Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN); Sen. Bill Frist (R-TN); Sen. Paul Sarbanes (D-MD); and Rep. Gregory Meeks (D-NY)

IRI Board of Directors: Sen. John McCain (R-AZ), chair of board; Sen. Chuck Hagel (R-NE); Rep. David Dreier (R-CA); and Rep. Jim Kolbe (R-AZ).

NDI Senior Advisory Committee: Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT) and Rep. John Lewis (D-GA)

Brazil: Bishop fasts for water rights

On October 6, Msgr. Luiz Flávio Cappio, bishop of the northeastern city of Barra, ended his 11-day hunger strike, which was held in protest of the transposition of water from the Sao Francisco River, the second most important in Brazil, to four northeastern states suffering from chronic drought. The bishop, who was pressured by the Vatican to end the strike, decided to cease the protest after receiving a letter from President Lula, which promised to extend the time for public debate and Lula's personal commitment to try to pass an amendment through the Congress for \$300 million over 20 years to revitalize the ailing river. The letter was delivered by Jaques Wagner, former minister of labor and employment who now heads CDES, the presidential council on economic and social development.

During the hunger strike, over 200 people around the world participated in solidarity hunger strikes coordinated by the Jubilee Brazil campaign. The National Conference of Brazilian Bishops initially expressed solidarity with Msgr. Cappio's fast, but changed its position after the Vatican sent a card asking the bishop to end the hunger strike.

The Sao Francisco River holds an important place in the history and minds of people in the northeast of Brazil, similar to the Mississippi River in the United States. Msgr. Cappio, a Franciscan who has served poor communities on the banks of the river for over 30 years, opposes the transposition for two reasons: the river is already in danger due to overuse and ecological deterioration and would be virtually destroyed if more water was siphoned from it, and because the project

would not benefit the poor in the region who suffer with droughts, but would be used to benefit primarily large agribusinesses and shrimp-growing conglomerates. As the bishop tells his parishioners, "An anemic doesn't give blood." Though there are serious problems with access to water for poor families in rural areas, researchers show that of the water that would be diverted, 70 percent would go to irrigation, 26 percent to large cities, and only four percent to the rural poor.

The Sao Francisco Hydrographic Basin Committee, composed of 60 representatives from the three branches of government, large water users and civil society, has held numerous public forums throughout the northeast, all of which have rejected the transposition project. The World Bank has also evaluated that the project is not economically viable, would not reach the rural poor, and that most water problems in the area could be resolved by much cheaper methods. Despite these assessments, the project remains very popular with northeastern politicians, many of whom have links to agribusiness in the area.

The day after meeting with the bishop, Jaques Wagner, who delivered President Lula's letter, negated the terms of the letter and said to the press that the water transfer would continue. When asked to comment on this, Msgr. Cappio said, "If he said that, he is not telling the truth... I trust in the honor of the word of the government... [but] if the government does not honor its word, I will return [to the hunger strike] and this time not alone, but with all the Truka nation (an indigenous tribe) and thousands of people with me will start a new hunger strike."

Brazil: Weapons sales referendum fails

Over 92 million Brazilians voted in the world's first referendum about the sale of small arms, responding to the question, "Should the sale of firearms and ammunition be prohibited in Brazil?" Earlier this summer, a survey showed that 81 percent of Brazilians favored the ban, but by October 23, the day of the vote, the referendum failed with a "no" vote of 64 percent. The way the opposing campaign was run may have affected the results more than anything else. Joanne Blaney, a Maryknoll lay missionary in Brazil, contributed to this article.

The referendum was called for as part of the Disarmament Statute that was passed in December 2003 by the Brazilian Congress in response to the country's overwhelming problem of handgun violence. According to UNESCO, Brazil has the highest number of people killed by firearms in the world, even compared with countries at war. Every 13 minutes a person is killed by a gun in Brazil. The majority of victims are children and adolescents. In 2003, almost 40,000 Brazilians were killed, an average of 108 each day, one every thirteen minutes.

The statute already has had notable effects on public safety – it initiated a "Campaign to Voluntarily Turn in Firearms" which began in July 2004 and has collected more than 400,000 firearms to date. It also integrates various databases of small arms in the country to help control the spread of weapons; increases controls on buying weapons (including raising the minimum age to 25); and prohibits carrying arms in public. Since the implementation of these measures, the number of victims hospitalized with gun wounds decreased by 11 percent in Rio de Janeiro and seven percent in São Paulo city.

In the Congressional debates around the 2003 disarmament statute, an overwhelming majority of legislators favored placing a ban on the sale of firearms and ammunitions, but the gun lobby was able to convince enough legislators to put the question to the public through a referendum. Brazil's gun lobby is mostly gun producers, not owners (as in the U.S.), who were able to use the referendum's marketing war to reverse the initial 81 percent support for an arms ban.

With support from the gun producers, the campaign for a "no" vote was able to outspend its adversary by almost three to one (R\$1.4 million, or US\$609,000, compared to R\$476,000, or US\$207,000 spent by the ban's supporters).

Directed by a marketing professional, the "no" campaign played to people's fears of crime and the inability of the government to control it. During the campaign, they used the image of Nelson Mandela, associating his struggle for liberty to the right to bear arms, even though he supported the Gun Free South Africa disarmament movement. Mandela protested and demanded that his image not be used.

The NRA denies any financial ties to the campaign, but helped form its strategies. Many NRA materials were translated into Portuguese and distributed; one of the arguments was the right to carry a gun, which is not guaranteed by the Brazilian constitution.

The "yes" campaign, on the other hand, was organized by a loose coalition of various NGOs, social movements and churches, and lacked hard-hitting images and a strong, central message. Rubem Cesar Fernandes, one of the organizers, affirmed that their marketing was not as effective and lacked a coordinated command center. "We didn't have the experience of a publicity campaign like them, who also had more money," he lamented. As one São Paulo journalist wrote, "the results of the referendum depended more on chance and marketing than on rational decisions."

"The financial and marketing power of the gun lobby and the gun industry in Brazil won in the end," said Rebecca Peters, director of the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA). "We are disappointed at this lost opportunity to take a dramatic stand against gun violence, but we know the country's strict new guns laws will continue to help save lives."

One positive outcome of the referendum was that Brazilians have gotten a taste of direct democracy and are talking about possibilities for other referendums. Social movements on the left have called for years for a referendum around questions like debt payment and free trade accords; they think that this referendum should help in getting other issues like these onto the table. It is unclear whether this air of direct democracy in Brazil will flourish; if it does, hopefully votes will be decided not by marketing abilities, but rather on deeply felt convictions.

Faith in action:

To learn more about efforts to curtail small arms, contact the International Action Network on Small Arms (IANSA), www.iansa.org or write to: IANSA, Development House, 56-64, Leonard Street, London EC2A 4JX, UK.

Panama: Canal expansion proposed

The Panamanian government appears to be planning a massive expansion of the Panama Canal in order to accommodate larger cargo ships, though it has not released much information to the public about those plans. Many concerns exist about the actual necessity for such an expansion, its possible social and ecological costs, and how the country will pay for the endeavor.

Those in favor of the expansion say it is necessary for the Canal to not become obsolete. The Canal's two "lanes" are operating at 93 percent capacity and are expected to reach their limit by 2012. In addition, 10 percent of the world's ships are currently unable to pass through the narrow waterway and an estimated 30 percent of the global fleet is projected to be post-Panamax size by 2020. (Ships known as Panamax are of the maximum dimensions that will fit through the locks of the Canal.)

Opponents of the expansion, including Fernando Manfredo, deputy canal administrator in the late 1980s and early 90s, question whether there really is a need to widen the Canal. Predicting future traffic rates through the Canal is a difficult task and estimates vary widely. Only four percent of world maritime traffic passes through the Canal today, based on trade routes which are not very flexible. Manfredo doubts that the big ships will in the end displace many of the Panamax-sized container ships, in part because the large and efficient seaport and land transport systems needed to profitably handle the larger post-Panamax vessels exist in very few places and are incredibly expensive to develop. In addition, tolls at the Canal would have to rise as much as 50 to 80 percent (some have even suggested 400 percent) from the time that construction began, increases that could drive some shippers toward using other routes that are becoming more affordable.

If the Canal is widened, the most likely form would be through the construction of a third lane which would provide capacity for the post-Panamax ships which hold up to 150,000 tons of cargo, more than double the largest ships that pass today. The biggest challenge may not be constructing the new lane, but finding the water to operate them. Each operation uses 55 million gallons of water that is spilled, and never recovered, from the Gatun Lake. Demand for water will increase as the nearby population grows and the number of passages through the Canal increases.

The most likely solution would be to construct another lake, the Occidental Basin, by damming the

Trinidad, Siní, Indio and Chagres rivers – a move that would displace up to 40,000 small farmers and indigenous peoples. Many of these people have formed the Farmers Coordinator Against the Dams (CCCE, by its Spanish initials), which, together with Caritas Panama, has been the most vocal opposition to the Canal widening.

The dams could also be used for energy generation, but World Bank studies have shown that they would be extremely inefficient, costing almost 10 times more per kilowatt generated than is recommended for Bank projects. It would also flood over 900 hectares of land for every megawatt of energy produced, far over its recommended limit of 50 hectares per megawatt.

Another possible solution to the water problem is the construction of gigantic tubs next to the Canal that would recycle some of the water, cutting water usage to 40 million gallons for each ship crossing. But there are concerns that this could bring salt water into Gatun Lake, causing unknown ecological effects and increasing an already expensive project with the energy costs of pumping water from the reservoirs into the locks.

CCCE and Caritas Panama argue that 40-60 percent of the water that runs into Gatun Lake currently escapes into the Atlantic, and that with an investment of \$400 million, infrastructure could be built to retain that water. This option is three times less expensive than building the Occidental Basin, would provide more than enough water for the widened Canal, and displace no one. But large farm interests have expressed interest in the new basin as a source of future irrigation and permission has been granted to construct the basin through law 44 which quietly passed in the Congress in the final hours of the administration of former president Pérez Balladares in August 1999, so many think that this will be the most probable choice.

