AFRICA RENEWAL

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Das Fotoarchiv / Ron Giling

Also inside

Against the odds

Africa strives to rebuild its domestic industries

By Gumisai Mutume

Just a few decades ago, the African island-nation of Mauritius depended overwhelmingly on growing sugar-cane — and was as poor as much of Africa. Since then, Mauritius has transformed itself into a diversified manufacturing and tourism centre, able to attract foreign investors and provide its people with incomes far above the continental average.

Across Africa, most countries face the problem that Mauritius once did: they produce and export mainly unprocessed crops or minerals, even though such raw materials are fetching lower and lower prices on world markets. In response, some are seeking to follow the example of Mauritius, to consciously and more energetically build up their manufacturing industries.

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UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan meets with community leaders in the Darfur region of Sudan.

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Accords save trade talks from collapse

WTO hears pledges to remove agricultural subsidies

By ***Gumisai Mutume***

A year-long impasse that threatened to derail the current Doha round of negotiations at the World Trade Organization in Geneva finally ended in July when member countries reached a compromise. The round, launched in Qatar in 2001, ground to a halt in Cancún, Mexico, in September 2003 over a series of disagreements. In particular, developing countries demanded the elimination of subsidies on cotton and other key agricultural exports from the North, while industrial nations insisted on introducing into the round a set of four completely new areas.

Countries of the South have succeeded in placing agricultural issues at the heart of the negotiations, even though agriculture represents only 8 per cent of world trade.

The July agreements foster "new hope" that the Doha Development Agenda (as the round is known) will be given priority and bring tangible results, UN Conference on Trade and Development Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero said. Upon its conclusion, the World Trade Organization (WTO) expects the round to enable developing countries to use trade to boost economic growth.

However, argues Mr. Moussa Faye of the non-governmental group Action Aid Senegal, "only if there is immediate reform of the WTO will there be a fair deal that will improve the lives of the millions of people living in poverty. The [July] compromise maintains the status quo and does not change the fundamental imbalance in the multilateral trading system."

A number of African countries were particularly disappointed that the agreements provide no immediate relief from the harmful cotton subsidies, amounting to more than $3 bn annually paid out to US cotton farmers. Benin, Burkina Faso, Chad and Mali had been demanding that cotton subsidies be dealt with as a priority and separately from all other areas under negotiation in the Doha Round, to allow immediate resolution. The US opposed this. A compromise was reached to set up a special sub-committee to "ensure appropriate prioritization of the cotton issue," even though no time frames have been set.

"Failure to address the cotton issue is a serious betrayal of developing countries and will have massive implications for the 10 million West African cotton farmers whose livelihoods are currently undermined by US export dumping," said Ms. Celine Charveriat of Oxfam, a UK-based non-governmental organization.

Agricultural subsidies

The July agreements, concluded over an intense two-week period, mark the conclusion of "talks about talks," during which WTO members had to agree on the broad guidelines of subsequent negotiations. The "frameworks," as they are known in WTO terms, include what appear on paper to be significant commitments. One obliges the European Union to eliminate agricultural subsidies that have long been blamed for distorting international farm trade — but at a date to be determined in the final phase of negotiations beginning in September. According to French Agriculture Minister Hervé Gaymard, it could be 2015 or 2017 before European export subsidies are finally eliminated.

In turn, the US agreed to curb elements of its export credit and food aid programmes, which developing countries deem unfair and trade-distorting. The US also agreed that in the first year of the implementation of the agreements of the Doha Round, it would reduce by 20 per cent its trade-distorting agricultural supports.

"This is the beginning of the end of subsidies," Brazilian Foreign Minister Celso Amorim told the media. "It is a rare combination of social justice and trade coming together," said Mr. Amorim, who is one of the leading spokespersons of the developing world on the issue.

During the last few years there has been a rise in international pressure against subsidies paid out to farmers in rich nations, which total more than $300 bn annually, for all crops. Such subsidies are seen as unjust towards the world's poorest farmers, who do not receive similar handouts. The farm supports also depress world prices, costing developing countries millions of dollars in lost revenue.

'A map for the road ahead'

Another potentially beneficial outcome of the July accords for developing countries was a compromise from industrial nations to drop all but one of a set of completely new issues they have been trying to

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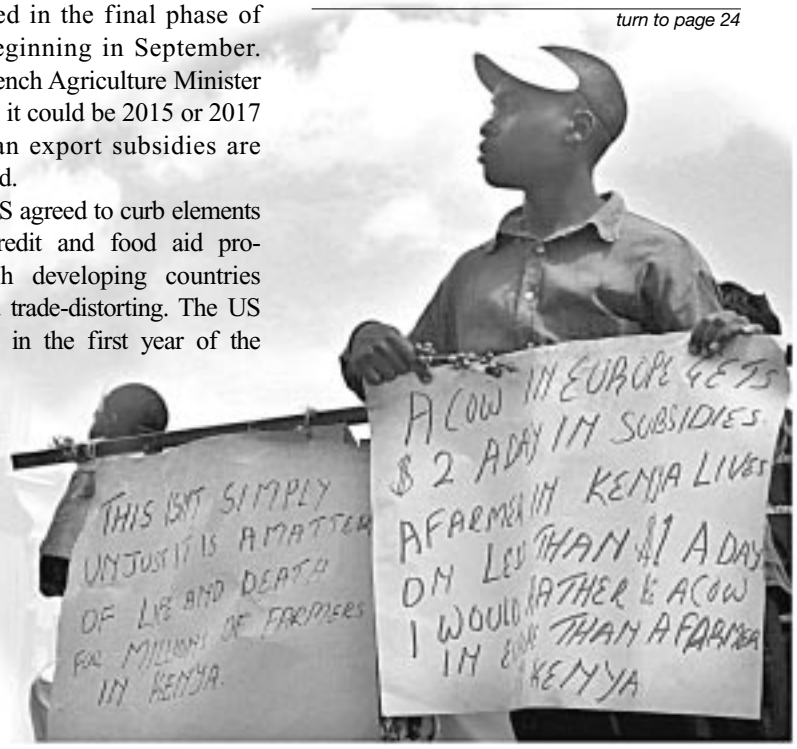

Kenya farmers, demonstrating in Nairobi, protest European cattle subsidies, which are twice what the average Kenyan farmer earns per day.

Getty Images / AFP / Simon Maina

‘Golden leaf’ loses its lustre

International tobacco controls spurring production shifts

By **Nututu Okhoya** and **Gumisai Mutume**

The growing global campaign against smoking poses a daunting challenge for Malawi, a country almost entirely dependent on tobacco for government revenue, employment and development financing. After the government, the tobacco industry is the second largest employer. It is responsible for 75 per cent of foreign earnings and contributes 10 per cent of the country’s gross domestic product. The crop has been so eagerly embraced by farmers in the region that they call it the “golden leaf.”

But in May 2003, world leaders agreed on the first global treaty to control tobacco.

Das Fotoarchiv / Frank Herman

Tobacco worker in Zimbabwe: Countries dependent on tobacco earnings will need time to shift to other crops.

Suddenly, countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe and Kenya had to begin reconsidering the sustainability of the sector. Tobacco is grown in more than 100 countries around the world and the sector employs about 33 million people. However, only a handful of developing countries, such as Malawi and Zimbabwe, are heavily dependent on the crop.

“We gambled that tobacco was going to be around longer,” says Mr. Milton Kutengule, an official in Malawi’s Finance Ministry. It was a long shot, and now the country is debating a turnaround. The government recently issued a draft economic strategy to encourage eventual diversification into alternative cash crops and the development of other sectors such as mining and tourism.

‘Programmed death’

The decline of tobacco is a reflection of growing international concern that its health risks far outweigh its economic advantages for producing countries. Smoking is responsible for 4 million deaths annually. It is the world’s leading preventable cause of death, with every second smoker dying from a tobacco-related illness. The World Health Organization (WHO) forecasts that 10 million people will die from smoking each year by 2020, and 70 per cent of them will be in poor countries.

“It is rare — if not impossible — to find examples in history that match tobacco’s programmed trail of death and destruction,” says former WHO Director-General Gro Harlem Brundtland. It is “programmed death,” she says, because a cigarette is the only consumer product “which when used as directed kills its consumer.” This year marks the 40th anniversary of the US surgeon general’s 1964 report on cigarettes — the first official recognition that tobacco smoking causes cancer and other serious diseases.

In sub-Saharan Africa, already ravaged by other health crises such as HIV/AIDS and where economies can barely support vital services such as health care, the added burden of smoking will further reduce life expectancy, the WHO warns.

Acknowledging these and similar arguments, African delegates joined their global counterparts at the 192-member WHO in 2003 to adopt the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Once in force, the convention requires countries to ban or set tough restrictions on tobacco advertising, sponsorship and promotion within five years. So far, 118 nations have signed the convention. As soon as 40 countries ratify it, it will become law in those countries, and subsequently in other countries as they too ratify it.

Africa’s challenge

The architects of the FCTC acknowledge that African tobacco-producing countries are faced with a complex problem. The convention includes mechanisms to provide long-term support for those countries in which tobacco farming is an economic lifeline, such as Zimbabwe and Malawi, WHO Executive Director Derek Yach told *Africa Renewal*. He says other institutions such as the World Bank and the European Union also offer assistance for diversification. Both organizations have urged producer countries “to reduce dependence, invest in rural develop-

Global Partnership for Tobacco Control / Anna White

Anti-tobacco demonstration in Nigeria: Health concerns are increasing.

ment more broadly and they will get the support they need," he says.

Dr. Yach is concerned that at this point it is not money that is hampering progress in diversification, but a lack of political will, especially in countries where large multinational tobacco companies are influential. Ms. Karen Slama of the Paris-based International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease says tobacco companies provide large external investments and governments are grateful for new factories and jobs. But this creates a vicious cycle as greater demand for cigarettes is created within those countries.

Because of the impact of the anti-smoking lobby in industrial nations, tobacco companies are increasingly targeting developing countries. The WHO notes that this push into developing country markets results in part from increasing tobacco controls in industrial nations, including limits on advertising and the placement of health warnings on cigarette packages. As a result, while smoking is declining in high-income countries, it is on the rise among males in most low- and middle-income countries and among women worldwide, reports WHO.

Tobacco also happens to be a crop of choice for farmers in many poor countries, as it is easy to grow. Because it is essentially a weed, tobacco grows anywhere and thrives in marginal soils that yield little else.

It is also lucrative for national economies. In Zimbabwe and Malawi, tobacco earns about 7 times more than maize, 22 times more than cotton and 60 times more than sorghum. The Zimbabwe Tobacco Association argues that reduced tobacco production would lead to permanent job losses and lower government revenue. "Tobacco provides one of the most stable and effective cash crops for farmers," notes the International Tobacco Growers Association, a lobby group of manufacturers and farmers. "Without it, millions of farmers on marginal land would be reduced to subsistence production."

Nevertheless, the WHO argues that a majority of small-scale tobacco farmers in developing countries continue to live in poverty. In addition, says Ms. Catherine le Galès-Camus, a WHO assistant director-general, "Precarious labour conditions, including the use of child labour and exposure to highly toxic products, and a highly negative impact on the environment, make tobacco an issue inextricably linked to poverty and other development issues."

Diversification

The World Bank is seeking to allay fears in developing countries that substituting other crops for tobacco would result in massive job losses. The claims about the negative effects of tobacco control have largely been generated by the tobacco industry and "have been greatly overstated," the Bank notes. In a study entitled *The Economics of Tobacco Control*, the Bank says that in all but a few agrarian countries there would be no net job losses, and there might even be job gains as money once spent on tobacco is shifted to other goods and services.

In any event, experts say, countries will have reasonable time to adjust and diversify, because implementing tobacco controls is a slow process and consumption and production will not cease immediately. "Even if the convention were remarkably successful and managed to hold consumption at current levels, there would be no decline in demand for tobacco," says Mr. Yussuf Salojee, director of the National Council Against Smoking in South Africa. WHO predicts that the number of smokers will rise from the current 1.1 billion people to 1.7 billion by 2025.

A study by South Africa's University of Cape Town notes that Zimbabwe already has a viable alternative to tobacco farming, horticulture (growing fruit, vegetables and flowers). The study, on the economic impact of tobacco control in Southern Africa, reports that roses provide economic returns 44 times higher than those from tobacco. Land under horticultural crops in Zimbabwe is growing. By 1990 the country was already ranked as the sixth largest rose exporter in the world. The main drawbacks, however, are that roses require larger investments to cultivate, transport and market than do tobacco.

Towards tobacco control

In support of the international campaign to reduce tobacco consumption, Dr. Yach urges African countries to raise taxes on and ban the promotion and advertising of tobacco products. He says countries that have done so steadily over the years have seen a rapid decline in smoking among youth and the poor — who tend to be the majority of smokers in most African countries.

