AFRICA RENEWAL

Formerly 'Africa Recovery'

United Nations Department of Public Information Vol. 20 No. 3 October 2006

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United Nations
Vol. 20 No. 3 October 2006

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Darfur facing even greater horror

With Sudan crisis sharpening, UN sees no time for "half measures"

By **Ernest Harsch**

As fighting in Sudan's western region of Darfur escalates once again, the world's biggest humanitarian catastrophe is poised to become an even worse disaster. Aerial bombardments by the government and ground fighting with rebel forces are displacing yet more villagers and preventing aid workers from getting relief to people in the most insecure areas. "If the humanitarian operation were to collapse, we could see hundreds of thousands of deaths and a man-made catastrophe of an unprecedented scale in Darfur," UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Jan Egeland warned in late August.

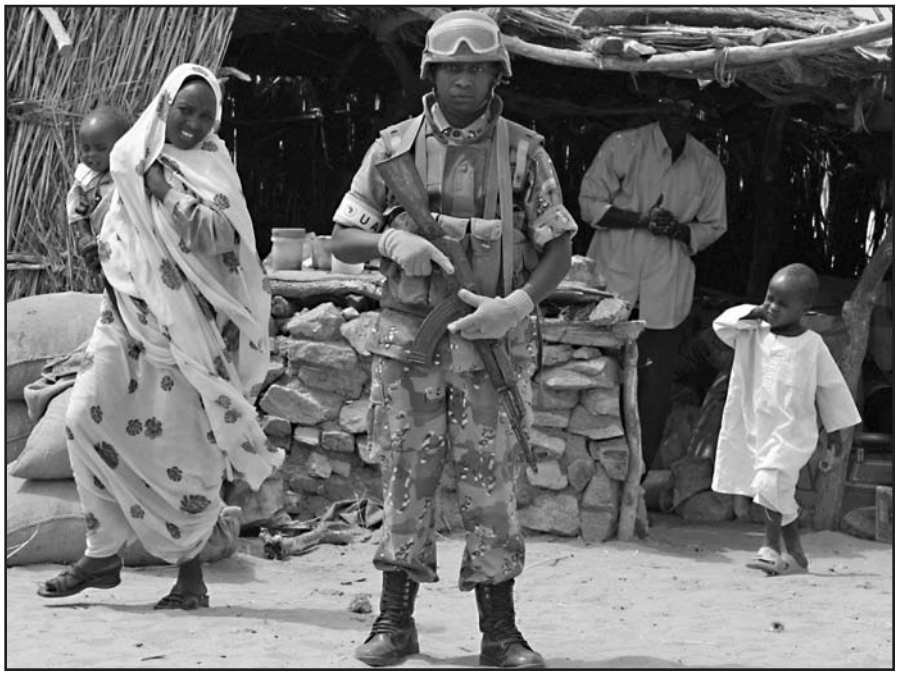
"I'm 85 years old and nothing like this has ever happened to me," Mohamed Abdulai Saleh, who fled his village in North Darfur, told IRIN, a UN humanitarian news service. "We need help."

The overall rise in violence has also brought an increase in sexual assaults. Reports of rape have soared in the giant Kalma camp for displaced people near Nyala, in South Darfur — surpassing more than 200 instances in just a five-week period. In the same province, reports the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, "In Gereida, women were exposed to attacks by armed militias as [the women] conducted income-generating activities."

During much of September, UN officials, aid agencies and human rights groups raised an especially urgent alarm as a sharp deterioration of the situation appeared imminent. The mandate of a 7,000-troop peacekeeping mission of the African Union (AU) was set to expire at the end of the month, while the government of Sudan continued to reject the establishment of a new, much stronger UN mission. This threatened to leave a complete peacekeeping vacuum, in which many more Darfurians could perish.

After intense negotiations, the AU agreed to extend its African Mission in Sudan (AMIS) by another three months, to the end of the year, with additional troops from African countries and more financial and logistical support from the Arab League and the UN. But even a moderately stronger African force, AU officials acknowledge, will not be able to protect so many displaced civilians over such a large territory. The extension of the AMIS mandate therefore buys mediators only a few more months in which to convince the Sudanese government to accept a UN mission and to pressure the contending factions in Darfur to stop obstructing relief operations.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, addressing the Security Council on 11 September, underlined the urgency of acting to save Darfur. "Can the international community, having not done enough for the people of Rwanda in their time of need, just watch as this tragedy deepens? . . . Lessons are either learned or not; principles are either upheld or scorned. This is no time for the middle ground of half measures or further debate."