Estimates for the cost of the Canal widening vary from \$6 to \$10 billion; none of the corporations who use the Canal, nor their host countries, have offered to help with the cost, a fact that many Panamanians point out as unjust. If the government pays all the costs, even at \$6 billion, the effect on Panama's debt would be tremendous. Currently, Panama has one of the highest debts per capita in the world. Economists estimate that with a \$6 billion loan from the World Bank at seven percent interest and a doubling of receipts from the Canal, the debt payment would take all of the receipts, and possibly more, for at least 30 years. As one author

pointed out, “This dramatic increase in our external debt means that Panama will not be able to invest in schools, hospitals and highways during a large part of the 21st century.”

Despite these serious concerns, many consider the expansion of the Canal a done deal. The government has promised a referendum on the topic, but has yet to set a date for it.

Additionally, the government has said it would

compensate those forced off their land by the Occidental Basin, but most of the families displaced by the original construction of the Canal were never compensated and few expect to be today. Valeria Martinez, who lives in the area that would be flooded, has started to save for the \$60 she’ll need to build another one-room hut on higher ground for her two children and four grandkids – not easy on \$50 a month.

Guatemala: National Police files discovered

About 30,000 National Police files detailing decades of abuse were discovered in mid-July in an old police ammunition depot. Staff members of the Human Rights Procurator’s Office (PDH) were attempting to make the National Civil Police (PNC) move explosives stored in the depot to a place farther away from the population when by chance they stumbled upon thousands of bales of files that appear to be a complete record of the activities of the notorious National Police, disbanded after the end of the 36-year civil war. The following report is from the Guatemala Human Rights Commission and Latin America Press (August 10, 2005).

With titles like “Disappeared People 1989” and “Kidnapped Children 1993,” the files could end the search for some victims of the war. Buoyed by the discovery, investigators from the Human Rights Procurator’s office then searched police headquarters and found more files.

Mario Polanco, director of the Mutual Support Group (GAM), said, “We believe that these documents contain information that will allow us to find out what happened to hundreds of disappeared people.”

“This is one of the most important discoveries in recent times,” Human Rights Procurator Sergio Morales told local media. “We have found files about missing persons. The documents contain . . . a book with information about children who were disappeared and to whom they were later given.”

The director of the PNC, Erwin Sperisen, said, “We do not have anything to hide. They are old files. If [the Human Rights Procurator] had asked for them we would have given them to him, and if there is something abnormal he can make a formal complaint to the Public Ministry.” Sperisen said the PNC was keeping its files in that place because of its tight budget.

The archive, which runs from 1930 through 2002, is so huge it could take some five years to sift through.

GAM offered to scan and photograph all of the documents to create an electronic database. Human rights activists fear that the files could meanwhile fall into the hands of those interested in destroying them.

“The state’s obligation now is to protect these documents, so we can start working on them as soon as possible,” said Frank LaRue, Presidential Commissioner for Human Rights.

“The information,” said Iduvina Hernández, of Security in Democracy, “should be protected by and at the disposition of the Human Rights Procurator’s Office.”

The files currently remain where they were found, in four dank buildings infested with bats and cockroaches. Government rights workers are keeping a 24-hour vigil over the archives, concerned that they might be stolen by groups who do not want their contents revealed.

According to Latin America Press, more than 15 PDH investigators are currently reviewing and digitizing the documents, which could contain key evidence against those responsible for torture, kidnappings, massacres and extrajudicial executions.

Faith in action:

Despite advances in human rights made since the end of war, threats and intimidations still play a role in Guatemala. One of the more recent cases is under investigation by Amnesty International: Lawyer Romeo Monterrosa Orellana and his family have received a string of death threats, believed to be linked to his work defending peasant farmers against wealthy landowners. Go to the Resource Center on the Americas and search for “monterrosa” for more information: www.americas.org. Also contact the Guatemala Human Rights Commission/USA to learn more about Guatemala and its struggle for justice: www.ghrc-usa.org/Home.htm, or call 202-529-6599.

El Salvador: H. Res. 458 commemorates martyrs

Earlier this year, Rep. Jim McGovern (D-MA) introduced H. Res. 458, which commemorates the lives and sacrifices of Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and Cleveland Lay Mission Team Member Jean Donovan, who were kidnapped, raped and murdered in El Salvador in December 1980. Following is a letter signed by over 80 organizations and religious communities, sent to Rep. Henry Hyde (R-IL) and other members of the House International Relations Committee, requesting their swift efforts to move H. Res. 458 through the House.

As people of faith and leaders of our nation's religious communities, we write to urge you to move H. Res. 458 through the House International Relations committee in a timely fashion.

H. Res. 458 remembers and commemorates the lives and work of Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel, and Cleveland Lay Mission Team Member Jean Donovan, who were executed by members of the armed forces of El Salvador on December 2, 1980.

Through their dedicated witness and untimely deaths in El Salvador, these four women remind us of the powerful gifts of humility, community and faith.

During the early years of El Salvador's tragic civil war, in which over 70,000 civilians eventually lost their lives, Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford worked in Chalatenango, providing food, transportation, and other assistance to refugees; Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and Cleveland Lay Mission Team Mem-

ber Jean Donovan worked in La Libertad, providing assistance and support to refugees and other victims of violence.

Based on their commitment to Jesus' call to service in the gospel, these four U.S. churchwomen dedicated their lives to working with the impoverished people of El Salvador, especially women and children left homeless, displaced and destitute by the civil war.

Now, 25 years after their kidnapping, rape and murder at the hands of Salvadoran National Guardsmen, it is fitting for Congress to recognize the women and their sacrifice and how their example has inspired so many others to answer the call to service. We strongly encourage your support of H. Res. 458, and again urge you to make every effort to move this resolution through the International Relations Committee in a timely fashion.



Faith in action:

Contact your member of Congress and find out if s/he has co-sponsored H. Res. 458. Thank your representative if s/he is already a co-sponsor; if s/he is not, urge him/her to do so, using the letter above as a guide. Also, write to Rep. McGovern and thank him for his leadership on this issue.

Consider holding a prayer service in commemoration of the four women's deaths. Go to the website of the Religious Task Force on Central America & Mexico for a PDF version of the resource packet, www.rtfcam.org, or contact the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns for a hard copy.

From the Maryknoll sisters in Central America after Hurricane Stan ...

At *NewsNotes'* press time, Tropical Storm Beta bears down on Nicaragua. Three weeks ago, Hurricane Stan slammed into Central America, causing flooding and mudslides in El Salvador and Guatemala, killing hundreds and displacing thousands of people, many of whom already lived in dire poverty.

From the Maryknoll sisters in Guatemala: "Here in San Marcos, the River Cabuz split in two and overflowed her banks. Waters from the highlands raged down causing enormous damage in the area of Malacatan ... Entire communities, Verdun and Lima, are no longer on the map ... It is a very difficult situation in that 80 percent of the people of Malacatan are poor; 20 percent suffer extreme poverty ... Phone lines and

electricity were out for the week and the sun refused to shine but the spirit of the people impressed us all. Communities brought in corn and beans. Women cooked and the men organized and distributed food to the needy. The Evangelical community of Malacatan opened its doors to the storm refugees. An ecumenical spirit bloomed ... There is a prayerful spirit of solidarity with the peoples around the world suffering from natural disasters."

Contact the SHARE Foundation, an advocacy organization that focuses on El Salvador, for more analysis on the aftermath of Hurricane Stan: www.share-elsalvador.org, 202-319-5540.

Mexico: Zapatistas' new strategy

Having declared a "red alert" on June 19, the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) proceeded to lay out for Mexicans and for the world a new strategy for building an alternative society from below. Thorough analyses of the Zapatista proposal can be found in Envio (August 2005), quoted in part below, and the SIPAZ Report (July 2005).

In late May and early June an attempt was made by the BBVA-Bancomer Bank to link the Zapatistas to money laundering. A few weeks later Mexico's National Defense Secretariat declared that troops had destroyed 44 marijuana plantations in three municipalities under EZLN control. Both accusations were proven quickly to be false, but immediately thereafter, witnesses reported new troop maneuvers in Zapatista territory.

That set the stage for the late June surprise announcement by the EZLN of a "red alert" throughout its territory. EZLN troops, regional and local leaders and grassroots supporters were summoned for a consultation and invited to express their opinion about a proposed new stage in the struggle. This new stage, EZLN leadership suggested, might involve "risking everything they had achieved and possibly increasing the persecution and harassment against the Zapatista communities."

"At the same time, Subcomandante Marcos issued a letter explaining that all aid received over the years from civil society had been used solely to improve the living conditions in the Zapatista indigenous communities and carry out peaceful initiatives seeking recognition of indigenous rights and culture. None of it had been used to buy arms or make any kind of military preparations."

He said that now it was time to move forward in the indigenous struggle by joining with workers, peasants, students, teachers, women, the elderly and others throughout the country who are resisting the neoliberal model, who are committed to ending injustice and creating a better Mexico, a better world. Marcos was very clear that this new effort did not imply a Zapatista military offensive, that the EZLN would neither attack any government forces nor "maintain any secret relations with political-military organizations in Mexico or any other country. Whatever the Zapatistas do will be done without arms, through a peaceful civic movement, but without neglecting or failing to support their communities."

The EZLN also expressed their solidarity with everyone in the world involved in resistance and struggle. They will look for ways to support these movements in Cuba, Chile, Venezuela, Ecuador, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, Brazil, Europe, Africa, Asia, Oceania and even the United States.

They announced that tens of thousands of their grassroots supporters had been consulted and that 98 percent had approved this new direction, "authorizing the EZLN to undertake a new national and international political initiative."

They intend to launch a campaign for a new constitution that defends grassroots sovereignty and rights, and for "new laws that consider the Mexican people's demands for housing, land, work, food, health, education, information, culture, independence, democracy, justice, liberty and peace."