South Africa is considered a model for tobacco control on the continent. In 1990 consumption peaked at 40 bn cigarettes, but owing to a vigorous anti-tobacco campaign by government and civil society

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Women: the face of AIDS in Africa

More action needed against high female infection rates

Three-quarters of all Africans between the ages of 15 and 24 who are HIV-positive are women. That astonishing figure, just released by UNAIDS, highlights the growing concern of international agencies, African governments and AIDS activists over the 'gendered' impact of AIDS in Africa. It also has spurred the beginnings of a campaign to help young African women counter the disease.

UNICEF / C-1638 / Pirozzi

By ***Michael Fleshman***

There are days when Mary Mwasi does not know where she will find the strength to get out of bed. But sickness, exhaustion and despair will not feed the children or fetch the water, and so, somehow, she wills herself erect and steps into the sunlight of another Kenyan morning. "I have to look for food for the children day by day," she told a counselor for the US charity World Vision. "Life is difficult. Unless I get help from well-wishers, we cannot afford to eat."

Like many other residents of Ghaza, a village near the port city of Mombasa, Mrs. Mwasi is infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. At least one of her three children is also HIV-positive and the others are often ill — whether from the disease or malnutrition, she cannot be sure. Her husband left in search of work two years ago and never came back, so she lives on sufferance on her in-laws' land — fearful that they will learn of her condition and expel her from the community. Her only financial assets are a few chickens, held in reserve to buy medicine for the kids.

She knows there is no hope for her. Her concern is for her children. "We say, 'When you pour water on the ground, you cannot pick it up again,'" Mary told the counselor. "I did not think of so many things before, so many worries. I am trying to leave everything to God."

As HIV/AIDS enters its third calamitous decade, Mary Mwasi's plight has become tragically common in East and Southern Africa, the regions hit hardest by the global epidemic. With 10 per cent of the world's population, impoverished sub-Saharan Africa is home to two-thirds of its HIV-positive population. But it is only recently that doctors, governments and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)* have realized that not only does the global struggle against AIDS have an African face, it is increasingly the face of an African woman. As infection rates mount, scientists and researchers are scrambling to understand the causes and to fashion new policies and programmes in response.

Young women an 'endangered species'

The need for urgency is clear. In July, UNAIDS announced that of all Africans aged 15–49 who are HIV-positive, women make up a disproportionate 57 per cent. Even worse, noted UNAIDS Deputy Director Kathleen Cravero, of those in the 15–24 age group, fully 75 per cent were young women. "That's a remarkable figure," she told *Africa Renewal*. "We're actually looking at young women becoming almost an endangered species in Africa due to this epidemic."

Part of the explanation for the staggering rates, she continued, is biological. Because of their reproductive systems, women's bodies are more susceptible to infection by the human immunodeficiency virus than are men's bodies. That is particularly true of sexually active young women, whose bodies are still developing.

Bringing women out of their shells

Despite the danger of being ostracized from her community or even stoned to death, 19-year-old Yinka Jegede-Ekpe went ahead and announced to her fellow Nigerians that she was HIV-positive. In a country where women's public voices are muted, she went on to set up a group to encourage her compatriots to speak out, fight stigmatization and raise awareness.

"The organization was formed to bring women out of their shells, because we have been trapped for far too long," Ms. Jegede-Ekpe, who is now 25 years old, told *Africa Renewal* in New York in September. "We believe women should come out and speak about their concerns about the HIV prevalence rate as well as treatment issues." Far too often the voices of the few women brave enough to attend mixed-gender gatherings could not rise above those of men, she said. And it was the men who would speak for them on issues that primarily concerned women.

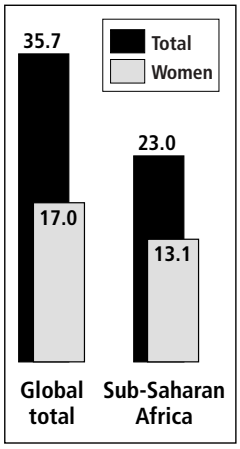
"More women than men in Africa are infected. It is they who care for people who are sick," the activist noted. "The issue of

The progression of the epidemic itself is another factor. It was in Africa that the virus first spread, leaving more people vulnerable to infection for a longer period than in other parts of the world. "But it is much more a function of the social and economic position of women," Ms. Cravero continued. "This is what happens when countries don't pay enough attention to the impact of HIV/AIDS on women."

Facing the future

In January 2003, therefore, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan asked UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Carol Bellamy to establish a task force on women and HIV/AIDS to examine the links between the spread of the disease and the socioeconomic status of women in Southern Africa. The 27-member task force included Namibian Health Minister Libertina Amathila, Vice-President Justin Malewezi of Malawi, Ms. Terezinha da Silva, head of the Mozambican non-governmental organization Forum Mulher, and South African parliamentarian Ruth Bengu.

The task force's July 2004 report, *Facing the Future Together,* examined both the causes of the high infection rates among women and the economic and social burden of the pandemic on women in the home and community. It faulted both regional governments and the international community for favouring men in the design of HIV/AIDS programmes or adopting what it termed a "fictional" gender-neutral approach to HIV/AIDS education, prevention and treatment. Only a "gendered" approach that accounts for the different effects of the disease on men and women will be able to reduce infection rates, the report stated.



Source: UN Africa Renewal from UNAIDS data.

The researchers found a clear link between gender discrimination and the disproportionate impact of HIV/AIDS on women and girls in six areas, including:

- prevention programmes
- education
- violence
- women's property and inheritance rights
- home and community-based caregiving
- access to care and treatment

The task force noted that in some Southern African countries adult women are still legally minors, and thus unable to own or inherit land and other property. This is a major contributor to the impoverishment of AIDS widows and orphans and underscores the urgent need for legislative reform and enforcement of women's legal rights.

The report cautioned that governments and donors could not continue to rely on unpaid women's labour to care for the sick and orphaned in the home and community. The task force urged donors to establish small grant schemes and training programmes for caregivers and called for the drafting of a "volunteer charter" establishing basic rights and obligations for both men and women struggling to meet the needs of the ill.

The report also noted that as life-prolonging anti-retroviral drugs and other medications become more widely available in Africa, treatment programmes must be structured and monitored to ensure equal access for women.

Targeting 'sugar daddies'

Among the task force's most important findings was a link between the extraordinarily high infection rates among young women and their sexual relationships with much older men, "sugar daddies," in exchange for money and gifts.

Existing somewhere between romantic relationships and prostitution, such intergenerational, "transactional" sex is a "key driver" of the epidemic in impoverished Southern Africa and a major target for education and prevention programmes, Ms. Cravero said. "You have an infection cycle that's going from the older men to the young girls. The girls in turn infect their slightly older boyfriends, who grow up to give it to the young girls they start seeing. If we could collapse this bridge of intergenerational sex, we could go a long way towards breaking the hold of this epidemic on young girls."

preventing mother-to-child transmission does not necessarily concern men. It is women who need to know how to protect their children."

In 2001, Ms. Jegede-Ekpe joined forces with other women to form the National Community of Women Living with AIDS. It teaches women about their rights and gives them gender-specific information on HIV/AIDS. Understaffed and ill-financed, the organization still operates only in Lagos state, even though it aims for a national reach.


Africa Renewal / Mutume

Ms. Yinka Jegede-Ekpe

Speaking out has not been easy. When Ms. Jegede-Ekpe revealed her HIV status while still in nursing school, the principal tried to expel her. Her dorm-mates locked her out of the women's bathrooms and relegated her to menial chores. But she fought for her right to continue studying. Finding out that she had been infected through the unhygienic practices of her dentist, Ms. Jegede-Ekpe fought for changes in dental procedures.

The fight has been worth it because of the changes she sees taking place in the communities of Lagos. "Right now, if a man comes to the podium and tries to speak for the women and children, I am sure that a woman will stand up from the crowd and say, 'Please don't talk for me while I'm here.'"

Ms. Jegede-Ekpe was awarded the 2004 Reebok Human Rights Award in New York for courage in changing her country's response to HIV/AIDS. Her organization is currently working on setting up a crisis fund for women and an educational trust fund for orphans.

The task force noted that because transactional sex is driven by poverty and growing consumerism, the long-term solution is sustained economic development, with expanded career and educational opportunities for young women. In the meantime, the report called for an explicit focus in education and prevention programmes on the dangers of transactional sex, as well as pressure on older men by political, religious and community leaders not to exploit poor women for sex.

Beyond 'ABC'

Rising infection rates among women are also raising questions about the widely praised "ABC" prevention strategy (Abstain, Be faithful or use a Condom). That approach has been credited with dramatically reducing HIV-infection rates in Uganda. But recent research showing high infection rates among monogamous married women in Africa — combined with gender inequality and what Ms. Cravero terms a global "epidemic" of sexual violence — suggests that for many women ABC offers no real choices at all.

"Across the globe," she notes, "women, particularly young women, are not in a position to abstain. They are not in a position to demand faithfulness of their partners. In many cases they are in fact faithful, but are being infected by unfaithful partners." Similarly, researchers report that women in transactional or dependent relationships are often unable to compel the use of condoms by their partners or are unwilling to even raise the issue for fear of rejection or physical assault.

"A woman who is a victim of violence or the fear of violence is not going to negotiate anything, let alone fidelity or condom use," Ms. Cravero continues. "Her main objective is to get through the day without being beaten up. Real-life prevention strategies for women include reducing the levels of violence against women, protecting their property and inheritance rights and ensuring their access to education."

Global Coalition for a global crisis

The scale and complexity of the HIV/AIDS crisis in Africa has served as the catalyst for a desperately needed focus on the special vulnerabilities and needs of African women. But the steady rise of HIV-infection rates among women globally is a grim reminder that, while the need for action is most urgent in Africa, the problem extends far beyond its borders.

In February 2004, a group of international organizations and non-governmental women's rights and anti-AIDS activists, including UNAIDS Director Peter Piot and UN Population Fund Executive Director Thoraya Obaid launched an informal network called the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS. Its goal is to focus international attention on the "feminization" of the AIDS epidemic and mobilize greater political and financial resources for practical and effective responses.

Jorgen Schuytte / Peter Arnold

More care is needed for women living with HIV/AIDS.

The coalition, which is guided by a 28-member steering committee, is based on six key principles:

- women are not victims
- young women and girls are at particular risk
- many women at great risk of infection do not themselves engage in high-risk behavior, a situation termed "the paradox of low risk and high vulnerability"
- the factors contributing to women's vulnerability can be changed with sufficient commitment and resources
- the involvement of women living with HIV and AIDS is vital for success
- efforts to reduce the burden of HIV/AIDS on women must also engage boys and men

Despite its global mandate and broad principles of unity, Ms. Cravero explains, the coalition is intended to promote practical solutions to specific problems. These include women's property and inheritance rights, access to care and treatment services, protection from violence and the development of new prevention technologies, including anti-viral foams and female condoms, which women can control.

She acknowledged that the solution to the crisis of women and AIDS lies in the fundamental transformation of women's economic and social status. But transformation can be viewed both as an ultimate goal and as "a day-to-day process." By supporting the efforts of women themselves and emphasizing concrete and short-term legislative, political and policy responses in key areas, she concludes, "we can reduce the level of violence against women, improve their chances of remaining in school and challenge discriminatory legislation. Even if we don't immediately transform women's place in society, we can make a difference in the lives of women and girls." ■

** Get more information on UNAIDS and its activities against the disease at: www.unaids.org*

Africa's youth on the edge of the chasm

Stephen Lewis raises alarm over loss of young women to HIV/AIDS

Since his appointment in January 2001 as UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, Ambassador Stephen Lewis has earned a reputation as a fierce, plainspoken advocate for greater action against the HIV/AIDS pandemic sweeping the continent. He was an early — and often lonely — voice for a much stronger focus on the special challenges to and contributions from African women in the struggle against the disease.

A counselor for South Africa's "Love Life" AIDS education group gives advice to another young woman.

Getty Images / Brent Stirton

On 12 July, Mr. Lewis delivered the first of two major addresses on women and AIDS at the International AIDS Conference in Bangkok, drawing attention to the soaring HIV infection rates among young African women and calling for urgent action.

The announcement that girls and young women now account for 75 per cent of all Africans aged 15–24 living with HIV and AIDS, he said, "is unprecedented in the history of the pandemic and . . . perhaps the most ominous warning of what is yet to come."

The new data, released a week earlier by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), revealed that women (both older and younger) comprised more than 50 per cent of the HIV-positive population in every country in sub-Saharan Africa. "The astonishing sameness of the figures demonstrates the deep-rooted and universal nature of the gender inequality," Mr. Lewis asserted. "But even more it demonstrates the potential for a further explosion of infection amongst the 15–24 age group." If such inequities intensify, he cautioned, "then the youth of Africa are walking on the edge of the chasm."

Mr. Lewis believed that African leaders do not fully understand the situation. "If they did, they'd be howling from the rooftops and changing legislative policies at every turn."