An African Union soldier in Darfur: The African peacekeeping mission is too small to halt the violence, but is getting more troops and equipment, while the UN presses for a strong UN peacekeeping force to protect civilians.

Getty Images / AFP / Ramzi Haidar

A staggering toll

The crisis in Darfur, which has complex political and social roots, erupted on a major scale in early 2003, when rebel movements launched attacks on government forces. In response, the regular Sudanese military carried out major military operations and encouraged parallel actions by an irregular militia force known as the Janjaweed. Many of the government and Janjaweed attacks were directed against the Fur, Masaalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups, from which the rebels draw much of their support.

The toll on civilians has been enormous. According to estimates by UN and other relief personnel, some 200,000 or more people have been killed since the start of the conflict, either as a direct result of the fighting or indirectly because the disruption of farming and health services has seriously worsened hunger and disease.

Within Darfur, about 3 million people depend on relief aid to survive. Out of those, about 1.9 million have been forced from their homes and live in squalid, over-

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Ghana takes African governance exam

"Peer review" highlights progress, need for more reforms

By **Ernest Harsch**

While Ghana is an "oasis of peace and tranquility" in West Africa and is moving increasingly towards consolidating democracy, its progress remains "fragile," concludes a comprehensive African review of the country. The analysis, released publicly in mid-2006, was the first one completed under the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), a scheme through which African states voluntarily assess each other's political and economic management, or "governance."

The mechanism is an outgrowth of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), adopted by African leaders in 2001 as the continent's development framework. The APRM is open to all members of the African Union (AU) and so far about half (25) have joined.

Ghana, which nearly half a century ago became the first colony in sub-Saharan Africa to gain its independence, promptly welcomed the opportunity to also become the first to undergo the innovative review process. The APRM, says Mr. Kojo Assan, Ghana's NEPAD director, reflects a "moral contract to ensure that African leaders and their people adhere to the tenets of NEPAD," which include good governance, peace, economic and social development and closer cooperation among African countries.

According to Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, executive secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa, completion of this first review has been significant not only for Ghana, but for the continent as a whole. "The peer review of Ghana is an important milestone for the improvement of governance in African countries," he said in January in Khartoum, Sudan, where Ghanaian President John Kufuor underwent four hours of questioning by other African heads of state as part of the process.

AP / George Osodi

Ghana is consolidating its democracy, with three national elections since 1992 and a smooth transition between presidents and parties.

Ghana's review, seen as the first indicator of the seriousness and credibility of the APRM process, provoked interest far beyond the country's own borders. Many asked: How forthright and critical would the review be? How would the government respond?

Dialogue and consultation

The meeting in Khartoum, held on the sidelines of an AU summit, was the culmination of a process that began in March 2003, when Ghana formally acceded to the APRM. A year later the government appointed a national governing council to organize a "self-assessment" in which Ghanaians from all walks of life would identify issues they considered important. None of the seven members was in government, coming instead from academia, the legal profession, business and other sectors.

Despite the council's formal independence, civil society groups were initially skeptical and demanded more input into its consultations, reports Mr. Steven Gruzd, a researcher at the South African Institute of International Affairs. In response to such pressure, he finds, "government ceded considerable space to civil society, and a more transparent and credible review resulted."

Much of the practical work in gathering public views about the strengths and weaknesses of Ghana's system was conducted by four reputable and independent local research institutes, including the Centre for Democratic Development (CDD), which focused specifically on democratic political governance. The three others looked at economic management, corporate governance and socio-economic development. They conducted opinion surveys and produced reports totaling 1,200 pages. These studies, along with the results of other consultations, fed into the governing council's self-assessment report.

A member of the APRM's panel of eminent persons, Mr. Chris Stals, former governor of South Africa's Reserve Bank, then led a 16-member mission to Ghana for further discussions. The members, from 12 different African countries, toured all 10 regions of Ghana and spoke with members of the government, opposition parties, Parliament, civil society, the media, academics and professional bodies. The team then produced the final *Country Review Report of the Republic of Ghana.**

* *Available on various Ghanaian websites, as well as on the official NEPAD site: <www.nepad.org/2005/files/aprm/APRMGhanareport.pdf>.*

Mixed scorecard

The report notes that the peer review, as the "crown jewel" of NEPAD, is a demonstration of the new commitment by African leaders to improve the way in which they operate and interact with their citizens. The APRM's notion of governance is a broad one, encompassing management of virtually all sectors of society — from the top echelons of political power to business, the media, civil society and local communities.