On July 13, the Zapatistas officially announced the National Campaign with Another Kind of Politics, for a National Program of Leftist Struggle and a New Constitution, which quickly became known as The Other Campaign. They have been very specific in saying that the The Other Campaign will not be an election campaign. Rather, the EZLN is seeking a much deeper national consensus than the results of elections which in Mexico have repeatedly failed to offer any real solutions to the problems and needs of the majority.

"It should be recalled that while the first roundtable in the 1996 talks achieved the yet-to-be implemented San Andres Accords, the government aborted the second roundtable on democracy. And that one was to have been followed by others related to economic policy.

"The EZLN is currently reworking these missing roundtables, this time not with the government but rather with a broad current identified as the new Left. The aim is to build a country that truly responds to the fundamental demands that gave rise to the Zapatista movement in the first place. But this time the discussion will not be limited to Chiapas; it will cover the whole Mexican territory.

"The importance of this new phase of the Zapatista movement is its insistence that the people be taken into account. Respected intellectual Pablo Gonzalez Casanova referred to the Zapatista's Sixth Declaration as a new, creative step taken by one of the most original movements of our times. ... Their project implies that society defines politics, and aims at a social Left. It is cause for renewed hope."

Southern Africa: AIDS decreases food security

Southern Africa is experiencing the primary stages of a food security crisis reminiscent of the early stages of the Niger crisis, which is now causing high mortality rates due to acute hunger. The drought that has hit Malawi, Zimbabwe, Lesotho, Swaziland, and parts of Mozambique and Zambia has disrupted the usual October harvesting season resulting in smaller crops, leading to higher prices and a lower food supply. HIV/AIDS has deepened the effect of the crisis as it fuels a cycle of malnutrition, economic marginalization, and food shortage. The following is taken from online reports by UNICEF and the UN's World Food Program, and was prepared by Noelene Jeffers, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Drought is hastening southern Africa's impending food crisis. However, root causes such as chronic poverty, reliance on maize as the main subsistence crop, chronic malnutrition, a crippled health system, a fractured economy, and the HIV/AIDS epidemic have greatly compounded the effects of the drought.

Malawi has been the hardest hit, with a projected 4.2-4.4 million Malawians expected to suffer from food shortages. Rising maize prices across the region are severely inhibiting access to this staple subsistence crop. In Malawi, maize prices have risen 70 percent and the increased prices prevent Malawians from relying on markets as an alternative to subsistence farming. There are no widespread reports of deaths, but severe malnutrition has increased the risk of contracting other infectious diseases by 50 percent. The situation has progressed so badly that for Malawi, World Food Program (WFP) reports that it "still needs US\$76 million to feed up to 2.9 million people before the next harvest in April/May 2006. Regionally, WFP requires US\$185 million to feed up to 9.2 million hungry people." Niger and greater West Africa experienced a similar food shortage a year ago which gradually deteriorated into a massive food crisis where thousands lost and continue to lose their lives due to acute hunger.

This approaching food crisis is different from southern Africa's last famine, in 1992, because the current crisis is occurring under the cloud of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. HIV/AIDS has not only contributed to the current food insecurity but perpetuates and complicates the insecurity as well. HIV/AIDS affects food

security in three main ways: one, when HIV/AIDS weakens a person to the point where s/he cannot work, the larger family experiences a loss of income; two, other family members may be precluded from earning income because of their responsibilities to caring for the sick family member; and three, less money is spent on food because it has to be spent on health care and other related expenses, like funeral costs. Additionally, "HIV/AIDS combines with the food crisis to form a vicious cycle: increased malnutrition weakens the resistance of people infected with HIV to opportunistic infections, thereby reducing the workforce available for agricultural and other work." (UNICEF)

HIV/AIDS has made such a major impact on this food crisis because it cripples the population expected to be most productive (aged 15-49). Most of the people in this age group across southern Africa have either succumbed to the disease or are too sick to farm. In Malawi, 16.4 percent of the infected population is aged 15 to 49. This high percentage of infection within the productive work force has greatly diminished the agricultural productivity of the country. However, this trend is not isolated to Malawi; scientists at the WFP

argue that HIV/AIDS is causing a decline in agricultural sector within much of sub-Saharan Africa. The combination of 80 percent of southern Africans (and Africans in general) that rely on subsistence farming with the average infection rate off 20 percent among the six affected countries is contributing to a comprehensive problem that spans across agricultural, health, and economic sectors.

The risk of infection of HIV/AIDS increases during times of crisis because persons employ new forms of coping mechanisms to survive. The mechanisms include "finding additional sources of food or income, migrating, dropping out of school, engaging in hazardous work, and exchanging sex for food or money." (UNICEF) Unfortunately, all of these coping mechanisms increase the risk for contracting HIV, particularly among young women.

The close association of HIV/AIDS with this food crisis and future crises serves as another reminder that HIV/AIDS is not only a health problem but a social and economic development problem that requires inclusive measures that address the links between health, the agricultural sector, social conditions, and the economy.



Maryknoll Father Dr. Peter LeJacq with an AIDS patient; photo by Tony Howell, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

Namibia: A “green revolution”

As the World Trade Organization ministerial meeting in Hong Kong approaches, with a heated debate about trade in agricultural products on the table, an African Development Bank (ADB) loan of US\$34 million has given Namibia’s “Green Scheme Project,” with a projected price tag of \$55 million, a major boost. The challenges of accomplishing this “greening” in a country whose terrain is largely desert without serious environmental consequences; of dramatically increasing agricultural production in a sustainable manner with full participation of farming communities; and of resisting the intense marketing of genetically modified seeds and patented inputs are significant.

The ADB loan will enable Namibia’s agricultural sector to emphasize irrigation and crop development following the model of India’s green, white and yellow revolutions of the 1960s and ‘70s, which boosted milk and grain production, turning India into a major food basket. Namibia hopes to increase the contribution of agriculture to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP), which is dominated by diamonds and beef.

A number of projects have been initiated since the

Green Scheme was launched last year: Dates and grapes are being produced in the south, freshwater fish in the northern and northeastern regions, and various horticultural initiatives as well as livestock farming in other parts of the country. Results, according to Namibian sources, are mixed.

According to the UN’s Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) (Sept. 28), “The government has said it would allocate close to US\$1.5 billion to agricultural production in the next 15 years, including developing 27,000 hectares of irrigation land along Namibia’s five perennial rivers: the Zambezi, Orange, Kwando, Kavango and Kunene ... Nickey Iyambo, the minister of agriculture, water and forestry, said he hoped the problems of hunger, poverty, unemployment and insufficient food would become things of the past once this goal was achieved....”

Namibia’s newly-established Green Scheme Agency will finance the development of core infrastructure - including pump stations, bulk high-voltage electricity supply and the necessary arterial roads - and subsidize interest payments on development and working capital.

Tanzania: Challenge of education reform

HakiElimu is an independent civil society organization in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, which seeks to realize equity, quality, human rights and democracy in education and society. It facilitates communities’ efforts to transform schools and influence policy making; stimulates imaginative public dialogue and organizing for change; conducts critical research, inquiry, analysis and advocacy; and collaborates with partners to advance social justice. And in recent weeks, HakiElimu has found itself in a disturbing public conflict with the government of Tanzania.

In July 2005 HakiElimu published the results of its study of Tanzania’s Primary Education Development Plan (PEDP), initiated in 2002. According to HakiElimu, “the implementation of the PEDP was the most significant intervention in the primary education sector in the last two decades. Education for Self Reliance (ESR), launched in the 1960s, was a politically derived intervention questioning the purpose, content

and outcome of the education process. ESR set out a vision for the education sector and linked it to the socio-economic vision for the nation. PEDP, on the other hand, appears to be an education technocrat’s project. It was developed to revamp primary education in the country by addressing problems that had arisen in the sector. It is a comprehensive, national five-year programme. It focuses on interventions in primary education by increasing inputs into the sector to bring about qualitative and quantitative improvements.”

HakiElimu’s report, entitled “Three Years of PEDP Implementation: Key Findings from Government Reviews,” was based on six government or government-commissioned reports. Its conclusion:

“There is no doubt that the implementation of PEDP between 2002 and 2004 has brought positive changes in the primary schools. More children are enrolled in school than ever before. The school environment has improved, in the sense that new classrooms have [been] built in nearly all schools. More teachers

have been recruited to cope with increases in enrollment. Schools have begun to receive more textbooks. Communities, through school committees, are participating in making decisions regarding their schools. Schools have significantly more finances than before. These are all clear achievements of PEDP.

“Yet, more needs to be done. Increased enrollment has led to increases in the number of pupils each teacher has to deal with (TPR), resulting in overcrowded classrooms. Despite successes, the need for more classrooms, more teachers and more textbooks is great. The PEDP Reviews categorically find much work needs to be done in improving the quality of education.... Most distressingly, many issues raised and recommendations made in the reviews appear to be neglected.”

The report ended with seven specific recommendations which HakiElimu believed should be prioritized “if PEDP is to fully achieve its goals.” The recommendations refer to important concerns like the

monitoring of attendance rather than simply enrollment; the inclusion of all children, including those with disabilities; teacher training, deployment, support and supervision; and transparency in finances and in the policy formulation process.

The report provoked a firestorm of reaction from the government. Education minister Joseph Mungai threatened to deregister HakiElimu because the report contained “sweeping comments and misleading information.” Those who knew the quality of HakiElimu’s work were stunned and deeply concerned about the implications for freedom of speech in Tanzania.

Faith in action:

HakiElimu publishes excellent and challenging Working Papers on a number of important contemporary issues, including Tanzania’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP), NGOs in Tanzania and the Washington Consensus. See www.hakielimu.org.