He asked: "Where are the laws that descend with draconian force on those who are guilty of rape and sexual violence? Where are the laws that deal with rape within marriage? Where are the laws in every country that enshrine property and inheritance for women?"

He recited a long list of missing legislation: laws to protect women from stigma and discrimination, to raise the minimum age of marriage, to abolish school fees so that girls and other children orphaned by AIDS can go to school. He asked why there are no laws or regulatory mechanisms to guarantee that HIV-positive young women and girls have access to treatment in proportion to their numbers. "Where are the laws that guarantee equality before the law for women in all matters economic and social? In short, where are the laws which move decisively towards gender equality?"

Profound changes in attitudes and behaviours can take generations, Mr. Lewis noted. But "in the meantime, we're losing the women and girls of Africa." It is well past time for political leaders to create a legal framework that can give women a chance to resist the virus, he said. And the danger of inaction is stark: "Whole societies are unraveling, as parts of Africa are depopulated of their women." ■

African women: a long battle for equality

For Ms. Sibongile Msimela, the UNAIDS gender adviser for East and Southern Africa, the solution to soaring HIV infection rates among women is the full empowerment of women. "None of it is rocket science," she told *Africa Renewal* from her Johannesburg office. "If the international community had done the things we know we need to do around women's empowerment issues, the impact of HIV and AIDS wouldn't be as severe as it is today."

As welcome as the current focus on women is, much of the debate seems to imply that "African women are doing nothing," she continued. "It's important to keep in mind that African women themselves are very actively pushing for change. The notion that people will come from outside to save African women is wrong. The battle for women's rights has been fought by African women for a long time now."

Women are organized to work for their rights in much of Africa, she noted. They are particularly strong in places like South Africa and Zimbabwe, where they participated in the struggle against white minority rule. "That history of organizing," she said, "has really helped women keep their communities together through some of the darkest times. It's not all gloom and doom."

Civil society engages African plan

Despite criticisms, more grassroots groups want to work with NEPAD

By ***Ernest Harsch***

In the Southern African country of Malawi, most local civil society organizations were initially very critical of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Activists objected that the continental development plan was "top-down," having been drafted by a handful of presidents and then adopted by African leaders, without public consultation, in 2001. They complained that its accent on promoting foreign investment and trade ignored the constraints facing especially poor countries such as Malawi.

After some reflection, however, more than 70 such groups formed a coalition known as the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), which welcomed NEPAD "as a landmark in the process of shared aspirations for African unity." According to one of its leading spokesmen, Mr. Dalitso Kingsley Kubalasa, the network still has reservations about the plan, but also "remains hopeful that a genuine NEPAD" can help Africans reduce poverty, achieve gender equity and attain global economic viability. Rather than "giving up on NEPAD because the process hasn't been ideal," he says, Malawian civil society organizations have decided instead to put forward their own suggestions for advancing NEPAD, "to make it really work."

The situation in Malawi is not unique. In South Africa, Nigeria and Senegal — whose presidents have been among NEPAD's foremost advocates — hardly a month goes by without some major public gathering designed to mobilize local support for it. In Ethiopia a consortium of civil society groups has been formed to monitor the plan's implementation and progress. In Algeria, a coalition of 19 groups has initiated a programme to popularize NEPAD at literacy centres and among students and grassroots organizations.

Increasingly, civil society activists are starting to see NEPAD not so much as a flawed plan of a few presidents, but as an opportunity that could be seized to advance Africa's development priorities.

"Overall," notes a study released in June by the UN's Office of the Special Adviser on Africa (OSAA), "there is evidence of growing efforts to involve or consult with civil society organizations and the private sector in implementing NEPAD." It adds, however, that "the nature and scope of this involvement vary greatly."

Scepticism and faultfinding

Although NEPAD is already more than three years old, it is still not well known or understood in many parts of Africa. Some leaders go to continental or regional meetings on NEPAD, but then fail to speak about it to their own citizens once they return home. Few African parliaments have discussed the plan in any detail.

One study commissioned by OSAA on women's organizations and NEPAD found that in Cameroon "dialogue barely existed" between civil society groups and the government. A survey in South Africa found that 17 per cent of all respondents had never heard of NEPAD and that another 15 per cent believed it would not change their lives, even if it were implemented. Ms. Grace Akumu, executive director of the non-governmental Climate Network Africa, notes that while NEPAD is sometimes discussed in Kenya's capital, "not very many NEPAD activities have taken place outside Nairobi, in the rural areas."

The limited public knowledge of NEPAD, combined with the initial lack of official consultation with civil society and private sector groups, contributed to the plan's critical reception by grassroots activists. Many continue to find fault with what they consider its shortcomings.

Mr. Oduor Ong'wen of the Kenyan group EcoNews Africa notes that NEPAD embraces the poverty-reduction and other targets of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), while at the same time urging Africa's greater integration into the world economy through expanded trade and foreign investment. He believes that NEPAD's promoters are too optimistic about the benefits of globalization and worries that policies of economic liberalization will further hamper achievement of the MDGs.

In an article published in February 2004, Mr. Tajudeen Abdul Raheem of the Uganda-based Pan African Movement and Mr. Alex de Waal of the London-based Justice Africa argued: "NEPAD needs popular debate. Some of the core ideas are sound, though having fallen into the hands of the bureaucrats they have had any

Getty Images / AFP / Rajesh Jantilal

Civil society groups want a voice in NEPAD's implementation, insisting that it not be left to governments alone.

originality systematically bleached out." In particular, they fear, some of the governments promoting the plan are beginning to focus too much on securing donor aid for projects. "NEPAD is not an implementing agency. If it were to become so, it would be a competitor to existing ministries and departments and would rightly be shunned." The New Partnership, they insist, should instead focus primarily on "the big policy issues" such as trade, debt relief, HIV/AIDS and the quality of aid.

Some seem to reject NEPAD's basic orientation. According to Mr. Khabele Matlosa of the SAPES Trust, a Zimbabwe-based educational and research organization, the policies reflected in the New Partnership are essentially "neo-liberal and dependent."

Getty Images / Michel Porro

Traditional chiefs in Ghana: There and in several other countries, chiefs are offering to mobilize rural support for NEPAD.

'We need to be realistic'

Increasingly, however, other groups and activists are starting to see NEPAD not so much as a flawed plan of a few presidents, but as an opportunity that could be seized to advance Africa's development priorities. After all, most civil society groups agree with the plan's stated commitments to advance democracy, entrench human rights, improve education and health services, strengthen productive capacities and achieve regional integration.

African civil society, argues Ms. Akumu of Kenya's Climate Network Africa, should identify the positive aspects of NEPAD, "because if all we see is negatives . . . then what is the point of getting engaged in it?" The positive elements, she believes, include the political will of leading African statesmen "to do something for the development of Africa," as well as their commitment to good governance, peace, democracy and respect for human rights. She adds that working through NEPAD does not prevent grassroots organizations from criticizing its shortcomings. In fact, "we mention them so that we can strategize to better overcome them."

South African Member of Parliament Ben Turok, who urges greater cooperation between civil society and parliamentarians on NEPAD, notes that most African governments remain very weak. Grassroots activists therefore should not expect rapid implementation. "These are early days and the path we intend to follow is difficult. Thus we need to be realistic about these matters."

At a national civil society forum on NEPAD in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2003, the several dozen participating groups drew a number of general conclusions. The first was: "NEPAD is an important idea whose time has come and we must keep up with it." The groups also pledged to undertake their own NEPAD activities and to "make enough noise" that the government will hear them.

Democracy and the state

From the outset, a number of groups saw NEPAD's insistence on democracy, respect for human rights, peace and good governance as one of its most innovative features. Previous African development plans, they noted, virtually ignored the political underpinnings for economic and social progress.

In May 2003, the Electoral Institute of South Africa (EISA) convened a conference on "strengthening democracy through NEPAD," with a focus on how civil society in particular can help that process. Speakers highlighted the importance of strengthening Africa's electoral systems, which remain weak in much of the continent.

Participants also drew attention to the unique role of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a NEPAD initiative in which participating countries agree voluntarily to submit their governance performance to review by other Africans. Mr. Chris Landsberg, director of South Africa's Centre for Policy Studies, warned against "false expectations" of what the APRM will be able to achieve, since it does not have any punitive authority over countries with poor governance standards. Its value, he said, is as a "socializing tool" to popularize and encourage the spread of good governance practices.

Above all, agreed the academics and activists at the EISA conference, civil society organizations have a vital role in strengthening democracy and human rights in Africa and in holding the continent's leadership accountable, not only for its political practices but also for its management of Africa's financial resources. By making governments more transparent and responsive to their citizens, some participants pointed out, civil society groups do not aim to weaken the state, but to strengthen its capacity to carry out essential public functions.

Mr. Kubalasa of the MEJN coalition in Malawi makes a similar point. NEPAD's economic policy framework, he says, "should be facilitated by a strong and inclusive developmental state, which engages various levels of society."

In some countries, traditional chiefs are coming forward to offer their assistance in helping to promote developmental efforts in Africa's countryside, where the central state is often especially weak. "If NEPAD

is meant to fight for the eradication of poverty and the upliftment of the socio-economic conditions of the masses, its protagonists must take it to the rural areas," says Mr. Patekile Holomisa, president of the Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa. "This time traditional leaders and their structures must be taken on board. Their special status in African life must be used to enhance the legitimacy of the development projects."

In August 2003, traditional chiefs from Ghana, Nigeria, South Africa and Togo met in Kumasi, Ghana, for the first African conference of traditional leaders. They pledged to support initiatives for peace and development through the African Union (AU) and within the framework of NEPAD, to join the fight against HIV/AIDS and to promote "the cause of women towards gender equity."

AfricaPhotos.com

Voting in Benin: Many civil society groups see NEPAD's emphasis on strengthening democracy as one of its most innovative features.

Mobilizing women

Women's associations have also been critical of NEPAD, stating that, aside from some scattered references to women in the original document, it has virtually ignored the gender dimensions of development.

"Poverty," argues Ms. Nombulelo Siqwana-Ndulo of South Africa's Commission on Gender Equality, "has a disproportionately large impact on women. Unless an analysis of rural poverty is underpinned by a gendered approach — an approach that examines what women can and cannot do due to the position they occupy in society — development projects will not be able to pull these women out of poverty and into the mainstream."

At an October 2003 conference in Nairobi on women's participation in the African Union and NEPAD, Ms. Maria Nzomo, Kenya's high commissioner to Zimbabwe, noted some of the steps taken since the plan's adoption to enhance the role of women. These have included the African Peer Review Mechanism, whose seven-member panel of experts includes three women, one of whom is the chair. Ms. Nzomo urged women's organizations to press for a stronger voice within both the AU and the various initiatives launched under NEPAD.

Evidence that this is occurring came on 19 June 2004 in the Senegalese town of Louga, when an association of women teachers held a public conference on women's participation in NEPAD. Foreign Minister Cheikh Tidiane Gadio welcomed their mobilization, noting that women comprise a majority of farmers in Senegal and other African countries, and therefore are central for realizing NEPAD's agricultural development objectives. He urged the women, as educators, to think about developing plans for teaching and publicizing NEPAD.

Building channels for dialogue

As they discuss how to have a stronger voice on NEPAD and other initiatives, grassroots activists are also grappling with some of the shortcomings of African civil society itself. At a number of the conferences held over the past year, speakers have pointed to the diversity of civil society organizations in Africa, many of them small, with few financial resources or skilled personnel and with varying interests and areas of concern.

Mr. Turok noted that the South African parliament and government do not interact with non-governmental groups as much as they should, "partly because civil society is badly organized." The problem becomes even more complex when such groups try to work with the African Union and other regional organizations. "If civil society wants to engage with all these institutions, it must pull up its socks," he said.

According to Mr. Tebego Molefi, from Rhodes University in Grahamstown, South Africa, civil society groups should adopt constitutions that embrace the objectives of the AU and NEPAD and should develop "fair, participatory and transparent election processes" within their own structures. But the main weakness facing civil society groups in Africa, he asserts, is that too many governments are still not willing to talk openly with them.

At a May 2003 conference in Ghana on civil society and NEPAD, Mr. Getachew Demeke, an Ethiopian with long experience in the civil society movement, called on African governments to reform their laws to make it easier for grassroots organizations to operate. He also urged government officials to recognize the importance of civil society participation in political change and public policy, in line with NEPAD's commitments.

For their part, more and more civil society groups believe that "continuing engagement" with both the African Union and NEPAD must be an ongoing priority, says Mr. Kubalasa from Malawi. NEPAD's vision can become a reality, he believes, "if Africa's leaders enter into a new partnership with their people. The vision of a new Africa dawning in the 21st century is too precious to be lost." ■

Youth pledge fight for Millennium goals

'NEPAD is important to young Africans'

By **Wilma Jean Emanuel Randle**
Dakar

For young people across Africa, education is vital, argues Mohammed A. Latif Mbengue, a 28-year-old graduate student at Senegal's Cheikh Anta Diop University. The fact that African countries have not yet succeeded in working together to solve the continent's problems has hampered access to education. "The lack of coordination makes it very difficult for me if I want to study at another African university."