The report praises Ghana for holding three successful elections since the restoration of multiparty democracy in 1992, including a peaceful transition between parties and presidents in 2000. The country also boasts a number of institutions that are "unique" in Africa and help "demystify" the process of government. These include a People's Assembly, first instituted in 2001, in which Ghanaians are able to directly question the president.

But the report also highlights shortcomings. It criticizes the large size of the cabinet — consisting of 88 full or deputy ministers at the time of the report — and the fact that many of the ministers are sitting members of Parliament, which is seen as undermining the separation of powers between the executive and legislature. The independence of the judiciary is also restricted, and the executive has at times interfered in court cases. For most Ghanaians, who cannot afford legal representation, the court system is simply inaccessible.

Numerous local conflicts exist, often over land tenure differences and disputes over succession to chiefly titles, while the system of decentralized government "is not working as it should." The police and other uniformed services continue to carry out abuses, including extrajudicial killings. Few women are in key decision-making positions and only 19 of the 200 members of Parliament are women.

According to a household survey conducted by the CDD, three-quarters of Ghanaians regarded corruption as a serious problem, with 80 per cent feeling it had worsened over previous years. The APRM report urges that sufficient resources be allocated to Ghana's various anti-corruption watchdog bodies so they can better curb the malady.

External dependence

The report notes that although Ghana was one of the first African countries to implement sweeping economic reforms in the 1980s and succeed in restoring economic growth, the economy remains vulnerable to external shocks, most notably through its dependence on exports of cocoa, which has seen a drastic fall in its world price in recent years.

Ghana's economic management exhibits a "heavy reliance on external resources" for financing development projects, the report adds. This has impelled the authorities to accept macroeconomic guidance from the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, while often ignoring policy advice from local research institutes, businesses and other sectors. "Some of the political elites are simply insensitive to feelings at grassroots level." Partly as a result, "certain social priorities are subordinated," and "to many, the role of the state is being redefined without adequate consultation with relevant national stakeholders."

The chapter on corporate governance observes that many Ghanaian businesses operate with few ethics and little transparency; awareness of corporate responsibility is low. Child labour remains widespread and the government needs to be more proactive to ensure that environmental standards are met by mining, logging, construction, fishing and other businesses.

Ghana's human development ranking has "improved remarkably" between 1975 and 2004, the review observes, but key areas of social development still lag significantly. Only about 16 per cent of Ghanaians living in rural areas have access to electricity or pipeborne water. Many schools have been built, raising overall enrolment rates, but without enough new teachers, the quality of education has declined. More than 54 per cent of females of 15 years or above have never been to school or are illiterate. Ghana has lost nearly a third of its health personnel to emigration abroad.

A February 2006 meeting of Ghana's People's Assembly, in which citizens directly question the president.

Ghana Information Services Department

The report pointedly notes wide regional disparities, with the three northern regions and parts of coastal Ghana having high poverty levels and "lagging far behind the rest of the country" in access to basic services such as water, electricity, health care, roads, nutrition and education.

Criticisms welcomed

When President Kufuor responded to questions and comments from other African heads of state at the January 2006 meeting in Khartoum, he heartily welcomed both the APRM report and the criticisms of his peers.

But in the government's first official response to the APRM report in June 2005, it took issue with some of the report's observations and suggestions, such as

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Wanted: jobs for Africa's youth

Seeking urgent solutions for armies of young unemployed

By **Gumisai Mutume**

African leaders are expressing a renewed sense of urgency to tackle youth unemployment on the continent and are beginning to develop and implement plans to create jobs. "In Africa, the problem of youth unemployment is more complex than in some other parts of the world," says Kenyan President Mwai Kibaki. "Slow-growing economies are unable to generate enough job opportunities to absorb the large number of young people qualifying from institutions of learning every year," he told delegates at a Youth Employment Summit (YES) in Nairobi, Kenya, in September.

Pancs / Sven Torfinn

A young woman professionally trained as an auto mechanic in Kenya: Creating jobs for women poses particular challenges.

"The evidence stares us in the face on the streets of our major cities," says Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, who until recently was Nigeria's finance minister. "Young men and women [are] roaming the streets with little to do, operating motorcycle taxis . . . and in some cases engaging in criminal activities."

Reducing the world's rate of youth unemployment by half could add $2,200 bn – $3,500 bn to the global economy, estimates the International Labour Organization (ILO). About 20 per cent of that gain would go to sub-Saharan Africa.