Statement by Maryknoll Sisters on GM seeds

We live on the African continent. We support the priorities of food production for African consumption and food security for the continent. Improved seeds and genetic advances can be very positive. However, we do not support the short-term testing of genetically modified (GM) seeds or the rapid, profit-driven proliferation of such seeds without full and informed consent of those who will be affected. Wherever GM seeds are available they can impact the environment, especially through cross fertilization among locally used grain. Full disclosure of information on all seeds should be available in agricultural sales and co-ops and should be accompanied by public education about the issues involved. Bags or packages of GM seed should be clearly marked. There is no room for testing in the fragile environment of Africa, where famine is often close at hand. — *Maryknoll Sisters’ Africa World Section October 2005*

World Day of Prayer for the Great Lakes Region of Africa

I address this letter to the Pax Christi family throughout the world to encourage your participation in a Worldwide Day of Prayer for the Great Lakes Region of Africa. In support of a similar initiative of the Bishops’ Conferences of Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda, we are requesting that you set aside the same date to prayerfully remember this part of the world that has been so torn by war, poverty and human suffering. The date chosen is the First Sunday in Advent, 27 November 2005, or another date that may suit better your local circumstances.

Located in the heart of Africa, the Great Lakes region has for several years passed through a crisis of unbelievable proportions, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people, massive atrocities and human rights violations and enormous migrations of displaced persons. The countries of this region are presently struggling to emerge from this tragic period in their history and to move into a more hopeful future.

We truly invite the prayers of all people of faith and good will. I hope you will join with us in this prayer.

I thank you ... for your prayers and action for the peoples of Africa and for those in the Great Lakes region in particular.

In the assurance of my devotion in Our Lord,

+ Msgr. Laurent Pasinya Monsengwo, Archbishop of Kisangani, DR Congo

Vice-President of Pax Christi International

Zimbabwe: Looking for hope

As Zimbabwe suffers with the aftermath of the infamous "clean up" (which will cost \$30 million according to the UN); a fuel shortage that has paralyzed the nation and doubled or tripled the cost of living; and shortages of basics such as mealie meal, margarine, cooking oil, soap, and sugar (locally produced products now being exported to neighboring countries to meet Zimbabwe's need for foreign currency) ... as foreign currency is used to pay off debt and purchase fighter jets ... as the 17th amendment to the constitution is passed to cancel immediately 4,000 deeds of white farms and to impose travel restrictions on any "traitors" who call for sanctions ... as the president is given the ability to create a new senate ... a group called Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) found the courage to launch an International Peace Day demonstration. The following article is from Sokwanele, which retains full copyright on its own articles, which may be reproduced or distributed but may not be materially altered in any way. Visit its website at www.sokwanele.com and its blog at www.sokwanele.com/blog/blog.html.

On International Peace Day, September 21, the feisty protest group Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) staged a peaceful demonstration in Harare, demanding "peace not poverty." Until the riot police intervened with batons it was an entirely peaceful, orderly and good-natured protest.

About 200 women started their march from the Market Square. It had been intended to complete the short protest walk at Harare's Town House, a few blocks away, but the ZRP riot squad was quickly deployed in response and blocked their way when the women were just 100 meters from Town House. As they walked, the women sang with great gusto, and their singing attracted the attention of motorists and passers-by, many of whom joined in the march. Along the way the WOZA women distributed fliers which were quickly picked up by the crowd - itself a sign of the new boldness Zimbabweans are demonstrating in embracing anything promising change. In the past pedes-

trians have been fearful of being seen picking up opposition or protest leaflets.

The reason the march was intended to finish at Town House was that the women were bearing a message to the Town Clerk, Nomutsa Chideya. In the message, co-signed by WOZA and the Combined Harare Residents' Association, the protesters drew attention to the significance of International Peace Day, and demanded "peace not poverty."

The letter continued, "Our sister, Anna Tibaijuka [the UN's special envoy], said Zimbabweans are today deeper in poverty, deprivation and destitution and have been rendered more vulnerable. We citizens know that the Harare Commission were part of the architects of Operation Murambatsvina [see *NewsNotes* September-October 2005] and should be held accountable for crimes against humanity ... The legitimacy of your commission is already under suspicion. Instead of delivering services, you are launching operations that disturb what

little peace we have left." The letter concluded with a demand for the right "to elect our own civic leaders and hold them accountable to deliver all services like water and refuse collection."

A short distance from Town House the protesters were intercepted by baton-wielding riot police who lashed out at them without mercy. The WOZA women have developed to a fine art the technique of appearing, as if from nowhere, on the streets of Zimbabwe's cities and then disappearing just as quickly after making their dramatic protests. Most of them managed to escape arrest on this occasion, though not to avoid bruises and cuts from the police batons. It is believed, however, that three of their number were detained by the police.

Human rights lawyers are seeking to establish the whereabouts of the three and the nature of any charges brought against them, but at the time of filing this report [September 22] the lawyers had not been able to make contact with them. The ZRP are once again reported to be proving less than helpful in permitting those in their custody the legal right to see their lawyers.



Sudan: Chaos continues in Darfur

The Darfur region in western Sudan is experiencing a chaotic surge of fighting. Since 2003 the region has experienced violence classified by the Bush administration in June 2005 as genocide. Critics note that, beyond labeling the conflict, the administration has done little to suppress the violence. The following article was written by Elizabeth Tomber, an intern with the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

Despite former Secretary of State Colin Powell calling Darfur “a situation that the world has not fully faced,” John Bolton, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, prevented a briefing from Juan Mendez, special UN advisor on genocide returning from Darfur, to the Security Council warning that the situation is worsening. According to Africa Action, “Had ... Mendez been allowed to address the UN Security Council, he would have reported on how the Sudanese government is refusing to cooperate with the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court and taking only superficial steps to address the systematic human rights abuses in Darfur.”

In October, violence in Darfur increasingly was aimed at humanitarian relief workers and peacekeepers. Sudanese troops have been using white jeeps similar to those used by relief agencies, causing humanitarian vehicles to be mistaken for militant carriers. Several Africa Union (AU) peacekeepers were killed and 38 AU troops were taken hostage by a breakaway rebel faction. Subsequently, the UN announced the evacuation of all non-necessary personnel from the region.

The AU effort is being ruled as a failure for several reasons, including the scant international support given AU troops, and their mandate of limited intervention.

According to the *New York Times* (October 18), the fighting in Darfur is no longer limited to local rebel groups versus the government and the supposedly government-backed Janjaweed. Inner rebel/militia violence has escalated. In addition, Janjaweed forces attacked a Sudanese police station, on October 17,

suggesting that they no longer feel subject to government power.

Sudan now has two million displaced people living in camps, which no longer offer safety. According to the BBC, “The Janjaweed patrol outside the [refugee] camps and Darfurians say the men are killed and the women raped if they venture too far in search of firewood or water.”

The UN estimates the fighting has resulted in the deaths of more than 180,000 people through violence, disease or malnutrition. The fighting is compounded with a lack of natural resources. “Aid workers have warned that many thousands are at risk of starvation and disease in the camps - and one million children threatened by malnutrition - especially during wet seasons when access is restricted.” (BBC)

“For Darfur to stabilize, one of two things must happen,” David Mozersky, senior analyst for the International Crisis Group in Nairobi, said. “Either the parties must radically change behavior and respect their commitments, or [the AU forces] must be

expanded in both size and mandate, and given the support it needs. Given this conflict’s history, the latter is the only real option today.”



Photo courtesy of the UN



Photo courtesy of CARE

Faith in action:

Contact Ambassador Bolton and express disappointment that Juan Mendez’s testimony was blocked from the Security Council. Challenge Bolton to focus his efforts on Sudan at the UN to pass a resolution for a multinational intervention to protect civilians and to deploy that force in support of existing African Union efforts in Darfur. Go to Africa Action’s

website at www.africaaction.org to use its action alert program, or write to Bolton directly, urging him to introduce and push for the passage of a resolution at the UN Security Council for a multinational intervention force with a mandate to protect civilians.

Asia: Bird flu hurts farmers, threatens pandemic

Asian bird flu is spreading beyond its main concentration in Southeast Asia, and world health officials fear a possible pandemic if the flu virus mutates into a form that spreads easily among humans. But poor farmers who risk losing their livelihood if their birds die of the disease or are culled might feel they have little reason to report the disease, a World Health Organization (WHO) official says.

“There is very little incentive for farmers to report suspected outbreaks. In fact, the fear that their flocks might be culled without compensation is a pretty strong disincentive to report an outbreak,” according to Dr. Shigeru Omi, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific.

In late 2003 and early 2004 avian influenza broke out in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). More than 100 million birds either died from the disease or were culled.

By early August 2005 there had been 112 human cases of avian influenza – 90 in Vietnam, 17 in Thailand, four in Cambodia and one in Indonesia – causing 57 deaths, the CDC said.

“Recent outbreaks in Mongolia, Kazakhstan and Russia have made it clear that avian influenza is not limited only to Asia but is spreading to the neighboring region,” Omi said. He spoke at a WHO meeting in September in Noumea, New Caledonia.

It is not only fear of losing one’s flocks that might keep a farmer from reporting possible bird influenza. Omi said some farmers remain unaware of the threat even in countries where bird flu has been reported.

Omi described a visit he made to a small poultry farm in Cambodia. In his conversation with the owner, she told him, “I used to have so many chickens and ducks mingling together. But several months ago, all of a sudden, most of them died.”

Omi said he also visited an open air market several miles away from the farm. He said he saw a vendor plucking feathers with her bare hands and scooping chicken blood into plastic bags for waiting customers. Speaking with Omi, the woman said she knew nothing about the recent outbreaks of avian influenza in neighboring Thailand and Vietnam.

“If the birds she was handling had been infected with the avian influenza virus, I’m sure she would have picked up the infection,” Omi said. He added that his

encounters in Cambodia illustrate “the hard realities not only in Cambodia but throughout Asia and beyond.”

In planning strategies to combat avian influenza, Omi said “we need to keep in mind that in many of the rural settings in which poultry is raised there isn’t sufficient capacity for proper surveillance.” He appealed to the international community to help build national capacity “to bolster surveillance, respond to outbreaks quickly, and to reduce transmission of the virus from poultry to humans, as well as prepare ourselves for a worst-case scenario.”