He believes that the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which emphasizes regional integration, can help. He also thinks that the global campaign to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is essential. Endorsed by world leaders in 2000, the MDGs campaign has set targets that include reducing by half the number of people living in poverty by the year 2015, to ensure that all children complete primary education and to combat HIV/AIDS. When African leaders drew up NEPAD the following year, they incorporated the MDGs within their plan.

Mr. Mbengue and about 150 other youth leaders assembled in this Senegalese capital on 28 June–1 July, for the first-ever Pan-African Youth Leadership Summit. Organized by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the Global Peace Initiative of Women, a non-governmental organization, the summit focused on mobilizing the next generation of Africa's leaders behind the push to achieve the MDGs.

Ms. Eveline Herfkens, executive coordinator of the MDGs campaign, noted that young people under the age of 35 account for 60 per cent of Africa's population. They should not be considered only in terms of Africa's future, she said, but also its present, urging them to unite to call on governments to take up the challenge of combating poverty.

In a declaration, the African youth leaders identified conflict, HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption as the main obstacles to Africa's progress. They agreed to establish an ongoing network, via the Internet, to coordinate efforts to advance the MDGs and other development goals.

The African youth leaders identified conflict, HIV/AIDS, poverty and corruption as the main obstacles to Africa's progress. They agreed to establish an ongoing network, via the Internet, to coordinate efforts to advance the MDGs.

When asked specifically about their views of NEPAD, some delegates responded that the programme remains a mystery, since they have received little information about it. Some were confused about the relationship between NEPAD and the MDGs campaign.

"I'm aware of the objectives of NEPAD, but many of the young people in my country are not, and that's because there has been almost no information directed towards them," said Ms. Marie Tamoifo Nkom, executive secretary of the Cameroon Association of Green Youth, an environmental advocacy group. Nevertheless, she told *Africa Renewal*, NEPAD's objectives address many issues, especially employment, that concern young people in Cameroon.

Ms. Aliaa Ahmed Mossallem, a 22-year-old from Egypt, saw hope in NEPAD's Africa-wide perspective. "NEPAD and the MDG effort are things that concern all countries, including my own," she said. "I think that it's important that youth be empowered to help make these efforts a reality."

Some believed that despite the summit's calls on young people to play a more active leadership role, the development programmes of governments and international organization must themselves devote greater attention to the specific interests and concerns of youth. "It's important that NEPAD and all these other initiatives focus on youth," Ms. Kaltouma Nadjina told *Africa Renewal*. A champion runner, she represented Chad at the Olympic Games in Athens in August and is also UNDP's Goodwill Ambassador in the country.

Unfortunately, added Ms. Aku Xorman Adzraku, who works in the youth division of the Planned Parenthood Association of Ghana, too few young people in Africa are yet aware of NEPAD. "Ways must be found to get young people involved, and one way to do that is to make information available that directly deals with young people." She noted that many of the young people she works with are concerned with the same issues addressed by NEPAD and the MDGs campaign, such as having food to eat, clothes to wear and the opportunity to advance their education. "Youth in my country are worried about their future." ■

UNDP

Participants in Dakar Youth Summit.

Joining business and Africa's development

African private sector urged to invest in NEPAD priorities

To realize the ambitious goals of the New Partnership for Africa's Development, governments must forge solid partnerships with African businesspeople, says the president of the African Union, Mr. Alpha Oumar Konaré. "We strongly believe in the African private sector," the former president of Mali told a conference on business support for NEPAD held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in December 2003. "Without its help, we cannot achieve great things."

African business leaders have often argued the same thing. "Harnessing the expertise and entrepreneurial spirit of the business community is crucial for mobilizing the capital, technology and human skills we need to ensure that NEPAD's bold vision for a new Africa becomes a reality," said Mr. Alhaji Bamanga Tukur, head of a Nigerian shipping company and executive president of the African Business Roundtable (ABR), at a conference in Tunisia on 25 June 2004.

Speaking just a few days later at the first African Union private sector forum in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Mr. Tukur emphasized that public-private partnerships between governments and businesses can have practical benefits for everyone. With limited foreign aid and other sources of public financing for infrastructure investments, he said, "public-private partnerships provide the only means for building the roads, the power and the water supplies that not only improve living standards but also provide the basic infrastructure for profitable business that creates wealth, jobs and hope for a better future."

More business engagement can also help prepare African countries to take better advantage of opportunities in the global marketplace, says the UN's Special Adviser on Africa, Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari. "A true and growing private sector would enhance competitive forces and promote competitiveness," he told the Johannesburg conference.

iAfrika Photos / Eric Miller

Businessmen in Mozambique: African entrepreneurs welcome NEPAD's promotion of the private sector.

From ignorance to opportunity

Like other sectors of the African public, business leaders have had mixed reactions to NEPAD. They have been encouraged by the plan's emphasis on private investment — the document approved by African leaders in 2001 mentions the private sector more than 20 times. However, notes Mr. Peter Ondeng, managing director of the Kenya NEPAD Business Group, the plan was initially developed "without the necessary consultations that would have enabled a broader ownership of the vision."

As a result, many entrepreneurs still do not understand how they can become involved. "Even a cursory survey of the level of knowledge and information about NEPAD among the business community shows that it is very low," observes Mr. Steve Godfrey, director of the Commonwealth Business Council, which represents more than 4,000 businesses, more than half of them African or operating in Africa.

In 2004, PricewaterhouseCoopers, an international investment-services company, interviewed nearly 250 business heads in Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda. It found that only 38 per cent of the chief executives believed that NEPAD will succeed and that 32 per cent thought it is unlikely to succeed (the remainder were undecided). Most thought the biggest obstacles facing NEPAD were poor and corrupt political leadership, war and trade barriers. "The private sector," commented the survey, "recognizes the potential benefits of NEPAD. However, NEPAD must make a greater effort to build awareness of its goal."

A start is already being made. The African Business Roundtable, which was established more than a decade ago as a forum for dialogue between private businesses and national and international financial institutions, in 2002 set up the NEPAD Business Group (NBG), a coalition of international business organizations and groups of African businesses. The ABR has named a liaison person to work directly with the NEPAD Secretariat in South Africa. Both the ABR and the NBG have been organizing numerous conferences and forums across Africa to

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Progress in tackling Africa's conflicts

But poverty, weakness of democracy hinder peace efforts, Annan reports

Africa today is afflicted by fewer serious armed conflicts than it was just six years ago, says UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. When he issued his first major report on the causes of conflict in Africa in 1998, there were 14 countries in the midst of war and another 11 were suffering from severe political turbulence. Today, Mr. Annan notes in his annual follow-up report,* just a half-dozen African countries are suffering from serious domestic armed conflicts, among them Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan. And very few other countries are facing deep political crises.

The UN and the rest of the international community have been "responding more readily" to armed conflicts in Africa, the Secretary-General notes. But much credit for the improvement also rests with Africa. The African Union, various subregional organizations and a number of governments have become more active in mobilizing military forces for peacekeeping missions or in defusing political crises before they escalate into large-scale violence, he reports.

Despite "steady" improvements in these areas, he adds, there have been only "modest and slow" advances in alleviating the underlying economic and political conditions that foster tension and strife. Poverty reduction has been slow, in spite of efforts by African countries and their external partners to implement the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Concerns are rising about high levels of youth unemployment and heightened competition over scarce resources because of demographic pressures. There also has been only limited progress in strengthening democracy, enhancing administrative capacity, ensuring independence of the judiciary and promoting transparency and accountability.

Renewed confidence

After earlier disappointments in attempts to bring peace to Somalia, Rwanda, Angola, Liberia and elsewhere in Africa in 1990s, the success of the UN peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone — which brought an end to years of civil war — "marked a watershed," Mr. Annan says. It "has given confidence to the United Nations to again support complex peace operations in Africa, and today Africa receives the highest deployment of UN peacekeeping efforts in the world." (According to the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, nearly 48,000 peacekeeping troops were stationed in Africa at the end of August 2004.)

The international community should be "sensitive and responsive" to the security concerns that Africa itself has identified, says Mr. Annan. External assistance should be provided in a way that respects Africans' priorities, institutions and decisions.

In recent years, the UN Security Council has approved new peacekeeping missions in Burundi, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. The UN has also dispatched an advance team to southern Sudan, where a peace agreement has been signed, and the world body is collaborating closely with the African Union in efforts to facilitate a solution to the current crisis in Sudan's Darfur region. In Sudan as in a number of other armed conflicts in Africa, such crises often have serious consequences for neighbouring countries, highlighting the importance of regional solutions.

Most of the newer missions are "multi-disciplinary," Mr. Annan notes. They do not simply try to monitor and enforce signed peace agreements. They also seek to address the "root causes" of conflict by promoting sustainable development, economic recovery, democratic pluralism, transparency and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

African initiatives

The African Union's establishment earlier this year of a Peace and Security Council has given a "major boost" to its own peace initiatives, Mr. Annan reports. The Council has already taken up the political situations in a dozen African countries,

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Rwandan contingent of African Union force on its way to Darfur, Sudan.

Getty Images / Gianluigi Guercia

African plan advances, says UN

Annan urges more consistent backing for NEPAD

African countries are making considerable progress in carrying out their continental plan, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan says. Yet to help them surmount the serious challenges they continue to face, he argues in his second annual report on NEPAD's implementation,* Africans also require firmer and more coherent support from the international community. This should entail more aid, debt relief, foreign investment and trade opportunities. It also should involve greater consistency in external policies, so that advances on one front are not undercut by lags on another.

"Africa is putting its shoulder to the wheel," explains Under-Secretary-General Ibrahim Gambari, the UN's Special Adviser on Africa. "Since NEPAD's adoption in 2001, it has accomplished a lot."

The Secretary-General's report notes "much progress" on the African Peer Review Mechanism, a voluntary process by which African leaders subject their standards of democracy, human rights, governance and economic management to review by other Africans. So far, 23 countries — nearly half of Africa's total — have joined, and several more are considering joining. Between May and July 2004, the mechanism's first support missions travelled to Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius and Kenya to prepare for their reviews.

To develop Africa's physical infrastructure, reports Mr. Annan, NEPAD's heads of state implementation committee has approved a list of 20 "top priority" projects, including in energy, transport, water and sanitation, and information and communications technologies. Although the World Bank and African Development Bank have already earmarked some financing, about half of the estimated total cost of $8.1 bn is expected to come from the private sector.

Debt undercuts aid to Africa, $ bn

	1990	1995	2000	2001	2002
Net aid inflows *	25.6	22.0	15.8	16.6	22.2
Debt servicing outflows **	23.0	22.2	22.1	21.4	21.9

** Official development assistance. ** Includes servicing payments on long-term public and private debt.*

Source: UN Africa Renewal based on data in: "New Partnership for Africa's Development: second consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support," report of the UN Secretary-General, 4 August 2004.

Coherence in policies

Despite Africa's progress so far, points out Mr. Gambari, "there's a lot left to do. And for that, Africa's needs its external partners to be even more forthcoming." The international community is already giving more, he acknowledges, and Africans welcome that support. "But sometimes the partners give with one hand and take away with the other."

While the international community is now beginning to provide more support to Africa, the report emphasizes, that assistance is sometimes not well-coordinated, limiting its effectiveness. Moreover, international policies and practices on aid, debt, trade and investment often are inconsistent, with shortcomings in one area undermining progress in another.

The Secretary-General's report, for example, notes that the overall level of aid to Africa has increased during the past couple years. According to donor country figures, total official development assistance to the region reached $22.2 bn in 2002 (up from just $16.4 bn in 2000). Preliminary UN estimates project that it may have reached $23.1 bn in 2003.

Yet this is still below the $25.6 bn in aid Africa received in 1990. And most of the financing won through aid inflows continues to be lost through high debt-servicing payments. In 2002 alone, Africa paid $21.9 bn in external debt-servicing costs, almost the same amount it received in aid that year.

So far, 23 African countries have received some debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative. However, even for the 11 African countries that have reached the HIPC stage at which they are eligible for extensive debt cancellation, observes the Secretary-General, there is not much hope for "debt sustainability." As a result, "there is now an increasing call for a new framework for debt sustainability" that goes beyond HIPC.

Donor aid policies and international trade practices are also contradictory, the report emphasizes. Africa's share of the world market has declined dramatically since 1970, reports the Secretary-General, bringing estimated losses of income of about $70 bn a year — almost five times what Africa receives in aid annually. The continent especially needs reforms in agricultural trade, he says, including elimination of agricultural subsidies in developed countries, which place Africa's agricultural exports at a competitive disadvantage.