The Nairobi summit was organized by the YES Campaign, a network of nonprofit organizations operating in 60 countries around the world. It brought together about 2,000 young people, leaders from more than 120 countries and representatives of donor agencies to develop solutions.

President Kibaki says it is critical for African countries to come up with specific plans that target youth. Most employment policies fail to take into account the particular needs of young people or the fact that creating employment for women often poses its own challenges. There is a realization in many countries that youth, both male and female, are at a disadvantage on the job market. Even if they have had some schooling, many lack skills and job experience. Those who want to set up their own businesses do not have money. In many companies, last-in, first-out hiring policies mean that young people are the first to lose their jobs when a company is in distress.

Time for action

Young people (between 15 and 24 years old) made up 63 per cent of the jobless in sub-Saharan Africa in 2003, even though they constituted just 33 per cent of the labour market. Reported unemployment in Africa averages 10 per cent, but unofficially the figures are much higher, with some countries experiencing unemployment rates of more than 40 per cent. In Botswana, 43 per cent of young people were officially unemployed in 1998, compared with 13 per cent of adults. In Zambia, recent estimates had 30 per cent of adults as jobless, compared with 60 per cent of youths. Although the UN defines "youth" as those between 15 and 24 years, in some countries the definition includes those who are as old as 35.

A complex mix of factors contributes to Africa's unemployment figures. It includes stagnant or sluggish economies that are not growing fast enough to produce jobs for a growing population. Development experts say that Africa's economy needs to grow by 7 per cent annually in order to cut in half by 2015 the percentage of people living in poverty, a target agreed upon by the international community. Because many countries have weak industries, manufacturing cannot absorb large numbers of the unemployed. Low rates of literacy and educational systems that do not equip young people with the skills required on the job market also fuel unemployment.

A number of long-term national policy options to deal with unemployment have so far been proposed — with limited results. In September 2004, African leaders decided to adopt a continental strategy, known as the Ouagadougou Plan of Action. Endorsed at an African Union (AU) summit on employment in Burkina Faso, the plan calls on countries to diversify their economies into labour-intensive industries, adopt laws that attract investors and create opportunities for women and young workers.

"The Plan of Action is a fine blueprint," says UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Executive Secretary Abdoulie Janneh. "But we must go beyond the planning stage," he told the annual conference of African ministers of finance, economic planning and development in Burkina Faso in May 2006. "More than ever, it is up to us to act on our words, embedding the Plan of Action into national development programmes."

The AU reports that since 2004 progress has been made in some countries. "The

Ouagadougou Summit led to the setting in motion of a number of activities in various countries," says AU Commissioner for Economic Affairs Maxwell Mkwezalamba. For instance, Malian President Amadou Toumani Touré has declared youth employment his first national priority, Ghana has set aside $110 mn in its 2006 budget for a National Youth Employment Programme and, with World Bank assistance, Ethiopia is designing labour market policies to make job creation a core element. Mr. Mkwezalamba reports that Chad and Madagascar, among other countries, have prepared national employment plans, while Tanzanian President Jakaya Kikwete has directed the labour ministry to identify sectors that could potentially hasten the creation of more than a million jobs annually.

Job plans

However, most countries have not yet incorporated job creation plans into their national development frameworks. The national strategies include anti-poverty programmes, commonly based on Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs). These are documents developed with assistance from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to set national priorities, direct spending of debt-relief funds and coordinate donor programmes.

"In view of their centrality in the development of low-income countries, PRSPs could be a major instrument for promoting youth employment," comments Mr. Makha Dado Sarr, a former deputy executive secretary of ECA. "PRSPs have become major development programmes of the countries concerned, since they presently constitute the basis of the assistance provided by international financial institutions" and by most other multinational and bilateral development partners.

The ECA and AU are leading a drive to encourage African countries to incorporate job plans into their PRSPs. As part of this effort, ECA convened a PRSP review conference in Cairo, Egypt, in March 2006. Participants examined 21 poverty reduction strategies and found that two-thirds now contain basic job-creation measures, a significant improvement over the first generation of PRSPs, which barely covered employment issues. Some of these measures include plans to widen access to education, training and credit and to build infrastructure and attract investors. But, judged the ECA, none of the 21 PRSPs "substantially and explicitly confronted employment issues and challenges."

Broadening consultation

At the PRSP review in Cairo, Tanzania's anti-poverty programme was commended for containing some measurable goals, specific targets and time periods by which job plans would be carried out. The World Bank had approved Tanzania's first PRSP in 2000. That one reflected little input from employers and workers, despite a general requirement that the preparation of the documents involve domestic stakeholders. But by the time Tanzania produced its second strategy in 2005, the labour ministry, with assistance from the ILO, had incorporated suggestions from the national employers' association and the trade unions.