WHO estimates that an avian flu pandemic could claim more than seven million lives worldwide. Factors include how deadly a new strain might be and how fast it could spread. U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Mike Leavitt said an influenza virus strain with a potential threat to millions of people could emerge at any time. “There is no pre-existing human immunity to this virus. None. Which is why pandemics can be so devastating,” he said.

U.S. scientists recently recreated the Spanish flu virus in their efforts to develop a vaccine against bird flu. Like the 1918 virus, the current avian flu in Southeast Asia occurs naturally in birds. The Spanish flu pandemic claimed 20 million to 50 million lives worldwide, including 550,000 in the U.S.

President Bush announced a new International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza Sept. 14 at the UN. The program calls for international cooperation to protect people’s lives and health, transparency in reporting cases of influenza that could have pandemic potential, improvement in public awareness, and coordination of bilateral and multilateral resources.

While such programs aim at controlling the disease and blocking its spread among humans, it is important to consider poultry farmers whose flocks could be lost or culled in the case of an outbreak of the disease. Assurance of compensation would encourage farmers to report cases of avian flu and make them partners in the effort.

It is critical to try to stem the spread of Asian bird flu before it mutates into a strain that threatens widespread loss of human life. Wealthier countries such as the U.S. would finance such an effort, but poultry farmers in poor nations are at risk, too. Unless containment programs provide for compensation, the reluctance of poor farmers to report an outbreak of avian flu will remain a weak link in the fight against the disease.

Burma: Move to democracy cannot be postponed

A UN special investigator on Burma's human rights situation has called for a move toward "a full, participatory and democratic system." Paulo Sergio Pinheiro told the UN General Assembly that civilians "continue to be harassed, arrested, tried and sentenced to prison for the peaceful exercise of basic civil and political rights and freedoms." Rapid change seems unlikely, however, as Pinheiro has not been allowed to visit Burma for two years.

Meanwhile, Human Rights Watch (HRW) urged the Security Council in October to address widespread human rights abuses in Burma. HRW cited a recent report, "Threat to Peace — A Call to the UN Security Council to Act in Burma," to bolster its request. The report was commissioned by Nobel Peace Prize winners Vaclav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic, and Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

"There is ample precedent for the Security Council to take up the human rights and political situation in a country with as horrific a record as Burma — especially when suffering spills across borders," said Brad Adams, HRW Asia director. As of late 2004, an estimated 650,000 people were internally displaced in eastern Burma, and two million Burmese had moved to Thailand, including 145,000 refugees living in camps. HRW said at least 240 Burmese villages have been destroyed, relocated or abandoned since 2002.

HRW endorsed the call of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for the Security Council to act. ASEAN's Inter-Parliamentary Myanmar Caucus (Myanmar is the junta's preferred name for Burma) said: "The deteriorating situation in Myanmar is affecting not only those within the country but people outside its borders as well. Quite apart from its truly disgraceful human rights record, Myanmar's troubles ranging from ethnic conflicts and refugee outflows to drugs and the unchecked spread of HIV/AIDS have become a serious cause for concern for ASEAN and the international community."

One Security Council option would be to impose a universal arms embargo on Burma. It has taken that action just four times since 1992: against Somalia, Liberia, Angola and Rwanda. The UN Charter provides for arms embargoes against countries in which a civil war has led to a humanitarian crisis.

It seems likely, however, that China — itself under an EU arms embargo — would veto any proposed arms

embargo on Burma. "As China understands the repercussion of an arms embargo against a country, it is less likely to impose one," explains the Bangkok-based Burma Issues, "especially when it is against a regime that the Chinese government supports both politically and economically." China, Burma's leading arms supplier, has exported an estimated \$1.4 billion worth of military equipment to Rangoon since 1993.

The junta in Burma reportedly spent nearly \$478 million — half the national budget — on the military in 2004. In recent years it has purchased armaments ranging from small arms to fighter jets from India, North Korea, Russia, Serbia and the Ukraine, besides China. Burma's army is estimated at upwards of 400,000 soldiers, including those who were forcibly recruited, as well as 70,000 child soldiers.

Though an important step, even a universal arms embargo on Burma would probably not be totally effective. The black market and sales through third countries often provide alternative opportunities to purchase arms. Earlier this year the German engineering firm Deutz came under investigation for allegedly breaking the EU arms embargo on Burma after it supplied engines to a company in the United Arab Emirates. The engines were then re-sold to a Ukrainian firm, which modified them and used them in armored cars — which were then sold to Burma.

"The transition to a full, participatory and democratic system in Myanmar can no longer be postponed," Pinheiro told the General Assembly on Sept. 28. "Political and constitutional dialogue must begin without delay."

Pinheiro said he welcomed the release in July of 249 political prisoners, but he said another 1,100 political prisoners reportedly remain in custody, "including monks, lawyers, teachers, journalists, farmers, politicians, student leaders, writers and poets."

He expressed concern over "ongoing allegations of the pervasive and systematic use of torture and ill-treatment by the authorities against persons in pre-trial detention," citing at least four deaths in custody between January and July.

Pinheiro also expressed concern over the continued house arrest of Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, head of the National League for Democracy. The League won elections in 1990 in Burma, but the junta refused to allow the party to assume power. Last year the junta called a national convention to set guidelines for a new constitution. However, Suu Kyi

was not allowed to participate, and the League boycotted the convention.

Pinheiro warned that if representatives of the democratic opposition were not involved in the national convention, any constitution that emerged would

lack credibility. He called on the government to take steps to include all political parties in order “to salvage the national convention and its credibility both at home and internationally.”

Japan: U.S. base relocation fuels controversy

U.S. and Japanese officials are trying to resolve a dispute over the relocation of a U.S. military base on Okinawa. Japanese news media, meanwhile, reported that the failure to reach agreement thus far led Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to cancel a stopover in Japan during a scheduled Asian visit in late October.

At issue is a U.S. proposal to build an airport in the shallow waters of Henoko Bay, just off the coast of the Marines Corps' Camp Schwab. The Japanese Defense Agency wants to construct the airport within camp limits, instead.

The proposed base relocation to Henoko Bay has been plagued with delays. The U.S. and Japanese governments reportedly agreed on the site in 1999 despite its being home to a rich coral reef and to a large sea mammal called the dugong. In April 2004 the Japanese government began a drilling survey of the seabed in preparation for construction. Two months later conservationists and other opponents began bringing sea kayaks into the area and occupying scaffolding in the bay to interrupt the drilling efforts. Construction of the base has yet to begin.

The relocation is planned as part of a realignment of U.S. forces in Japan. In 1996 the bilateral Special Action Committee on Okinawa agreed to reduce the land occupied by U.S. bases on the southern island by 21 percent. Key to the plan was closing the U.S. Marine Corps Futenma Air Station in urban Ginowan, and moving Marine air operations to a less-developed location within the prefecture – such as Henoko Bay.

With around 40 U.S. bases, Okinawa hosts about half of the 48,000 U.S. military personnel in Japan. The bases occupy 20 percent of Okinawa. (See January/February 2003 *NewsNotes*.) The 1996 agreement followed by a year the rape of an Okinawa schoolgirl by three U.S. servicemen, which sparked huge anti-base protests. The agreement provided for the closure of Futenma within seven years, provided an alternative facility could be found on Okinawa.

Opposition to U.S. bases further increased in August 2004 after a U.S. helicopter based at Futenma

crashed on a university campus in Ginowan. Christian Church leaders protested the presence of the base in a crowded residential area, adding that “you can identify the face of the pilot flying by from the classroom window of the local elementary school.”

Given the heated controversy, Yoshinori Ohno – director general of Japan's Self-Defense Forces – questioned whether an interim agreement on the realignment of U.S. forces in Japan could be reached by the end of October, as earlier expected.

And a Japanese Defense Agency source said any interim agreement reached by month's end might have to exclude the Futenma issue. The source expressed concern, however, that the media might then focus on the disagreement over the proposed base relocation, reducing the impact of other parts of the report.

Both sides had hoped that Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and President Bush would confirm the importance of a completed interim report if Bush visits Japan as planned on Nov. 15.

Current discussions of base realignment in Japan are also aimed at improving U.S.-Japan military cooperation and giving Japan a bigger role as a strategic hub from which U.S. forces could respond to regional and global threats. The U.S. also hopes to see the Japanese military do more to help out the U.S. in anti-terrorism and disaster relief operations.

Despite incidents and protests, Japanese opinion about the U.S. military presence is mixed. While some oppose the U.S. presence and favor the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops, others view the military personnel as a deterrent in the face of China's military buildup and North Korea's weapons programs.

A local political figure has warned that Okinawans' patience is limited, however. When Rumsfeld visited the prefecture in November 2003, Gov. Inamine Keiichi complained about noise pollution from U.S. military planes and crimes committed by U.S. troops. “The U.S. military has reached its limit,” the governor said. “The feelings of Okinawans are like magma – once there is a hole, it will erupt.”

Iran: Human accomplishments begin with dream

Shirin Ebadi, winner of the Nobel Peace Prize in 2003, addressed delegates from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) at a conference in New York sponsored by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI). The founder and president of the Human Rights Defense Center – which the Iranian government refuses to recognize – Ms. Ebadi spoke Sept. 9 at the 58th annual DPI/NGO Conference. This article is excerpted from her address. Maryknoll has special consultative status with ECOSOC, the United Nations Economic and Social Council.

... NGO organizations in every country represent a mediating force between the general public and their government. The most important function they perform is to convey the needs, wants, concerns and critical views of their people to government, offering suggestions to correct shortcomings or improve existing conditions.

A central attribute of an NGO is its independence from government. This characteristic, when combined with popular appeal, is the guarantee of its authenticity and effectiveness. Independence does not mean that NGOs cannot receive assistance from their own or other governments, but rather acceptance of such assistance should not influence their autonomy and non-partisanship. ... When NGOs pursue their goals in a peaceful manner, governments have no right to interfere with their activities.