The Secretary-General urges Africa's partners to better align their policies in these

iAfrika Photos / Eric Miller

African governments pledge to spend 15 per cent of their budgets on health.

different areas. "Improved policy coherence," he says, "promises to be a virtuous link in the cycle of increased and effective aid, reformed trade policies and debt relief by developed countries towards Africa."

African action

About half of the Secretary-General's report looks at the actions that Africans themselves have undertaken over the past year. African countries, reports Mr. Annan, are seeking to gradually align their budgetary spending with NEPAD priorities. They have committed themselves, for example, to allocate 15 per cent of their national budgets to health and 10 per cent to agriculture. About 5 per cent of both national and local budgets should be earmarked for water and sanitation, while spending on science and technology should rise to 1 per cent of gross domestic product within five years.

This process is likely to be slow, says the report, since most African countries face severe fiscal constraints and are bound by budgetary agreements negotiated with external financing institutions. In addition, the share of external aid devoted to agriculture in Africa has been declining, while the health sector is losing professionals both to emigration and to the ravages of the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

There have been advances in promoting women's involvement in NEPAD implementation, the report notes. Out of the seven members of the African Peer Review Mechanism's panel of eminent personalities, three are women, one of whom is the panel's chair. Several women hold high-ranking positions representing their governments on the NEPAD steering committee and several also hold senior positions in the NEPAD Secretariat.

As the implementation of NEPAD moves forward, the Secretary-General concludes, a "strengthened partnership" is needed. Within that partnership, African countries would "deepen their commitments" to NEPAD, while the continent's development partners should take a series of "carefully targeted" measures to give a major impetus to the African plan. ■

** The full text of the report is available online at: <www.un.org/AR>, click on NEPAD/UN Reports.*

Progress in tackling Africa's conflicts

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and has decided to pay particular attention to several of those which have shown little sign of progress: in Darfur, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo and between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

The Secretary-General commends the African Union for sending a peacekeeping mission to Burundi in 2002, which helped to stabilize the situation there (a UN peacekeeping mission has now taken over from the AU force). The African Union and the Inter-Governmental Authority for Development, a sub-regional group in the Horn of Africa, have been working to help reconcile the various sides in Somalia. In June 2004, the Economic Community of West African States authorized the creation of a standby peacekeeping unit of 6,500 trained and equipped soldiers, for rapid deployment to any country that may fall into crisis in West Africa.

The Group of Eight industrialized countries, notes the report, have agreed to provide financial support and training for the African Union's plans to set up a similar standby force at the continental level. The European Union has recently pledged €250 mn for the AU's peace fund.

While helping in such ways, Mr. Annan adds, the international community should at the same time be "sensitive and responsive" to the security concerns that Africa itself has identified. Especially with a strengthened AU now in place, external assistance should be provided in a way that respects Africans' priorities, institutions and decisions. ■

** The full text of the report is available online at: <www.un.org/AR>, click on NEPAD/UN Reports.*

Joining business and Africa's development

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publicize NEPAD and highlight the potential avenues for private investment in sectors that are high NEPAD priorities.

Long-term perspective

These meetings also provide opportunities for African business leaders to air their complaints and urge governments to adopt policies to encourage the private sector. At the Johannesburg event, for example, speakers pointed to problems of red tape, corruption and inequitable practices in world trade.

Some African governments are still uncertain about working with the private sector, Mr. Tukur noted in Tunisia, and "only pay lip service to the important role that a thriving indigenous private sector plays." He urged them to adopt policies that match their pronouncements. Similarly, Mr. Samuel Dossou-Aworet, president of Petrolin, an African oil company, insists that governments give more responsibility to African businesspeople, "who, by their active engagement, deserve to be partners of choice of the African Union and NEPAD."

At some meetings, participants have also pointed to the shortcomings and weaknesses of the African private sector, including limited capital, diverse interests and weak management capacity. Others, noting that NEPAD's basic focus is on long-term development, advised their colleagues to look beyond the possibility of quick profits.

Ms. Joan Guriras, director of a Namibian advertising company, told other executives at the Johannesburg conference that they should think not just about their shareholders' returns, but also about how they can plough back more into Africa's development. "We need a greater relationship and partnership in assisting governments to achieve some of their objectives," she said. "Businesspeople need to think of development as more of a long-term plan than they do." ■

Africa strives to rebuild its industries

Economic diversification to guard against unfavourable commodity prices

from page 1

South Africa, a country developed through the revenues of its gold and diamond mines, is drafting new legislation to encourage companies to first process minerals before exporting them. In neighbouring Botswana, a realization that the economy cannot be sustained indefinitely on a single product, diamonds, has given renewed impetus to that country's industrialization programme. The story is much the same in a small but growing number of African countries, including Namibia and Senegal.

Africa is clearly on a new path, says Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako of the Addis Ababa-based UN Economic Commission for Africa, marked by economic reforms, greater commitment to political pluralism, a decline in conflicts and policies more favourable to private investment. "African countries should aim to be middle-income industrialized nations in the next three decades." While this is a bold vision, Mr. Amoako says, it can be achieved.

As African industries faltered, most economies remained dependent on a narrow range of primary products. Development planners warn that unless the continent diversifies the range of products it produces and exports, it will be further marginalized in the global economy.

Early hopes — and disappointments

When most African countries gained their independence in the 1960s, the new governments saw industrialization as a logical means of shaking off colonial trade patterns and attain sustainable development. They employed state-led strategies to develop local industries to produce goods that were previously imported. But the results fell short of expectations.

By the 1980s, many African governments embraced structural adjustment policies promoted by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund which reduced the role of the state in economic activities and encouraged the sale of public enterprises. While many of these enterprises had been inefficiently run, they often accounted for most industrial production and employment.

As African industries faltered, most economies remained dependent on a narrow range of primary products. This is a growing concern among development planners, who warn that unless the continent diversifies the range of products it produces and exports, it will be further marginalized in the global economy. According to the World Bank, the African share of global non-oil exports is now less than one-half what it was in the early 1980s.

Diversifying production

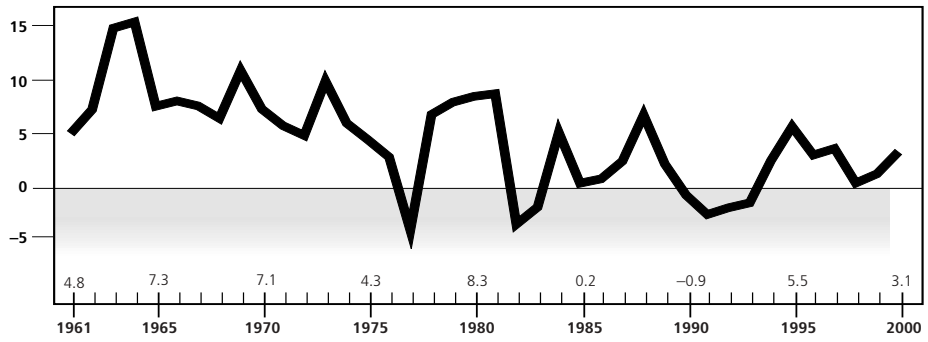
Building — or rebuilding — African industry is a major challenge. Across the developing world, countries that have successfully shifted from producing raw materials into manufacturing have done so in stages. They started by moving into the processing of primary commodities, a process known as vertical diversification. Some African countries, for instance, are now exporting leather instead of just hides, textiles in place of cotton, or paper, plywood or furniture instead of logs. Côte d'Ivoire, now a major fish- and wood-processing country, has managed to do this. So has Senegal, which also shifted from simply selling raw fish into processing and packaging its produce.

"Our entrepreneurs," says Botswana's President Festus Mogae, "should look for technology from partners to enable them to process their products and sell value-added goods abroad." At independence in 1966, his country was one of Africa's poorest, but it soon discovered diamonds and its economy has been one of the continent's fastest-growing. Aware that these diamonds will one day be exhausted, Botswana has used the revenues to invest heavily in human resources.

The government has also invested in infrastructure, to help make the country more attractive to investors outside the mining sector. At independence Botswana had only 5 kilometres of tarred road. Now, virtually all national roads are surfaced and the country boasts modern, well-equipped hospitals in all major centres.

However, Botswana remains dependent on diamonds, which bring in $2 bn of the country's $3 bn in annual foreign revenue. Due to dry weather, the Southern African country has limited options in agriculture, except for cattle ranching. So in 1997 it

Manufacturing value added in sub-Saharan Africa
annual % growth rate, 1961–2000



Source: UN Africa Renewal from World Bank data.

launched a major industrialization drive, based partly on value-added industries in the cattle sector such as meat and hide processing and the production of cattle and chicken feed. The country is also promoting a small but rapidly growing industrial sector in textiles, motor-vehicle assembly, electronics, garments and jewellery.

Although South Africa has managed to build up sub-Saharan Africa's most sophisticated industrial sector, executives there are also concerned about the economy's continuing reliance on mining. "We cannot solely depend on the extraction industry and forget about the fact that the resources that we have . . . are finite," says Mr. Sandile Nogxina, director-general of South Africa's Ministry of Mines.

South African parliamentarians are currently drafting legislation to make it easier for companies to produce jewellery in South Africa, either on their own or with foreign partners. "If Belgium and Israel have become centres for the international trade in diamonds without having their own resources, why can't we develop a sector in South Africa where upstream and downstream activities reside side by side?" asks Mr. Nogxina.

UNIDO

Cotton-spinning mill in Sudan: By processing their raw materials, African countries can stimulate their economies.

Over-reliance on commodities

Earnings from primary commodities represent 40 per cent of Africa's gross domestic product. For 20 countries, a single commodity accounts for more than 50 per cent of export revenue. But such dependence on primary products, especially agricultural crops, means the continent is vulnerable to unstable market prices and weather conditions.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) reports that between 1997 and 2001, primary commodities lost more than 50 per cent of their purchasing power in relation to manufactured goods. This meant that in order to maintain their 1997 incomes, African exporters would have had to more than double production volumes in 2001. The biggest declines were in coffee, cocoa, tea and vegetable-seed oils, which comprise about 20 per cent of the continent's non-fuel commodity exports. Almost all the countries hardest hit by falling commodity prices are among the poorest in the world.

"Africa's overall economic decline is linked with its economic structure and its trade patterns," notes the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in its *Industrial Development Report 2004*. "Africa has not significantly industrialized, it has not reduced its initial dependence on primary commodities for exports . . . in contrast to the rest of the developing world." Although other developing regions managed to break into the global market for manufactured goods, notes UNIDO, Africa did not.

Overall, manufactured goods now account for 80 per cent of the exports from developing countries, compared with just 25 per cent in 1980. Those countries that successfully transformed their economies did so by investing revenue from natural resources into infrastructure, human resources and new technologies. But natural-resource-rich African countries such as Benin, Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Nigeria did not make such a transformation, notes UNIDO.

In Nigeria, some oil revenue was channeled into import-substituting industries, which the government gave heavy protection from external competition. But when oil earnings fell, such subsidies proved too expensive and these industries could not compete externally. More than $200 bn was invested in the non-oil sector

Polishing Africa's diamonds in Africa

In mid-September, a Belgian-based diamond company broke ground in Gaborone, Botswana, for the construction of a new diamond cutting and polishing factory. The operation, which is being built by Eurostar Diamond Traders, will eventually be the biggest such factory in Africa, employing more than 1,000 workers.

Up to now, almost all of Botswana's rough diamonds have been sent abroad for polishing by the South African De Beers company, which dominates the world diamond trade and jointly owns, with the Botswana government, the local diamond mining enterprise.

Although the Eurostar factory will change this pattern, De Beers supports the initiative. Said De Beers Managing Director Gary Ralfe at a news conference following the ground-breaking ceremony: "De Beers increasingly realizes how important it is to respect the entirely reasonable and justified demands by the governments of Botswana and Namibia to create . . . jobs." A similar Israeli-owned diamond polishing factory was recently opened in Namibia, and employs 550 workers.

in Nigeria, but this sector is now smaller, on a per-capita basis, than it was before the oil boom.

Industry collapses

Nigeria's story was common across Africa. Seeking economic independence from colonial trading patterns, many countries adopted an industrialization model known as "import substitution," producing domestic goods in place of imported ones. But these efforts were thwarted by high transportation costs in landlocked states, small markets and limited skills and technology. Many such industries were themselves dependent on imported inputs, especially oil, and were vulnerable to foreign currency shortages.

On top of this, structural adjustment policies eroded the industrial base in many countries, notes a recent paper by African researchers Samuel Wangwe and Haji Semboja. They note that the rate of growth in manufacturing value added (which measures the growth of the industrial sector) declined from 3.7 per cent during the early 1990s to 2 per cent by 1994.