"In part, the weakness of the employment policy dimension of PRSPs probably reflects the relative absence of labour ministries and their social partners from the consultation processes for the drafting of the first papers," noted the ILO. Larger questions, such as how to translate economic growth into jobs, are yet to be fully integrated into poverty reduction strategies, but "this is likely to change as PRSPs evolve."

Tanzania's current PRSP requires the government to promote business-friendly policies, provide flexible loans to support poor women in setting up businesses and encourage small and micro-enterprises. But, as with the other PRSPs under review, Tanzania's strategy does not address youth unemployment as a specific challenge requiring special attention. By grouping

Unemployment threatens peace and security

In a number of African countries, youth unemployment is part of a vicious cycle. Jobless youth are more susceptible to joining the ranks of the rebel movements, armies and pro-government militias that have been battling each other in the continent's numerous wars. In turn, war leads to more joblessness because of its impact on a country's economy, infrastructure and human resources.

The challenge is stopping this vicious cycle, says UN Under-Secretary-General and Special Adviser on Africa Legwaila Joseph Legwaila. This can only be done if the youth are productively engaged. "They must have something useful to do. But a country that has gone through war often does not have jobs," he says.

In African countries emerging from war, UN peacekeepers are carrying out disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programmes to try to create lasting peace. Sierra Leone's war ended in 2002, and the UN supported the reintegration of 48,000 ex-fighters. However, the challenge of creating lasting jobs in one of the poorest countries in the world remains immense. More than 50 per cent of young people in Sierra Leone still lack proper work.

Liberia faces a similar predicament and is seeking ways to keep its 100,000 young ex-fighters economically engaged. Many are taking part in that country's reintegration programme, in which they are trained and placed back into their communities, notes President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf. The challenge now, she says, is to get them into long-term ventures or school so that when the current programme ends "we will not find them back in a state of unemployment, a state of helplessness."

A recent UN report, *Youth Unemployment and Regional Insecurity in West Africa*, describes the high levels of unemployment among young men and women in West Africa as "a ticking time bomb." The study, produced by the UN Office for West Africa, warns that progress and security in the entire region is undermined by the "growing numbers of youths who lack prospects of ever being able to work for a reasonable living."

The concerns of youth and their potential to contribute to development have not attracted sufficient attention from policymakers in Africa. To help redress this shortcoming, Mr. Legwaila's Office of the Special Adviser on Africa is convening a regional meeting in Namibia in November. It will bring together youth and regional experts to discuss reintegration of young ex-combatants into society, as well as job creation and access to basic services, such as water, health and education.

youth together with all other job seekers, such plans overlook young people's particular economic and social needs.

'Bad policy'

Since the mid-1990s, economic performance has improved significantly in many African countries, with average annual growth in gross domestic product (GDP) rising steadily from less than 3 per cent in 1998 to 5 per cent in 2005. In theory, according to many economists, this should have led to higher employment.

However, notes Ms. Okonjo-Iweala, the former Nigerian finance minister, "In most of our countries, economic growth is not resulting in significant job creation and therefore in poverty reduction."

This lack of job opportunities contributes to many social problems. Without alternatives, many young women and girls are forced into sex work. Studies show that young jobless people living on the street are more likely than their employed counterparts to abuse illicit substances or join armed groups.

"Jobless growth isn't just bad social policy, it is bad economics," says ILO Director-General Juan Somavia. "It results in less consumption, more migration, more child labour and lower aggregate demand." Those maladies in turn lead to reduced investments, less funding for pensions, lower tax revenue and other resources for social policies, and ultimately more poverty.

Diversification

The Youth Employment Network, an alliance of countries initiated by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in collaboration with the heads of the ILO and World Bank, recommends that governments diversify their economies and promote sectors that use a lot of workers. Many African economies still rely on the production of one or two primary commodities. They could diversify into processing these commodities or producing light manufactures, as Mauritius has successfully done.

Over two decades, Mauritius has averaged 6 per cent annual economic growth, resulting in a fourfold increase in per capita income and virtually eliminating unemployment. The government attracted investors to the country's principal exports, sugar and garments. It also furthered diversification by promoting export processing zones (EPZs), which featured incentives for investors but also allowed workers to form and join unions (unlike in the EPZs of some other countries).