Some governments are suspicious of NGOs, do not tolerate their advocacy or educational projects and deny them the opportunity to organize. In a number of countries security forces arrogate to themselves the right to approve the qualifications of NGO organizers and administrators. I can illustrate this point by describing my own experience. Some years ago I joined a number of human rights advocates in Iran to establish the Human Rights Defense Center. In the past three years we have tried to register this organization with Iran's official organs, but they have repeatedly denied our request. During this period, the Center has become a member of the International Federation for Human Rights and was the recipient of the 2003 Human Rights Award from the French National Commission of Human Rights, and I was personally awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace. Yet, the Islamic Republic of Iran, without offering any reason and in violation of its own laws, has refused to grant recognition to the Human Rights Defense Center.

... Another method undemocratic governments use to undermine the credibility and effectiveness of NGOs is to use the name for groups of their own creation. Members of such government-controlled NGOs are then sent to international gatherings to issue false reports and raise irrelevant questions in order to distract public attention from the dismal human rights record of those in power. Such groups, which are in fact government NGOs known as GONGOs, actually present the agenda of the autocratic state while pretending to be non-partisan and, by doing so, prevent the true voice of the people to reach the international community.

The idea of the United Nations is based on the cooperation of governments, and the framers of the [UN] Charter assumed that governments represent their people. But we know that this is not always the case. The existence of this contradiction or falsehood in the world organization is a major reason for the failure of the world organization to live up to its original promise.

... As we all know, too often those who serve on the [UN] Commission [on Human Rights] are themselves violators of human rights. Some have not signed or ratified United Nations Conventions Against Torture and Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. I wish to add my voice to those who question the appropriateness of allowing such governments to evaluate the human rights records of others, and strongly support the Secretary General reform proposal in this regard. I would also suggest that international human rights organizations such as Amnesty International, International Federation for Human Rights and Human Rights Watch become voting members of the new body that will replace the Human Rights Commission. For these international NGOs can act without the fear of government that dissidents in undemocratic states have to contend with. It is becoming increasingly evident that enduring peace and protection of human rights require international oversight on the governments that use their power to prevent opposition groups' participation in the affairs of their societies.

... I am aware that to some observers my suggestions sound like idealistic dreams, but the challenges we have to meet require us to express our ideals while acting in a pragmatic manner. We all know that significant human accomplishments often begin with a dream.

Iraq: Bi-partisan hearing calls for withdrawal

At a Congressional hearing on September 15, 29 members of the House of Representatives and regional experts gathered to answer the question, "What is the future of Iraq?" Panelists answered overwhelmingly that it is time to discuss responsible withdrawal.

Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) hosted the well-attended and provocative bi-partisan hearing. Setting the tone for the forum, Woolsey said it was time "not just to say no to the war in Iraq...but yes to a new, intelligent, progressive, peaceful Iraq policy that will both protect the American people and fulfill our obligations to the Iraqi people ... [W]e must also offer sound, through policy proposals that could turn our deeply held convictions into operational reality."

The diverse panel included an international law professor, a former member of Congress, a retired military officer, and an Iraqi-American activist. Each drew upon his or her own experience in making recommendations for Iraq's future. Each testimony reiterated that withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq is best for the U.S. and for Iraqis.

The panel presented an opportunity to hear an Iraqi speak about his homeland with the testimony of Anas Shallal. Shallal, an Iraqi-American and founder of Iraqi-Americans for Peaceful Alternatives, relayed many personal stories of the suffering his family has experienced throughout the war and occupation. Shallal explained to the audience that when less than 30 percent of the population has access to clean water and half the children under age five are malnourished, details about the proposed Constitution are dead last in the concerns of daily Iraqi life. While Iraq was far from perfect before the invasion, Shallal commented that the war has "created an environment that is ideal for those seeking to polarize Iraq." Shallal was able to bring a human face to this tragedy by reminding U.S. residents that "[e]ach one of those killed [estimated 25,000 civilians] is a relative of someone."

Panel members agreed that allowing Iraqis to

control Iraq should coincide with withdrawal of U.S. troops. Former Sen. Max Cleland (D-GA) used the credibility of his government and military service in stating, "I have concluded that the best way to support our troops is with an exit strategy from Iraq." Cleland,

Vietnam veteran and former member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, likened Iraq to Vietnam as a "no-win, no-end war." Middle East expertise was provided by Ambassador David Mack, current vice president of the Middle East Institute, who outlined proposals for responsible disengagement. Mack insisted, "The U.S. should enter into urgent discussions with the Iraqi government



Children in Baghdad

Photo by Linda Panetta, www.opticalrealities.org

to establish benchmarks for the gradual disengagement of U.S. and other foreign military units." Mack also suggested forming an "ad hoc international coalition to set up an Iraqi contact group." Law professor Antonia Chayes was able to elaborate on different international and diplomatic approaches available for disengagement, and agreed that a high level, non-U.S. leader was needed.

On September 19, the *Washington Post* reported that the military is measuring success in Iraq in terms of body count. Panelist Gen. Joseph P. Hoar (USMC, ret.) contested this model, saying that the war "cannot be won by killing Iraqis. Were this possible, the over 25,000 Iraqis killed already might have been enough."

Faith in action:

Contact your representative and urge him/her to sponsor bi-partisan House Joint Resolution 55, which calls for the president to develop a plan to withdraw U.S. troops from Iraq. The bill currently has 62 cosponsors and is the most viable peace bill before Congress. Go to <http://thomas.loc.gov> and search for "HJ Res 55" for more information, or go to Sojourners' website to send a message to your Congressperson: http://go.sojo.net/campaign/end_the_war.

Iraq: Maryknoll appeals for human security

Sadly, the war in Iraq drags on, with little clarity about possible resolutions. Grave concerns continue to mount, including the war's financial cost and the growing death toll.

Iraq's reconstruction was to be funded with \$18.4 billion in U.S. aid; however only \$12.8 billion of that has been appropriated, and only \$4.8 billion has been spent. Even as unemployment mounted among Iraqis, the largest contracts for reconstruction were invariably awarded to U.S., not Iraqi, firms.

While President Bush steels the country for additional losses of U.S. troops in Iraq – at least 2,000 have died so far – little is said about the suffering of Iraqis, among whom tens of thousands of civilians have been killed and hundreds of thousands wounded.

Despite the administration's claim of a "victory strategy," not an "exit strategy," a policy of simply staying the course can only ensure continued suffering for the Iraqi people, additional environmental damage in Iraq and ultimate defeat for the U.S. What is needed is a "peace strategy" that will protect life and promote human security in Iraq as a step toward a more peaceful and secure global community.

Below is the statement from the joint leadership of the Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers, Maryknoll Sisters and Maryknoll Lay Missioners, released in September, which calls on the U.S. to withdraw its troops from Iraq "quickly yet in a manner conducive to the well-being of the people of Iraq." It also calls on the U.S. to pay for Iraq's reconstruction, and to award contracts for reconstruction to Iraqi workers and companies.

Create human security in Iraq: Withdraw, repair, reconstruct

Maryknoll missionaries live and work in communities around the world torn apart by conflict and war. We know too well the intense suffering and destruction that war brings. As followers of Jesus we are committed personally and institutionally to reverence and affirm the dignity of each person and the whole community of life of which we are a part. We seek to participate actively in the transformation of the world, pursuing social justice, the integrity of creation, and – with even greater intensity in these times – peace. (Statement of Maryknoll Joint Leadership, February 2003)

Two and a half years after the U.S. toppled Saddam Hussein from power, Iraq seems more unstable and insecure than ever. The country is ravaged by growing violence. Water supplies, electricity and oil production remain below pre-war levels. Prospects for returning to normalcy seem bleak as long as U.S. military forces, seen as occupiers and not as liberators, remain in the country.

The U.S. war in Iraq was morally unacceptable from the beginning; we opposed it formally in 2003 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 has been unconscionable
- War in Iraq has destabilized the Middle East, causing more death and destruction in the region and increasing the threat of terrorist attacks throughout the world
- The ecological damage is tremendous
- The burden of war has been carried by the poor and vulnerable as military expenditures steal funds from social programs in the U.S. and around the world.

Now it is time for:

- **Withdrawal:** The U.S. should begin quickly withdrawing its military troops, bases and secret prisons from Iraq.
- **Reparations:** The U.S. should pay for reconstruction in Iraq, repairing damage caused by the invasion, occupation and years of U.S. led sanctions.
- **Reconstruction:** Reconstruction projects should not provide another windfall for U.S. firms. Contracts should provide jobs for Iraqi workers and companies.

We the people can help by beseeching Congress that monies allocated to Iraq arrive there, that we cease the establishment of permanent bases, and that troops are withdrawn quickly yet in a manner conducive to the well-being of the people of Iraq.

New U.S. energy policy does not meet needs

On August 8, after four years of debate, President Bush signed the Energy Policy Act of 2005. Environmental advocates oppose this bill for several reasons: 1) it fails to address global warming, 2) it fails to reduce home heating and gasoline prices, and 3) it fails to promote clean renewable energy. The bill is another example of this administration's failure to recognize both an opportunity for global leadership and its responsibility to protect the environment. The following article is written by Sr. Mary Ann Smith, MM, a member of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns' advisory committee on the integrity of creation.

The 2005 legislation does virtually nothing to achieve the goals of energy conservation and the reduction of carbon-based fuels. Instead, it allows for drilling in the Arctic Refuge, which does nothing to meet immediate needs. No oil would be produced there for at least 10 years but the refuge and the lifestyle of the indigenous people will be devastated.

In addition, the 2005 energy bill subsidizes new nuclear plants and fossil fuels through generous tax incentives and credits. For example, \$1.3 billion dollars is divided between integrated gasification projects (\$800 billion) and advanced coal-based generation technologies (\$500 billion). By contrast, renewable energy development receives \$10 million over five years (2006-2010).

Funding for the Presidential Commission on North American Energy Freedom for two years is \$10 million. One of the key provisions endorsed by the American Gas Association, the Commission will report within 12 months to Congress on how to establish a coordinated and comprehensive policy for North American energy self-sufficiency by 2025.