"Compared with anywhere else in the developing world, Africa's was the most serious manufacturing-capacity loss," the academics note. This was because structural adjustment drastically curtailed the role of the state in industrial development. There were notable exceptions, they report, including Botswana, Mauritius and Zimbabwe, which attained some success with strong public sector involvement.

Trade liberalization, a component of structural adjustment, also caused havoc. Tariffs on imported goods were reduced, allowing cheaper imports to flood domestic markets and further eroding the remaining small and medium-sized enterprises. Unable to compete, many businesses were forced to close down or were privatized.

Africa now finds itself in a vicious cycle. Its manufacturing industries are largely dominated by a small and weak indigenous private sector at one end of the scale and large, foreign multinational corporations at the other. Medium-sized indigenous firms — vital for developing a strong domestic private manufacturing sector — are largely absent.

Das Fotoarchiv / Ron Giling

Ghanaian workers sand wood used in manufacturing garden furniture for export.

International trade policy

Further complicating matters, some global trade practices discriminate against developing countries seeking to export manufactured goods. One of these practices is "tariff escalation," in which customs duties may be very low or absent for primary goods but then rise as the product undergoes processing. Because the practice protects domestic markets from imported processed goods, it inhibits international trade in such products.

For example, the US Department of Agriculture reports that in North America the tariff rate is about 25 per cent for raw tobacco, but rises to 112 for tobacco products. The European Union (EU), another major market for African products, charges average tariffs of 21 per cent for fresh fruit, but raises the rate to about 37 per cent for fruit juice.

World Trade Organization Director-General Supachai Panitchpakdi agrees that despite attempts at the WTO to lower them, tariff rates remain high on some products in which developing countries are competitive. This, he says, prevents them "from moving away from dependence on a few commodities."

Some trade arrangements designed to assist developing countries also reinforce over-reliance on primary commodities. By offering preferential duty-free or quota-free access to European and North American markets to primary products, but not manufactured goods, they tend to encourage greater production of raw materials, critics point out.

One such treaty was the Lomé Convention (now known as the Cotonou Convention), a series of international aid and trade arrangements first negotiated in 1975 between the EU and former colonies in Africa, the Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) regions. While its architects had noble intentions — to guarantee market access to bananas, sugar, beef and other goods produced in ACP countries and foster sustainable development — the agreement's achievements were modest.

One weakness "was that the design of the ACP countries' preferential access to the EU market was based on selected, mainly traditional commodities, and this tended to discourage diversification of ACP economies in general and industrialization in particular," writes Mr. Gerrishon

Ikiara in a study for the Netherlands-based European Centre for Development Policy Management. Moreover, because they faced no direct competition, many countries did not improve efficiency even in the production of these goods. When the agreements finally end in 2009, many ACP countries will not be able to compete with those that have become more efficient because they did not enjoy such protection.

Competitiveness will be undermined if governments fail to maintain law and order, guarantee the security of individuals and investments, protect intellectual property rights or provide an efficient infrastructure, adequate training, education and health systems.

Mauritius: getting it right

Despite such obstacles, a few African countries have managed to develop a formula for industrial transformation. Among these is Mauritius. Once a poor, sugar-dependent nation, it now has a diversified economy in which manufacturing and tourism play a growing role. Its per capita income is about $10,000, many times higher than the sub-Saharan average of $300.

The country's sugar sector is still the third largest export earner, having benefited from preferential access agreements with Europe over the last 50 years. The arrangements guaranteed Mauritius sugar prices that were 100-200 per cent above world prices. But by 2009 these agreements will be phased out. Mauritius has long prepared for this by developing other sectors.

A key government strategy was to develop export-processing zones, duty-free industrial areas that also provide tax incentives to businesses. The policy allowed the government to protect existing import-substituting industries while at the same time permitting new export firms to take advantage of duty-free imports. The authorities strategically encouraged investments in service industries such as finance and information and communication technologies.

Realizing that the labour force was ill-equipped for the transition, the government increased spending on manpower and infrastructure development. Mauritius, which now boasts world-class telecommunications facilities, is seeking to emulate India's Bangalore and become the information-technology hub of the region, utilizing a workforce able to operate in both English and French. Mauritius also invested in a fibre-optic underwater communications cable that connects East Asia and South Africa, and is currently amending its labour laws to attract investors. It recently secured a $100 mn low-interest loan from India to build a "cyber city," a project which will produce information technology goods and create 5,000 jobs.

In addition, Mauritius has other advantages. UNIDO notes that the country was fortunate in that its industrialization programme coincided with the need of Hong Kong-based firms to relocate their production sites. The government of Mauritius has also succeeded in restraining corruption and other bad practices by its public officials.

In a case study in its *Economic Report on Africa 2003*, the UN Economic Commission for Africa concluded that the success of Mauritius has much to do with how development strategies are formulated. The policies are "well thought out to address the needs of the economy," and are not simply formulated in reaction to crises.

Attracting investors

Despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, African leaders remain optimistic that the continent is now turning the corner. In 2001, they adopted a new vision known as the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which stresses peace, security and good governance. To accelerate development, the plan targets certain priority areas for investment, including human resources and infrastructure, particularly in energy and transport.

"We believe that without the leadership of the African countries themselves and the multilateral development institutions, the private sector will not come to Africa on the scale that is required," says Mr. Wiseman Nkuhlu, chairman of the NEPAD Steering Committee. Through the facilitation of the NEPAD Secretariat, a number of large-scale cross-border infrastructure projects are planned.

Last year, Zambia, Tanzania and Kenya signed an agreement to build a 400-megawatt power line linking the three countries at a cost of $323 mn, partly financed by the World Bank. The African Development Bank has committed $95 mn to an Algeria-Morocco-Spain electricity interconnection project, $20 mn to a Nigeria-Togo-Benin power project and $100 mn to a Mali-Burkina Faso-Ghana road project.

Many such development projects remain underfunded, however. If Africa is to attain its goals, notes World Bank Chief Economist François Bourguignon, the international community needs to play a role, "investing more in education, trade promotion and the development of infrastructure."

Africa's declining share in global trade

Over the last few decades Africa's share of world trade has progressively declined. During the 1950s, sub-Saharan Africa accounted for about 3 per cent of world exports, but by the 1990s this had fallen to 1 per cent. "Even in the area where Africa is supposed to have a competitive advantage [such as agriculture], it has been losing market share," says Mr. Kamran Kousari of the UN Conference on Trade and Development.

In a study, *Trade Performance and Commodity Dependence*, released in February, the agency attributes the failure to increase agricultural productivity in Africa to a number of factors. These include reliance on an ill-supported small-scale farming sector, rudimentary technology, donor-driven policies that have reduced the role of state institutions in the sector and domestic subsidies in industrial countries that have eroded the competitiveness of African farmers.

Over the years, Africa has lost its advantage in growing cocoa, tea and coffee more competitively than Latin American and Asian producers, and is losing markets to countries in these regions. According to a World Bank assessment, had the continent maintained its 1950s share of world trade, the value of its annual exports today would be $65 bn, a figure that far surpasses the $13 bn in aid the continent received in 2000.

For their part, African governments urgently need to focus on the "supply side," notes UNIDO. This would entail training workers to operate plants at competitive levels, raising quality, introducing new products and encouraging higher value-added activities. While this depends on adequate financial investment, reports UNIDO, it primarily requires "a set of resources more precious than money: skills, organization, knowledge, effort and institutions."

On the way to recovery

While African governments and their development partners continue to grapple with the factors responsible for sub-Saharan Africa's weak performance, there is a growing consensus that, at least in a number of countries, the policy environment for recovery now exists. The World Bank forecasts that in the medium term, manufacturing value added will grow at about 4 per cent annually.

A turning point out of the decline of African industry came in the mid-1990s, reports UNIDO, as 36 countries attained industrial growth rates higher than during the first half of the decade. Among the factors that contributed to this shift, the agency states, was a new focus by African governments on competitiveness. In the past, policy-makers believed competitiveness largely related to wage levels, exchange rates and macro-economic policies. Today, UNIDO identifies infrastructure, governance, skills and technology as the four elements influencing competitiveness.

Moreover, adds UNIDO, all four elements are dependent to varying degrees on state policies and capacities. Competitiveness will be undermined if governments fail either to maintain law and order, to guarantee the security of individuals and investments, to protect intellectual property rights or to provide an efficient infrastructure, adequate training, education and health systems, notes the agency's *Industrial Development Report*.

An earlier *African Competitiveness Report* issued in 1998 by the World Economic Forum and the Harvard Institute for International Development found that small, dynamic economies with solid export bases perform the best. In sub-Saharan Africa, the top performers were Mauritius, Botswana and Namibia. Other countries that managed to avoid high levels of economic and political turmoil also made it into the top half of the ratings. The survey is now issued periodically. And as with other international ratings, African governments prefer to climb rather than descend the ranks. ■

Getty Images / Time Life Pictures / Louise J. Gubb

Shaping a gold bar in South Africa: Despite industrial diversification, the country still depends heavily on mineral exports.

'Golden leaf' loses its lustre

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groups, it dropped to 24 bn by 2003, says Mr. Peter Ucko of the National Council Against Smoking. He says taxation was "the single most important factor that contributed to the decline in smoking, because it made smoking less affordable." South Africa also used other measures, passing legislation in 1995 that requires health warnings to be placed on tobacco product packages and banning advertising in 2000. The government complemented these actions with increased public-awareness and educational campaigns in the media, and it set up a national telephone "quit line."

In many African countries, there is "ample room to increase tobacco taxes," says Dr. Yach. Whereas taxes amount to two-thirds or more of the retail price of a pack of cigarettes in high-income countries, by contrast they amount to no more than half the retail price in poorer countries. Of greater concern, he says, is that between 1990 and 2000 cigarette prices in many African countries declined in real terms. In Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, Kenya and Nigeria, a pack of 20 cigarettes is now more than 25 per cent cheaper than it was in 1990.

Dr. Yach notes that a 10 per cent increase in cigarette taxes in Zambia, for example, would increase cigarette tax revenues by more than 7 per cent and lead to a 2.4 per cent drop in consumption. Moreover, the additional funds generated by such efforts could be used for other health priorities. "Extra tobacco tax revenue could be a crucial and immediate source of funding for HIV/AIDS and malaria, as well as for tobacco control." ■

Mixed results for regional economic blocs

ECA highlights progress and shortcomings of African integration

Since 1994, when Africa began implementing a treaty to establish a continent-wide economic community, integration has proceeded weakly and irregularly across countries, sectors and regional economic communities. In its first comprehensive assessment of regional integration in Africa, the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), based in Addis-Ababa, reports that the best performing regional economic communities had well-developed integration programmes that were implemented "steadily and effectively by member states." By contrast those communities affected by political, economic and social upheavals performed poorly, notes the study, *Assessing Regional Integration in Africa 2004,* released in July.

There are 14 major regional economic groupings in Africa, considered the building blocks of the African Economic Community, which is expected to gradually develop over the next few decades under the terms of the 1994 Abuja Treaty. The goals of that treaty have been reinforced by the adoption in 2001 of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the establishment the following year of the African Union, a continental political organization.

The ECA reports that integration among African countries improved by an average of 4.5 per cent annually from 1994 to 1999, the last year for which it had comprehensive data for a variety of indicators. The study measured performance in the linkage of eight key economic sectors — trade, transport, communications, energy, agriculture, manufacturing, finance and labour markets. It assessed, for example, the extent to which countries have removed barriers to trade (such as tariffs), have developed policies to allow people to move freely and work in other countries and have built links such as roads and power grids.

"There has been some progress. You find that inter-connectivity within Southern Africa, in terms of transport links, is much improved now," ECA Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako said at the report's launch in New York. "The same can be said of North Africa. But it is still a major, major problem for Central Africa."

Strong performance

One of the strong performers was the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). In 1981, ECOWAS members began eliminating tariffs among themselves on unprocessed goods and in 1990 started lifting tariffs on industrial products. Now, no ECOWAS country except Liberia charges tariffs on unprocessed goods. On the other hand, only Benin has so far removed tariffs on industrial products.

The report places the continent's regional economic communities into five categories based on their performance. ECOWAS, the West African Economic and Monetary Union and the Southern African Development Community were "above average," with improvements of about 6 per cent annually in the period 1994-99.

"Strong trade expansion and above-average performance in the money and finance, transport, and telecommunication sectors explain the faster integration of the top three performers," the report states.

The four other categories were:

- *Average:* (4-6 per cent) — Central African Economic and Monetary Community, Community of Sahel-Saharan States and Economic Community of Central African States.
- *Close to average:* (2-4 per cent) — East African Community, Inter-Governmental Authority on Development and Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.
- *Stagnant:* (2 per cent and lower) — Arab Maghreb Union.
- *Volatile:* (erratic results) — Economic Community of Great Lakes Countries, Indian Ocean Commission and Mano River Union.