Between 1983 and 1986, employment in Mauritius's EPZs tripled and by 1985 the EPZ sector had overtaken sugar as the prime source of exports, foreign exchange earnings and employment. Today Mauritius is no longer able to compete so effectively with other textile producers, such as China. So it is restructuring its economy, moving into other sectors such as financial services, light engineering goods, precision plastics and computer products.

Education and training

"It is clear that to rise out of poverty, the people of our continent need jobs and education," says ECA Executive Secretary Janneh. "Not just any job, but one that provides a decent wage and employment conditions." According to the Addis Ababa-based ECA, it is crucial for countries to expand training, lifelong learning, education and other means of improving skills, with a particular focus on young people.

As a start, many countries need to rebuild a formal education system that declined rapidly during the last few decades from the effect of cost-cutting measures adopted at the urging of the World Bank and IMF, notes an ILO study led by University of Zambia lecturer Francis Chigunta. These austerity policies, known as "structural adjustment," led to deep cuts in public spending, including for food, health and education. Many schools were obliged to introduce fees, contributing to a decline in attendance by students from poor families.

Many countries are now trying to boost school enrolment rates, with some success. The special emphasis on getting more girls into school should ultimately improve the employability of young women in Africa. However, an estimated 45 million children aged between 6 and 11 still do not attend school in Africa.

Other studies highlight shortcomings in the focus of many educational systems in Africa, which concentrate on educating students for often nonexistent formal white-collar jobs, rather than for technical or factory-type work, which may be available.

To increase the employability of the 1 million young school-leavers entering the job market annually without appropriate skills, the Egyptian government in 1991 began to provide technical and vocational training to secondary school students. Over a three-year period, students spend two days a week at school and four days a week in training in a business. More than 1,600 companies are involved in the programme, which has so far reached more than 15,000 students. Graduates often find immediate employment or set up their own small enterprises.

Entrepreneurship

Another focus of action has been on spreading entrepreneurship skills beyond the schools. A number of countries have introduced entrepreneurship training programmes, including Gambia, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Swaziland and Zimbabwe. Policymakers believe that the promotion of small-business enterprises and the informal sector offer quick solutions to joblessness.

In Nigeria, which has more than 10 million small-business owners, the government supports new entrepreneurs through a network of about 20 industrial development centres that train youth, help them turn their ideas into feasible business ventures and supply them with credit.

But many of these programmes are not easily accessible to women, notes Ms. Christiana Okojie of the University of Benin, Nigeria. "Studies have shown that women tend to benefit less … as they are crowded out by men," she reports. Women are at the back of the job queue, since they generally have lower levels of education, due in part to cultural and other biases against the training of girls. Ms. Okojie argues that governments should put in place deliberate affirmative action policies for poor, rural women and should establish training programmes in sectors that employ many women, such as trading and agricultural processing.

Responding to the need for gender-specific programmes, women lawyers, bankers, entrepreneurs and trainers set up the Kenya Women Finance Trust in 1981.

It is the only micro-finance institution in the country exclusively for women, and it has more than 100,000 members. It grants cheap credit to low-income earners to start small businesses.

Public works

In many countries, immediate, short-term solutions are needed to quickly ease the burden of unemployment. Public works programmes are a popular option. South Africa, which commits more than $800 mn to public works, has one of the best programmes on the continent, reports the ILO. In terms of technical design standards and the quality of completed physical infrastructure, the country's public works programme "was regarded as surpassing anything that the ILO members of an evaluation team had encountered in more than 30 developing countries in Africa, Asia and the Pacific," notes the ILO.

The Community Based Public Works Programme, designed to provide rapid and visible relief to the poor, helped create 130,000 jobs between 1998 and 2004. In the latter year, the government launched the Enhanced Public Works Programme, with a goal of creating a million jobs over five years. The programme employs unskilled and semi-skilled people to build schools, hospitals and roads, giving them short-term incomes and, hopefully, long-term skills.

"Public works are popular with politicians as they offer the opportunity for a government to claim to be 'creating jobs' in a far more direct and observable way than through the opaque medium of long-term processes which deliver genuine economic growth and employment," comments South African economist Anna McCord.

But in a context of chronic poverty, which is neither cyclical nor temporary, public works programmes will not have a significant or sustained impact, she adds. This is because the jobs offered are short-term — lasting only about 4 months — and the wages are low. Even if South Africa's programme were to create the envisaged 200,000 jobs annually, that would benefit only a small fraction of the country's poor and unemployed. Out of a population of 45 million, 24 million live below the poverty line.

Getty Images / Per-Anders Pettersson

South African trade unions protest job cuts and demand better employment opportunities.