Access to and control of energy resources are key indicators of current energy policy driving both the direction of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 and a rash of post-Hurricane Katrina and Rita bills in the House and Senate. Among the weakened bills are the Endangered Species Act (passed by the House on Sept. 29) and the National Environmental Policy Act.

Members of the Washington Interfaith Staff Community on Energy and Ecology Working Group (WISCEEWG), of which the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns is a member, opposed the weakened Endangered Species bill and the budget reconciliation to be voted on in November. This spending bill is likely

to run as high as \$100 billion, and may include waivers to environmental laws and regulations included in S.1711, the Community Economic Expertise Enhancement Act of 2003, a bill which would allow the Environmental Protection Agency to temporarily suspend environmental laws when responding to damage from Hurricane Katrina. (source: *NCCC Capsules, Eco-Justice News and Views*, October 2005)

HR 889, the Coast Guard and Maritime Act of 2005, passed by the House on September 14, inserts an additional hurdle into the process of approving offshore wind energy projects by requiring the head of the Coast Guard to submit a written opinion as to whether offshore wind projects would affect ship traffic.

According to Margie Burns in the *Washington Spectator* (October 15), "To the extent that the Bush White House, from its first days, believed there were any security concerns to focus on, they were mainly voiced as a need for 'energy security'. ... [A]dministration officials, together with their industry friends, pushed for more drilling on federal land in the spring of 2001, saying we should not put our national energy security in the hands of foreign nations. That argument was not used to deter U.S. oil companies like Condoleezza Rice's former company, Chevron, or the Saudi or Kuwaiti royal families, or with Saddam Hussein. In their eagerness to establish 'energy security' effectively by taking over another country's resources, they established a track record of official distortions unparalleled since the Vietnam era."

Faith in action:

Monitor the Budget Reconciliation Process, Energy related bills in Congress, actions by the Environmental Protection Agency and Administration references/actions directed toward "energy security." Be aware of related issues in your local area. For example, where and how is your local electricity produced? Does the production process meet safety and air pollution standards? For further information see: National Council of Churches Ecojustice Group, <http://ncccecojustice.org>; Union of Concerned Scientists, <http://www.ucsusa.org>; and the Nuclear Information and Resource Center, nirsnet@nirs.org



WTO: Sixth ministerial to be held in Hong Kong

From December 13-18, the World Trade Organization (WTO) will hold its sixth ministerial meeting in Hong Kong in what is called the “Doha Development Round” of negotiations. The Development Round was initiated in Doha, Qatar in November 2001, with the intention of placing the needs and interests of the Global South at the heart of the negotiations and to “make positive efforts designed to ensure that developing countries, and especially the least-developed among them, secure a share in the growth of world trade commensurate with the needs of their economic development.” This shift in emphasis to issues important to the Global South resulted from the failed negotiations of Seattle in 1999, where these countries showed that they will no longer sign agreements that they do not help to write and that are detrimental to their citizens. Unfortunately, watching the preparatory negotiations for Hong Kong makes it clear that the lofty goal of shaping trade policies to benefit poorer countries is being overrun by deals that focus primarily on opening markets to further trade liberalization without taking into account the particular needs of Global South countries.

Negotiations in Hong Kong will be most intense in four areas: agriculture; services; non-agriculture market access (called NAMA, more easily regarded as industrial products); and special and differential treatment for developing countries. In agriculture, the U.S. and EU are called upon to reduce domestic subsidies and export assistance while increasing access for agriculture imports. It appears unlikely that there will be much change in regards to domestic subsidies. In fact, the U.S.’s proposal to lower the upper limits on its subsidies was poorly received by the Global South because it would allow for increases in its *real* subsidies. However, there may be some limited cuts in export protections and much of the negotiating has centered on how to increase market access, where there is the most potential for change.

The EU and U.S. often have stated that any movement on their part in agriculture would require that other countries reduce their barriers in services and NAMA. While some countries of the Global South, or at least their large exporting farmers, could benefit through increased agriculture access, removing trade barriers in these other areas will be devastating to all.



Photo by Linda Unger, courtesy of Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers

In services, the center of the negotiations has been in what is called Mode 4, which covers the temporary entry of service workers, especially skilled personnel. This appeals to India, and is seen by others as a key to obtaining India's concessions in other negotiation areas. A more controversial proposal by some countries of the Global North asks for a minimum benchmark of tariff reductions in a defined number of services by all countries. This proposal contradicts the very structure of the service negotiations, or GATTs, which have always been a “bottom up”-type negotiation in which countries only negotiate the services that they offer to be liberalized. The reaction by many countries of the Global South has been so strong that it is doubtful that this proposal will pass, but civil society organizations will watch this closely.

The NAMA negotiations look to lower barriers in the exchange of industrial goods. The EU especially has insisted strongly that countries of the Global South must sharply lower barriers before it will lower any of its agricultural protections. If this reduction happens, many Global South industries will be overrun with competition from industries from the North as industrial tariffs tend to be much higher in the Global South. The same policies that the North has used to develop its manufacturing would be ruled out for countries of the Global South. Any significant reductions in NAMA tariffs will result in the closing of many of national and local industries in the Global South.

The Group of 33 (actually a grouping of 42 countries from the Global South) argues that poorer countries should receive special and differential treatment in all of the areas of negotiation: 1) They should be able to lower their tariffs and protections to a lesser degree than countries with stronger economies; 2) they should also be able to exempt “special products” from overall tariff reductions (“special products” are goods which the country and/or small farmers depend on for food security, livelihood security or rural development); and 3) they also argue for “special safeguard mechanisms,” or SSM, which would allow for them to increase tariffs if a surge in agricultural imports or other emergencies occurs. Unfortunately, these issues have been all but ignored.

Looking at the preparatory negotiations for Hong Kong, it seems extremely unlikely that countries of the Global South will be able to reap any real benefits.

Despite the overall goal of the negotiations being “development,” the negotiations have taken what Oxfam has called a line of “naked self-interest.” What we will look for is if the Global North will be able to force the opening up of smaller economies throughout

the world, or if these countries will be able to resist as they did in Seattle in 1999 and Cancun in 2003. There will be tens of thousands of activists from around the world in Hong Kong to help ensure that it is the latter that happens.

World Bank, IMF boards approve debt deal

On September 24, the International Monetary and Financial Committee (IMFC) of the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) endorsed a deal to cancel \$42.5 billion owed by 18 poor countries to those two institutions and to the African Development Bank. The deal is “to be finalized” in the coming months by the WB and IMF boards. If it is fully implemented by the creditors in a transparent manner and if beneficiary governments are publicly accountable for the use of resources freed, this agreement should have tangible benefits for the most vulnerable people in up to 38 countries. It was originally reached by the Group of Eight (G8) industrialized nations at their July summit in Gleneagles, Scotland.

The 18 initially qualifying countries have passed the strict economic reform monitoring process of the IMF and WB’s Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. They include Benin, Bolivia, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guyana, Honduras, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nicaragua, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia.

The Jubilee USA Network called the political agreement a “first step towards the amount of debt cancellation needed to end the debt crisis and eradicate global poverty,” but joined other voices around the world, including Jubilee South and the African Forum and Network on Debt and Development (AFRODAD), in criticizing the accord, which excludes dozens of other impoverished, highly indebted nations and debt to other significant creditors such as the Inter-American Development Bank. It also does not address odious or illegitimate debt and preserves economic conditionality by using the HIPC framework. [See page 25].

Worrisome language included in the IMFC communiqué appeared to require that the 18 countries meet one final test of compliance with IMF/WB conditions, including so-called “sound policies,” but IMF Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato told a press conference at the end of the WB/IMF annual meetings that there would be no new conditions.

In a communiqué immediately prior to the WB/

IMF annual meetings, Africa Action wrote, “The existing debt relief framework, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, has failed to provide a solution to the debt crisis. Designed by creditors in 1996, it dictates economic policies and extracts the maximum in debt repayments from poor countries before writing off the balance. Recent World Bank and IMF reports concede that the HIPC Initiative has failed to provide an exit from the debt crisis that these countries face. Independent audits of these two institutions have confirmed that they can afford to write off Africa’s debt completely.

“The 14 African countries in the present debt cancellation proposal were not chosen because they are the poorest countries. Rather they were chosen because they’ve already completed the harsh HIPC program and received some debt relief, but it has proven to be insufficient to halt their further impoverishment. 18 more African countries are still involved in the HIPC program, while another third of Africa’s low- and middle-income countries are excluded altogether due to inappropriate measurements of per capita wealth, which rank them as insufficiently poor to qualify for such debt relief.” (See www.africaaction.org)

Debt activists in Latin America reacted in a similar way, noting the very high level of poverty in many heavily-indebted middle income countries that are ineligible for the HIPC program and the significant amount of odious and illegitimate debt carried by countries in the region.

Soren Ambrose of the Solidarity Network in Africa (Nairobi, Kenya) and the 50 Years Is Enough Network for Global Economic Justice (Washington, D.C.) wrote, “...[T]he critiques of the G8 deal are, in most respects, correct; but it is at least as accurate to say that, even if the promises are not kept, this is the biggest success debt campaigners have had. It puts the G8 on the record as supporting the logic and need for 100 percent elimination of multilateral debt, and as implicitly acknowledging that the HIPC debt scheme has failed and, by extension, that the impact of the corporate-globalized economy is unsustainable, at least in

some places. These are very valuable statements, (or, in the latter example, logical extrapolations). Yes, they apply to far too few countries at the moment, but they will serve as the bulwark of ongoing debt campaigns as we struggle to expand this victory....” [See www.50years.org]

He continues, “For campaigners in Southern countries, outside the 18 beneficiaries, the most significant

impact of this proposal may not be the precedent set by the G8, but the impetus it gives to campaigns for more radical solutions.” He notes in particular the decision of the Africa Union in Sirte, Libya to call for comprehensive debt cancellation for the entire continent – and the fact that two members of Parliament in Kenya advocated repudiation or a suspension of payments when Kenya was excluded from the deal.