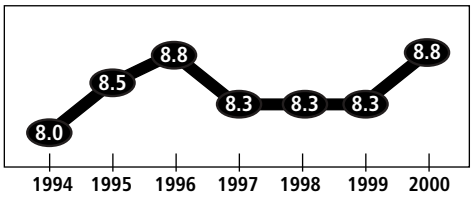
Conflict and weak institutions

In those that performed badly, progress was hampered by low "implementation of treaty obligations, an inability to prevent and resolve conflicts decisively and a lack of resources to support integration."

The ECA reports that integration in agriculture has been very disappointing, with the sector registering 2 per cent growth during the period under study. Obstacles included bureaucratic red tape, protective non-tariff barriers, lack of credit, land scarcity, insufficient supplies and poor infrastructure. However, there has been visible cooperation in early warning systems and agricultural research. Early warning systems are strongest in East and Southern Africa.

A key hindrance to integration in Africa has been the multiplicity of regional economic communities with overlapping memberships, resulting in a duplication of efforts and waste of scarce resources. Out of sub-Saharan Africa's 53 countries, only 6 are members of one regional economic community, 26 belong to two and 20 are members of at least three. Fewer regional communities would reduce administration costs and provide funds to improve day-to-day operations and finance projects, the report states.

Trade among African countries
as % of GDP



Source: UN Africa Renewal from ECA data.

"If you don't have strong institutions to implement these objectives then you are not going to make much progress. That is one lesson we have learned," said Mr. Amoako. "Our institutions have not been strong enough and they lack resources, both human and financial." ■

Accords save trade talks from collapse

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include in the current round, known as the Singapore issues. Since the WTO's ministerial meeting in Singapore in 1996, industrial countries have been pushing for binding agreements on trade and investment, competition policy, government procurement and trade facilitation.

The issues that were dropped include trade and investment, which seeks to expand the rights of foreign investors, as well as competition policy, which would regulate cartels and lead to open competition between foreign and local firms, to the detriment of the latter. Negotiations on an agreement on government procurement, to permit foreign firms to compete for government tenders, were also shelved. Many developing countries were wary of the possible damage such agreements would have had on their development policies.

However, talks on an agreement on trade facilitation, to lower the costs and simplify customs procedures, will go on.

The deadline for concluding the round, which had been set for January 2005, was extended to at least December 2005, when WTO members meet for the organization's highest decision-making forum, the ministerial meeting. Having missed a number of crucial deadlines, there were fears that if no agreement emerged from Geneva in July, the round would completely break down. "The Doha round is back on track," said EU Trade Commissioner Pascal Lamy at the conclusion of the agreements. "We have laid out a map for the road ahead," noted US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick. Now it is time to negotiate "the speed limits for how far and how fast we will lower trade barriers."

Maintaining the status quo

However, it remains to be seen if there will be any substantial change in the way international trade is conducted and whether developing countries will benefit. Scepticism was reinforced when a US trade negotiator, seeking to calm the fears of American farmers, told the US media that in order to meet some of its July commitments without actual reducing farm supports, the US would simply shift assistance into different categories permitted by the WTO.

Even at the conclusion of the current round, it may take a long time before the benefits of lowering farm subsidies are realized. In July, the US pledged to lower the cap on its agricultural supports by 20 per cent in the first year of implementation of the final agreement. The US spent about $23 bn in subsidies annually over the last three years — well below the maximum of $49 bn permitted under the current agreement. So lowering the cap by 20 per cent could have no impact at all on actual payments. In addition, some observers warn, the language in the framework is vague.

Uganda Department of Information

Northern cotton subsidies depress world prices and reduce the earnings of Africa cotton exporters.

"In agriculture, the framework is a legal instrument for the US and EU to maintain their subsidies," argues Ms. Aileen Kwa, policy analyst with the non-governmental group Focus on the Global South. "It is nothing but a box-shuffling exercise, even as developing countries' markets are forced open."

Lack of transparency

Organizations that monitored the negotiations in Geneva charge that the final agreements largely represent the interests of a few powerful countries. In agriculture, the main negotiations to decide the final text were carried out by a so-called group of five interested parties — the US, European Union, Australia, Brazil and India. "For developing countries, the main decisions were left to Brazil and India," reports Ms. Kwa.

African delegates complained that the most outspoken countries were left out of the "green rooms" — meetings in which only a small group of nations engage in negotiations. Others noted that the poorer countries had very little leeway to oppose the final text presented to them, given that it had already been endorsed by their more powerful counterparts in the Group of 21 and by industrial nations.

According to Mr. Zaki Laïdi of the Centre for International Research in France, countries of the South have succeeded in placing agricultural issues at the heart of the negotiations, even though agriculture represents only 8 per cent of world trade.

However, poorer nations, especially the least developed, may not gain as much from agricultural exports. They have continually stressed the importance of not conceding too much ground on trade in industrial goods. They opposed the draft agreement, which lays the framework for significant tariff cuts. African and Caribbean countries argued in particular that this would open their domestic markets to imports of low-cost industrial products, killing their efforts to build their own industries.

"All in all, the text is a raw deal for the South," maintains Ms. Kwa. "It is the makings of a round that will be catastrophic for the poor." ■

AFRICA AGENDA

7–8 October 2004, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — African Voices: Second Meeting of the Commission for Africa. Launched by UK Prime Minister Tony Blair, the Commission will look at recommendations for Africa's future. Contact Nicola Savage, tel (44 20) 7023 1869, e-mail <n-savage@dfid.gov.uk>.

11–15 October 2004, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — African Development Forum, sponsored by UN Economic Commission for Africa. Contact Robert Okello, tel (251-1) 443040, fax (251-1) 514416, e-mail <rokello@uneca.org>.

13–15 October 2004, Johannesburg (South Africa) — Eskom African Business Leaders Forum 2004, to define and construct a prosperous future for Africa. Contact Estie Schafer, tel (27-11) 807 0948, fax (27-11) 807 0919, e-mail <estie@businessinafrica.co.za>, website <www.businessinafrica.net>.

17–21 October, Pittsburgh (USA) — International Water Conference, highlighting issues such as waste water and water preparation. Contact Tracy Devlin, e-mail <t.devlin@eswp.com>, website <www.eswp.com/water/water.htm>.

27–28 October 2004, Nairobi (Kenya) — Mobilizing ICT to Improve Healthcare in Africa. Contact Sean Moroney, e-mail <sean@aitecafrica.com>.

1–2 November 2004, Tokyo (Japan) — Asia-Africa Trade and Investment Conference, follow-up to the Third Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD). Contact Mieko Ikegame, tel (1-212) 963-1937.

1–4 November 2004, Conakry (Guinea) — Ecotourism in National Parks and Protected Areas in Africa. Tel (224) 45 32 49/41 49 94, fax: (224) 45 36 76/45 32 78/45 51 64, e-mail <opda@sotelgui.net.gn>.

19 November 2004, Dakar (Senegal) — Ai Investments Awards. Sponsored by *Africa Investor* magazine to highlight achievements in promoting direct investment in Africa. Website <www.africa-investor.com>.

19 November 2004, New York (USA) — Building the ICT Capacity of African Universities for Promoting Development. Contact Jackie Sayegh, tel (1-607) 255-6849, e-mail <jsb25@cornell.edu>, website <www.einaudi.cornell.edu/africa/>.

22–24 November 2004, Geneva (Switzerland) — International Conference on Women Defending Peace. Aims to create new peace activism. Contact Lea Biason, tel (41 22) 741 77 40, fax (41 22) 741 77 05, e-mail <wdp@dcaf.ch>, website <www.dcaf.ch/wdp/>.

22–24 November 2004, Marrakech (Morocco) — International Conference on Media Issues, a follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society. Contact ORBICOM, tel (514) 987-8743, fax (514) 987-0249, e-mail <orbicom@uqam.ca>, website <www.orbicom.uqam.ca>.

26–28 November 2004, Perth (Australia) — Twenty-Seventh Annual and International Conference on "African Renewal, African Renaissance": New Perspectives on Africa's Past and Africa's Present. Contact Dr. Jeremy Martens, tel (61 8) 6488-2154, e-mail <jmartens@arts.uwa.edu.au>.

12–14 January 2005, Cape Town (South Africa) — International Conference on Natural Products and Molecular Therapy, highlighting the use of natural products in health care. Contact Deborah McTeer, fax (27 21) 4486263, e-mail <deborah@curie.uct.ac.za>

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

3–9 September, Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso) — African Union Extraordinary Summit on Employment and Poverty Alleviation. Contact Dr. Grace Kalimugo, tel (251-1) 517700 ext 279, fax (251-1) 517844, e-mail <dsocial@africa-union.org>.

15 September 2004, Tunis (Tunisia) — Africa's Development: the Journey So Far and the Way Forward. Symposium organized by the African Development Bank. E-mail afdb@afdb.org, tel (216) 71 333 511 or 71 103 450, fax (216) 71 351 933.

AFRICA BOOKS

Imagine There's No Country: Poverty, Inequality, and Growth in the Era of Globalization by Surjit S. Bhalla (Institute for International Economics, Washington, DC, 2002; pb $28)

L'autre mondialisation by Dominique Wolton (Flammarion, Paris, France, 2004; 212 pp, €8.19)

The African Studies Companion: A Guide to Information Resources, ed. Hans M. Zell (Hans Zell Publishing, Scotland, UK; 2003)

Popularization of Science and Technology from Africa, eds. Mike Savage and Prem Naidoo (Commonwealth Secretariat, London, UK, 2002; 267 pp; pb £13.90)

Better Governance and Public Policy, eds. Dele Olowu and Soumana Sako (Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT, 2003; 288 pp; pb $26.95; hb $65)

Continent of Mothers, Continent of Hope: Understanding and Promoting Development in Africa Today by Torild Skard (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 256 pp; pb £14.95, $22.50; hb £45.00, $65.00)

Agricultures et paysanneries des Tiers mondes by Marc Dufumier (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 600 pp; €32)

Women and Land in Africa: Linking Research to Advocacy, ed. L. Muthoni Wanyeki (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 384 pp; pb £16.95, $29.95; hb £55.00, $75.00)

Capacity Building for a Reforming African Power Sector, ed. Mengistu Tefferra and Stephan Karekezi (Zed Books, London, UK, 2003; 320 pp; pb £15.95, $25.00; hb £49.95, $75.00)

Economies réelles en Afrique/African Real Economies by Georges Kobou (CODESRIA, Dakar, Senegal, 2004; 332 pp, pb £29.95)

Debt Relief Initiatives and Poverty Alleviation: Lessons from Africa by Munyae Mulinge and Pempelani Mufune (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 2004; 409 pp, pb £25.95, $42.95)

African Political Parties: Evolution, Institionalization and Governance, ed. M.A. Mohamed Salih (Pluto Press, Sterling, VA, US, 2003; 372 pp; hb $75.00; pb $24.95)

Histoire démographique du Burundi by Christian Thibon (Karthala, Paris, France, 2004; 440 pp; €29)

Eroding Local Capacity: International Humanitarian Action in Africa, eds. Monica Kathina Juma and Astri Suhrke (Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Uppsala, Sweden, 2003; 203 pp; SEK220, £16.95, $27.95)

Ameliorer les systemes de distribution du livre en Afrique by Tony Read, Carmelle Denning et al (Association for the Development of Education in Africa, Paris, France, 2004; 344 pp; pb £17.95, $29.95)

International Trade and Political Conflict: Commerce, Coalitions and Mobility by Michale J. Hiscox (Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ, US, 2002; 224 pp; hb $18.95, £13.95; pb $49.50, £35.00)

AIDS in Africa: How Did It Ever Happen? by Frank Ham (Kachere Series, 2004; 223 pp; hb £11.95, $22.95)

Shifting Burdens: Gender and Agrarian Change Under Neoliberalism, ed. Shahra Razavi (Kumarian Press, Bloomfield, CT, US, 2002; 288 pp; pb $29.95)

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Clothing and Footwear in African Industrialization by Dorothy McCornick and Christian M. Rogerson (Africa Institute of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa, 2004; 649 pp)

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Islam, Sectarianism and Politics in Sudan since Mahdiyya by Gabriel Warburg (Hurst & Co, UK, 2003; 252 pp; £16.95)

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A F R I C A

IN BRIEF

African Union plans more troops for Darfur

The African Union (AU) is hoping to send 3,000–5,000 troops to help dampen the deadly conflict in Sudan's Darfur region. Thousands of local residents are dying each month in Darfur, and about 1.5 million others have been uprooted from their homes because of attacks by pro-government militias and fighting between rebel forces and the regular army.

Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo, the current chairman of the AU, told a news conference in September that the 53-nation body aims to mobilize the force quickly, but needs external financing to deploy the African troops. It is seeking about $200 mn or the equivalent in transport equipment and other logistical support. Mr. Obasanjo said the Union is resolute in its commitment to bring peace and security to Darfur and is ready to play its part to revive the stalled peace talks.