Policy reforms

"For successful poverty reduction, African countries have to be in the driver's seat," says World Bank Africa Region Vice-President Gobind Nankani. "Africans know best where the shoe pinches. They should craft their own poverty-reduction strategies based on national realities."

But many countries in Africa are hampered by the inability of the state to deliver social services. Development policies followed in many African countries during the 1980s emphasized macroeconomic prudence, which translated into a reduction in the size and role of the public sector. In Zimbabwe for example, the cabinet in 1995 ordered all ministries to cut staff by 40 per cent, in line with the conditions of a World Bank loan. Weakened by similar cutbacks, labour ministries in many African countries found themselves with no capacity to plan or direct employment-generation programmes.

There is now a growing realization among African policymakers and their external development partners that the state needs to be rebuilt so that it can play an active role in development.

Mr. Nankani notes that African governments could benefit from directing investment into rural areas. Two-thirds of Africa's population lives in the countryside and poverty is predominantly a rural phenomenon. The rural poor work in small-scale, subsistence farming and non-farm activities such as agro-processing. Governments could therefore promote policies that increase agricultural productivity and growth. These may include policies to raise the quality of labour, through training, and to improve the productivity of land. Rural industrialization programmes could create jobs in particularly disadvantaged communities.

Business-friendly

In the short term, countries need to do away with policies that hinder investment, notes the World Bank in its report *Doing Business in 2006: Creating Jobs*. African countries impose the most stringent regulations on entrepreneurs, the Bank reports. In Mozambique an investor typically must go through 14 separate procedures over an average of 153 days in order to register a business, while in Sierra Leone a company may have to spend 164 per cent of its gross profits to pay all its business taxes.

The report ranks 155 countries according to how they have reformed their policies to attract investors. Exemplary reformers on the continent include Rwanda, which has reformed its courts and customs procedures. The report praises Mozambique for cutting the property transfer tax from 10 to 2.4 per cent of the property value, the largest such reduction in the world.

African countries need to put their houses in order, says Mr. Nankani. Economic growth and job creation will remain elusive in countries where public policy "chokes private enterprise and discourages business activities." ■

Solar power: cheap energy source for Africa

NEPAD seeks to boost electricity supply in remote rural areas

By ***Itai Madamombe***

Kerosene lamps and sore eyes were once routine elements of grading student homework. Solar electricity has changed that. Caroline Hombe, a 35-year-old teacher in rural Mhondoro, Zimbabwe, can go through the pile of books stacked on her table without worrying that the onset of darkness will put an end to her work. African countries, blessed with sunlight all year round, are tapping this free and clean energy source to light up remote and isolated homes that have no immediate hope of linking to their national electricity grid.

"My eyes were always painful and my head ached from the fumes," Ms. Hombe told *Africa Renewal*. "Imagine trying to go through a hundred exercise books in poor lighting and smoke. The alternative was marking assignments before sunset, but that meant I could not spend time with my two young children before their bedtime, or prepare dinner early enough. Thankfully, this is now a headache of the past."

Electrifying rural areas poses unique challenges for African governments. Remote and scattered, rural homes, unlike homes in urban areas, are costly and often impractical to connect to the grid. Under the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), countries are seeking innovative alternatives to give rural families efficient means to cook their food and light their homes. Stand-alone sources of energy, such as solar, wind and mini-hydro generators, can help fill the gap.

NEPAD, Africa's development blueprint, recognizes that to achieve the desired social and economic prosperity, countries must boost access to cheaper and reliable energy. Excluding South Africa and Egypt, no more than 20 per cent (and in some countries as few as 5 per cent) of Africans have electricity. This figure falls to an average of 2 per cent in rural areas where the majority of Africans live — a far cry from the 35 per cent consumption level, or more, African leaders wish to achieve.

'The sun is free'

The target is quite feasible, says Mr. Garai Makokoro, director of the Energy Technology Institute in Zimbabwe. Africa, after all, possesses some of the world's largest watercourses (hydro-potential), as well as some of the world's largest oil, coal and gas reserves. The way to move the NEPAD vision ahead, he adds, is for countries to find cheaper power sources while minimizing environmental hazards and ensuring sustainability. The energy expert believes that solar power, clean and renewable, fits the bill.

"African countries must think outside the box. The sun is free and inexhaustible. Solar technology — photovoltaic panels — converts the sun's radiation directly into electricity with no pollution or damage to the environment. The panels can generate enough power to run stoves, pump water, light clinics and power televisions. Africa has one of the best climates for this type of energy," Mr. Makokoro told *Africa Renewal*.