Debt and HIV/AIDS: A deadly combination

To highlight the relationship between debt, health, and HIV/AIDS on the African continent, Africa Action has compiled a table comparing debt service expenditure and spending on health. The table, found on the Africa Action website at www.africaaction.org, puts these issues in perspective and highlights the following:

a) Between 1970 and 2003, African countries received about \$540 billion in loans and paid back \$580 billion in debt service, yet the continent is still saddled with a crippling \$330 billion in external debt.

b) This burden of debt diverts money directly from spending on health care and other important needs. In 2003, African countries paid over \$25 billion in debt service fees, even as 2.3 million Africans lost their lives to AIDS. In Angola, about 240,000 people live with HIV/AIDS and yet that country spent \$106 per capita on foreign debt payments and only \$38 per capita on health.

c) Many of Africa’s most impoverished countries spend more per capita on debt service than on health care. For every dollar spent on health care in 2002, the Democratic Republic of Congo spent more than four dollars on debt service – this in a country where 1.1 million people are living with HIV/AIDS.

d) Even if the Group of 8 (G-8) proposal to cancel the debts of 14 African countries were immediately implemented, it would have no effect on most African countries, who will still spend more on debt.

World Bank/IMF: Review of conditionalities

The World Bank and IMF held their annual meetings at the end of September. At that time, over 20 faith-based organizations, including the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, signed a letter to the World Bank to express their concern about the status of the Bank’s review of conditionalities. Excerpts from the letter follow:

[The conditionality assessment] is especially important in light of the commitments to debt cancellation and increased aid announced at the July G-8 summit. Such commitments will not genuinely benefit impoverished countries without a re-evaluation of the economic policy conditions that are attached to debt cancellation and aid programs.

... Bank officials must be more critical in scrutinizing the policy conditions attached to its debt relief and aid programs. The recent 2005 World Bank Conditionality Review must be taken seriously and strengthened, with more attention paid to specific harmful economic conditions such as mandated trade liberalization that

exposes small-holder farmers to unfair competition, including subsidized imports from rich countries, and the privatization of essential services, such as water and electricity. ...

The economic conditions mandated by the current debt relief and aid programs have not been shown to increase per capita income growth or reduce poverty in impoverished countries. Other examples of these economic conditions include harmful budgetary spending restrictions that undermine essential government services and the elimination of necessary assistance for small-scale agriculture and domestic manufacturing. We thus call for the World Bank to stop attaching economic policy conditions to aid and debt relief. The right of developing countries to determine their own economic policies must be respected. ...

For more information about faith-based responses to the debt issue, contact Jubilee USA at www.jubileeusa.org or call 202-783-3566.

Killer hurricanes and climate change

The following article is adapted from "Talking Points on Hurricanes Katrina and Rita and Climate Change" written by Daphne Wysham, Institute for Policy Studies Fellow and co-director of the Sustainable Energy & Economy Network. See www.seen.org and www.ips-dc.org.

The suffering and destruction brought by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita to New Orleans and the Gulf Coast of the United States in September provoked thoughtful commentary on poverty and racism in the United States, and on our skewed budget priorities resulting particularly from the war in Iraq. Not only are we spending hundreds of billions on a war based on lies, but the National Guard is also stretched so thin that it was ill-prepared to meet its primary obligation at home.

In addition, the hurricanes' aftermath placed in plain view of the U.S. people the consequences of ecological damage resulting from unsustainable development. Some specific connections outlined by Daphne Wysham in her talking points include the following:

Hurricane intensity is increasing due to ocean warming. While hurricane frequency is seasonably varied, recent scientific studies show that the intensity of hurricanes is increasing. One can never say there is a clear link in the chaos of global weather systems between an increase in greenhouse gas emissions and a specific weather event, but Hurricanes Rita and Katrina appear to fit within the pattern of increasing hurricane intensity. These were the third and fourth most powerful hurricanes in recorded Atlantic basin history, and fed off unusually warm tropical waters.

Climate change is real. The Bush administration and its Congressional supporters, the media, and corporate allies have confused the U.S. public about the science around global warming. But global warming is in fact underway. Temperatures are rising to unprecedented levels, at a pace that may outstrip the capacities of plants and animals -- including humans -- to adapt. Feedback loops, such as melting glaciers (white snow reflects heat; dark soil absorbs it), methane being released from permafrost (methane is over 20 times more potent a greenhouse gas than CO₂), forest fires (releasing stored CO₂ into the atmosphere) and other interdependent phenomena all determine whether or not we will face an average three to nine degree Fahrenheit rise over the next century. A three-degree average Fahrenheit increase will be a tragedy; a nine-

degree average change would be a global catastrophe.

Hurricane Katrina was as much a disaster made by humans as it was a natural disaster. It was made much worse by human interference in the ecosystem on the global, regional and local level. Oil and gas production over the past century has removed critical mass from below, and has accelerated natural subsidence. Levees and concrete channels designed to control the Mississippi have tried unsuccessfully to tame a region of the United States that will grow ever more vulnerable to rising sea levels and hurricanes as the planet warms.

A century of petrochemical industrialization and poverty compounded the disaster and poses long-term health risks. Some government officials are encouraging people to return to the areas devastated by the hurricanes.... Yet, some of the most toxic, chemical-laden sites of the world are found in the Mississippi River delta. Poverty intensifies the crisis: Over 20 percent of the people of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana live in poverty, and the region suffered from inadequate health care prior to Katrina. The hurricane finished off much of this threadbare infrastructure. Fully funded long-term health care and monitoring for the victims of Katrina must become a prerequisite for relief and reconstruction.

Poor communities, living on the most marginal land, are predicted to continue to suffer the most, both at home and abroad, as the world warms. Crop failure, an increase in vector-borne diseases, and water shortages all hit the poorest the hardest. But none of us are immune.

Relief and reconstruction can overcome historical patterns of pollution and discrimination by following the environmental justice framework. The combination of discrimination and pollution in the lower Mississippi River spawned the global environmental justice movement, which is now rallying behind the concept of "Green Relief." This framework emphasizes unity, redressing disparities, cleanup accountability, transparency, skills training, green communities, healthy shelter, long-term health monitoring, and economic diversification.

Faith in action:

Let your member of Congress know that you want the U.S. to return to the international community's climate negotiations and agree to drastically limit its consumption of and public investment in fossil fuels.

Resources

- 1) **Tell Them About the Times When Jesus Came: Reflections for Advent 2005:** Pax Christi USA presents its annual Advent booklet, written by Donna Toliver Grimes. This year, we are reminded that Jesus invites the entire global family into discipleship. Featuring artwork from Julee Dickerson-Thompson, these reflections are perfect for individual, group or parish study. As Grimes reflects on this season: “By prayerfully focusing our attention on spiritual values, we help to clear the path so that God can order the steps and actions toward justice that we struggle to take individually and collectively. No matter where we live most of the year, we wander into the desert from time to time...Our desert times allow us to hear more clearly the message that draws us closer to God.” \$2.50. Contact Pax Christi USA at 814-453-4955, or go to www.paxchristiusa.org to order.
- 2) **“Celebrate Christ’s Coming Through the Doors of Our Hearts” Advent calendar:** The Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD) has an Advent calendar available on its website, which includes reflection questions and action suggestions for students and adults: <http://www.usccb.org/cchd/Advent2005Eng.pdf>. For a hard copy, call CCHD toll-free at 800-235-8722.
- 3) **Salvador Witness:** This new biography of Jean Donovan, written by Ana Carrigan, recounts a remarkable journey from the affluent suburbs of Connecticut to the jungles and refugee camps of El Salvador. The murder of Jean Donovan and her fellow churchwomen by Salvadoran troops in 1980 made headlines around the world. This book tells the story behind that event but also the story of a young woman, her growth, bravery, and humanity—and the price she was willing to pay for them. Published by Orbis Books. \$18 for paperback; 304 pages. Order from Orbis Books, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545; www.orbisbooks.org; orbisbooks@maryknoll.org; or call 800-258-5838.
- 4) **“Hope and Dignity in the developing world”:** This new packet from Catholic Relief Services provides statistics and other information on CRS’s projects to stop the HIV/AIDS crisis. For more information, contact CRS at 209 W. Fayette Street, Baltimore MD, 21201-3443; 410-625-2220.
- 5) **Voices from the Field: Local Initiatives and New Research on Central American Youth Gang Violence:** In early 2005, the Washington Office on Latin America, the InterAmerican Coalition for the Prevention of Violence and the Due Process of Law Foundation convened a gathering to look at the growing problem of youth violence in Central America. They focused on it as a public health and social policy issue, concerned that current hard-line approaches to the problem are ineffective and violate principles of human rights. For a copy of the seven page conference report, contact WOLA at 202-797-2171 or visit www.wola.org/gangs/gangs.htm.
- 6) **Guide to Ending Sweatshops, 5th edition:** From Co-op America. This 18-page resource includes frequently asked questions, “labels to look for,” action suggestions, essays on labor rights, and a list of companies that demonstrate a commitment to fair labor practices. 1-5 copies, \$3; check with Co-op America for prices for bulk copies. Contact Co-op America at www.coopamerica.org or call 800-58-GREEN; 1612 K Street, N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C., 20006.
- 7) **God’s Economy: Biblical Studies from Latin America:** These essays, originally published in Spanish in the distinguished journal (RIBLA), represent the work of many of Latin America’s leading biblical scholars. Contributors include: Elsa Tamez, Jorge Pixley, José Miguez Bonino, Pablo Richard, Alicia Winters, and José Severino Croatto. Edited by Ross Kinsler and Gloria Kinsler, co-workers in mission for the Presbyterian Church, who spent 25 years as theological educators in Central America. 260 pages. \$28. Order from Orbis Books, P.O. Box 308, Maryknoll, NY 10545-0308; www.orbisbooks.org (search for “Kinsler”); orbisbooks@maryknoll.org; or call 800-258-5838.



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