Taking a lead role, the AU had already deployed about 80 military observers in Darfur, protected by just over 300 soldiers, to monitor a rarely observed cease-fire agreement signed in April by the Sudanese government and the two rebel movements — the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). From 23 August–18 September, the first substantial peace talks took place in Abuja, Nigeria, under the AU's auspices. The opposing parties reached agreement on humanitarian issues, and some progress was made on security matters, but the underlying political, economic and social differences remained unresolved. The talks were adjourned, but expected to resume, possibly by late October.

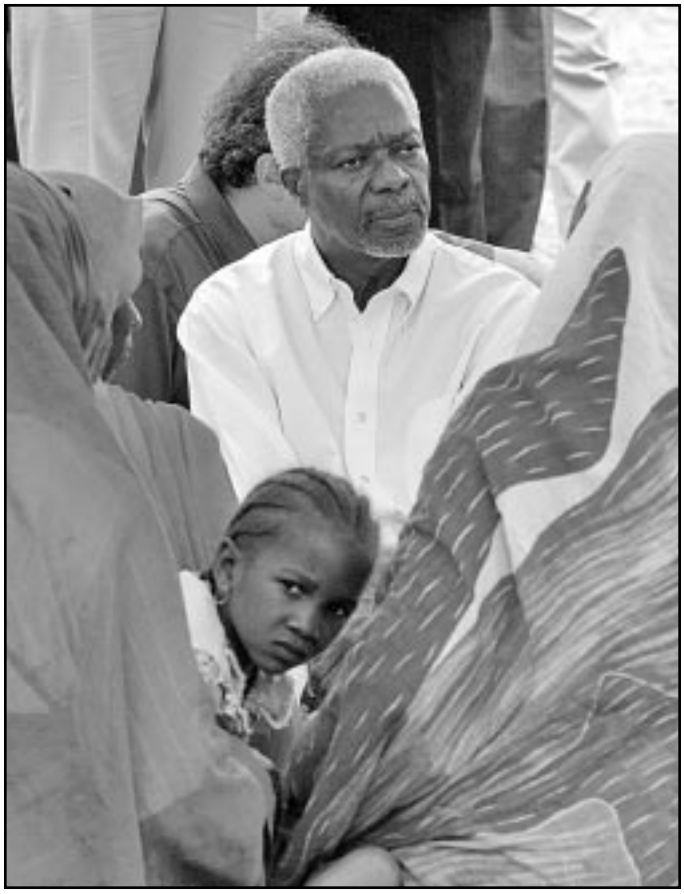
The rebels began their uprising in February 2003 after years of skirmishes between farmers who identify themselves as "African" and Arab nomadic livestock herders, mainly over land and water disputes. The rebels accused the central government in Khartoum of supporting the Arab pastoralists. Sudanese armed forces and a government-backed militia, known as Janjaweed, mobilized to suppress the rebellion.

The Janjaweed have been blamed for killing and raping thousands of civilians, and destroying homes, wells and cropland. According to prevalent estimates, some 50,000 people have been killed in the last 19 months. The UN estimates that nearly 1.5 million more are internally displaced and another 200,000 are refugees in neighbouring Chad. A total of 2 million people require humanitarian assistance.

The carnage in Darfur has aroused world attention and has prompted a number of UN Security Council actions. Concerned that Sudan has not fully met its obligations to protect civilians, disarm the Janjaweed militia and bring to justice those who have carried out the atrocities, the Council in September said that it would consider taking additional measures, including oil sanctions, against Sudan if necessary.

Describing the resolution as a "fatal blow," Sudanese Foreign Minister Mustafa Osman Ismail characterized the conflict as an uprising by rebels and a dispute among tribes, caused in part by an increase in population, livestock and the encroachment of deserts. On 1 October, the Sudanese government agreed to allow up to 3,500 AU troops to go to Darfur.

The UN is supporting the African Union's efforts to strengthen operations in all parts of Darfur to protect civilians. Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged the international community to assist the expansion of the AU's mission and emphasized that its strengthened presence requires substantial international resources and logistical support. ■



United Nations / Eskinder Debebe

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan during a visit to a camp for displaced people in Darfur, Sudan, in early July. Helping to resolve the devastating conflict in Darfur, in cooperation with the African Union, is a priority for the United Nations.

Locusts threaten West African harvests

A bumper harvest was originally expected in West Africa this season, but a substantial portion may be destroyed by swarms of locusts that have deluged North and West Africa, the worst infestation in that region for 15 years. The locusts could not have come at a worse time for the arid

Senegal honoured with human rights award

In September, the International League for Human Rights (ILHR) bestowed its annual human rights award on Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade. Established in 1941, the ILHR is an independent advocacy group that promotes human rights across the globe.

Africa Renewal / Ernest Harsch

Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, in New York, proposes a world summit on Islamic-Christian dialogue.

Receiving the award at a ceremony in New York, President Wade said that he accepted it on behalf of the Senegalese people, who have long fought to enshrine the principles of human rights and democracy. Mr. Wade himself was a long-time opposition leader who attained the presidency in 2000 following democratic elections. He noted that the new Senegalese constitution adopted in 2001 incorporates respect for basic human rights into the country's highest legal instrument. These include recognizing the equality of women and men in the workplace, as well as the right of women to own land and other property. A bill has just been submitted to parliament to formally abolish the death penalty.

Beyond his own country, President Wade said, the continent as a whole must adopt high human rights standards, in the spirit of the New Partnership for Africa's Development. "Africa should be built by respecting human rights." Shortly before the awards ceremony, he announced that his country is organizing a world summit in 2006 on "Islamic-Christian dialogue," to bring together political leaders from around the world to promote tolerance and cross-cultural interchange.

nations in the Sahel region, which had endured three years of drought before ample rains came this year.

The good rains created ideal breeding conditions for the locusts. Although the UN Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) began to warn of the impending locust danger earlier in the year, governments responded slowly, and by mid-September some 3-4 mn hectares of land were infested by the locusts. Mauritania, Senegal, Mali and Niger are the countries most at risk of heavy locust damage, reports the nine-member Inter-State Committee to Fight Drought in the Sahel. "The maximum losses likely in a scenario where the desert locust situation is not brought under control are estimated at 25 per cent of the overall production in the region."

The FAO has called for $100 mn in international assistance to control the swarms. But by September the countries had received pledges for only a third of the amount, while just 300,000 hectares of the land under siege could be treated.

In Mauritania alone, 1.6 mn hectares have been laid fallow by the swarms. In Mali, officials estimate that the swarms will destroy 1 mn tonnes of its grain crop — about a third of the nation's food supply. Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who has declared war on the locusts, warns that they could cause up to $500 mn of damage to agricultural production in his country.

Aided by the wind, locust swarms can travel for up to 200 kilometres a day. A single tonne of locusts (a small proportion of an average swarm) eats as much food as 2,500 people in a day. The locusts multiply rapidly and increase 10-fold from one generation to the next. Swarm sizes range from one square kilometre to hundreds of square kilometres, consisting of several billion locusts.

"Locusts don't respect political boundaries, so it is essential that the countries in the region work closely together to tackle this emergency," says FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf. The agency has been assisting 11 countries in the region to fight the swarm invasions. ■

Zambia declares AIDS 'emergency'

The government of Zambia declared a five-year HIV/AIDS "emergency" in early September. According to the authorities, the move is designed to permit the manufacture of cheaper anti-retroviral medicines (ARVs) to counter the effects of the disease, ***Reginald Ntomba reports from Lusaka.*** With one out of every five Zambians aged 15–49 estimated to be HIV-positive, there has been considerable pressure on the government to make ARV therapy more widely available to those living with the disease.

The emergency declaration was required under the terms of the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreement on intellectual property rights, which permits the importation and manufacture of generic medicines in the event of a national health crisis. The Zambian government has agreed that it will not seek to export such generic ARVs to other countries.

Zambia has already begun preparations for the local manufacture of ARVs, with technical assistance from Cuba. According to Minister of Health Brain Chituwo, Cuban specialists are seeking to ensure that the locally produced ARVs are suitable for public distribution.

Anti-AIDS activists have welcomed the move, saying it will help reduce the costs of ARVs, currently at about US$8 per person per month in government hospitals and higher at private clinics. "It's not just having [access]. We need affordable and effective drugs. We need a guarantee that they would be available and cheap," said Mr. Raymond Mwanza of the Network of Zambian People Living with HIV/AIDS.

A Ministry of Health spokesperson told *Africa Renewal* that the government wants "to ensure that the poor are not deprived" of access to ARVs. The government is extending its provision of ARVs from provincial and district hospitals to community health centres, the spokesperson said. He also noted that the authorities are planning to allocate additional spending to train more personnel to handle ARVs and provide other treatment for the opportunistic infections associated with HIV/AIDS. ■

AFRICA WATCH

POLIO

Vaccinations resume, as disease still spreads

The polio outbreak that originated in northern Nigeria after suspension of immunization last year has now spread to 12 other countries, endangering global efforts to eliminate the disease worldwide by 2005.

Intense polio vaccination efforts in Africa had succeeded in containing polio to only a few pockets by the end of 2002. However, in late 2003 some Islamic religious leaders in Nigeria charged that vaccines supplied by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) were contaminated. In response, four states in predominantly Muslim northern Nigeria halted immunization campaigns until their safety concerns were met.

Although vaccination efforts had resumed in all states by July, the disruption of the drive permitted the disease to spread from Nigeria to previously polio-free countries. In August, new infections were reported in Guinea and Mali. Other countries that have been affected are Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Ghana, Côte d'Ivoire, Sudan and Togo.

Epidemiologists fear a major epidemic could leave thousands of children paralyzed for life. African health ministers have responded by drawing up a series of synchronized mass immunization campaigns in 23 countries, with the goal of reaching 80 million children under the age of five. The Global Polio Eradication Initiative, a consortium that includes WHO, UNICEF and other groups, has warned that immunizations planned for October-November and into the next year may be seriously compromised by a lag of $100 mn in needed funding. ■

UNCTAD

Africa needs debt write-off

In a new study released in September, the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) calls on industrial nations to write off the debts of African nations to enable them to attain the internationally-agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Continued debt servicing by African countries constitutes a reverse transfer of resources to creditors by a group of countries that can least afford this, notes the report, entitled *Debt Sustainability: Oasis or Mirage?*

African economies must grow by a minimum of 7 per cent annually for the next decade to enable the continent to reduce poverty by half by 2015. To achieve this, the continent needs massive financial resources, UNCTAD reports, the bulk of which are currently being used to service debt. Africa, the world's poorest continent, received $540 bn in loans between 1970 and 2002 and paid back $550 bn in principal and interest, mainly to rich creditor countries. Despite these transfers, the continent still has a debt stock of $295 bn. ■

SLAVERY

Remembrance and living reality

The UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) led worldwide events on 23 August to commemorate the abolition of slavery. Among the ceremonies, a new slavery museum was opened in the US state of Ohio and a commemoration was held on Gorée Island, Senegal, once a major slave trade post. The date was set by UNESCO as the "International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and Its Abolition," marking the first decisive victory of slaves against their oppressors during the revolt of San Domingo in 1791. That uprising led to the creation of the independent state of Haiti.

UNESCO notes that despite the end of slavery, millions of people are still being held against their will across the world. "Although abolished and penalized in international instruments, [slavery] is still practiced in new forms that today affect millions of men, women and children," said UNESCO Director-General Koichiro Matsuura.

One of the fastest growing forms of modern day slavery is human trafficking, especially of women and girls, who are shipped from Africa, Asia and Eastern Europe to become sex slaves or domestic servants in Western Europe and North America. In a report released in April, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) noted that human trafficking is a problem in every African country. Children are the main victims, the report observed, through recruitment as soldiers and employment as forced labourers or prostitutes. ■

APPOINTMENTS


UN

Mr. Jean Ping *has been appointed president of the 59th session of the UN General Assembly. Since 1999 he had served as minister for foreign affairs for Gabon, where he also had been an elected member of parliament, director of cabinet for the president and minister of information. He began his professional life at the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1972. He was president of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries in 1993.*


UN

The UN Secretary-General has appointed ***Mr. Jan Pronk*** *as his special representative for Sudan, effective 18 June 2004. Mr. Pronk served three times as minister for development cooperation of the Netherlands and also as minister of the environment. He was the Secretary-General's special envoy for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002. He also was deputy secretary-general of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in 1980-85, and later served as a UN assistant secretary-general.*


UN

Mr. Juan E. Méndez *has been named by the UN Secretary-General as his first Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. Mr. Méndez is a human rights advocate, lawyer and former political prisoner from Argentina. As a lawyer in the 1970s, he sought to defend political prisoners against Argentina's military junta. He was jailed for those activities, and Amnesty International adopted him as a "prisoner of conscience." He worked for Human Rights Watch for 15 years, specializing in Western Hemisphere issues. At the time of his UN appointment, he was president of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, a non-governmental organization.*