But even with the compelling advantages solar power offers, the *Human Development Report*, published by the UN Development Programme (UNDP), shows that the majority of Africans still rely on less efficient traditional energy sources. Wood, or other biomass such as crop waste, is the dominant fuel for cooking. This comes at a huge cost to the environment as families continue to cut down trees for much-needed fuel.

In the early 1990s, numerous villages turned to solar power in parts of Africa where one might least expect to stumble upon an oasis of lights shimmering in the pitch-black night. Perhaps the most ambitious project of this nature, and one that is often

New Partnership for Africa's Development

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) was adopted as the continent's main development framework at a July 2001 summit meeting of African heads of state. According to NEPAD, attainment of Africa's long-term development goals is anchored in the determination of African peoples "to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world." It calls for a new relationship between Africa and the international community, in which the non-African partners seek to complement Africa's own efforts. The United Nations, Group of Eight industrialized nations and various donor countries have pledged to do so.

For Africa to develop, argues NEPAD, three conditions must prevail:

- peace, security, democracy and good political governance
- improved economic and corporate governance
- regional cooperation and integration.

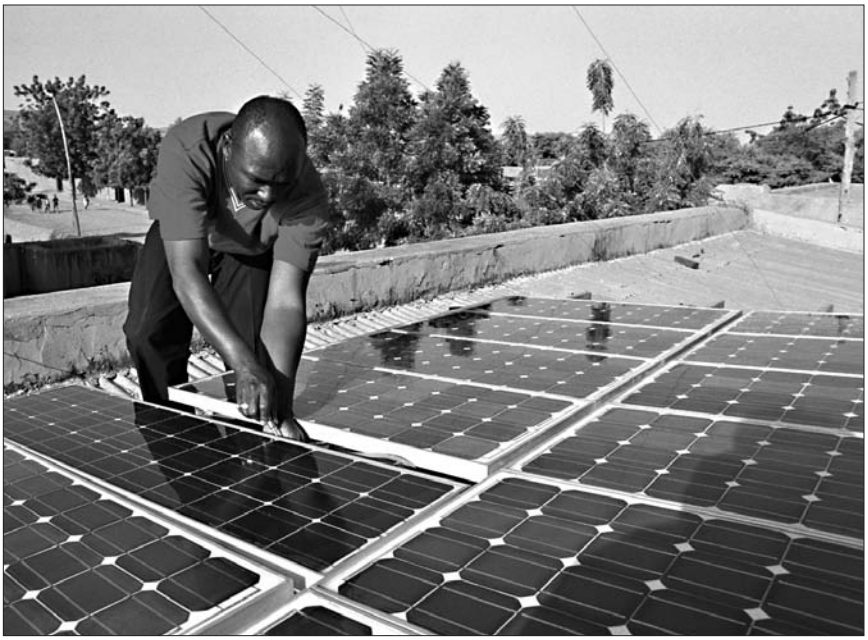
NEPAD further identifies several priority sectors requiring special attention and action:

- physical infrastructure, especially roads, railways and power systems linking neighbouring countries
- information and communications technology
- human development, focusing on health, education and skills development
- agriculture
- promoting the diversification of production and exports.

Many of the required resources will initially need to come from outside the continent, although African governments are redoubling efforts to mobilize more domestic resources. "Africa," states NEPAD, "recognizes that it holds the key to its own development."

cited, is a Zimbabwean project supported by UNDP through the Global Environment Facility (GEF). The initiative, jointly funded by GEF ($7 mn) and Zimbabwe ($400,000), installed some 9,000 solar power systems throughout the country in a bid to improve living standards, but also to curtail land degradation and pollution.

The River Estate near Shamva, 70 kilometres from Zimbabwe's capital, Harare, boasts one of the best solar-village models in the country. Fifty-two commercial farming families share systems; there is one system for every two houses. Each family has two lamps and a connection for a radio or small television set. The new lighting systems have improved the quality of life for the community. They have extended study hours for schoolchildren, reduced rural-to-urban migration in the area and upgraded health standards by electrifying a local health center.



Panos / Crispin Hughes

Maintaining solar panels in Mali: Africa can tap its plentiful sunshine to generate electricity.

Innovative financing

"With all their advantages, solar systems are not cheap to install," says Mr. Jem Porcaro, an analyst for the Energy and Environment Group at UNDP. "A typical home system in sub-Saharan Africa costs anywhere between $500 and $1,000 and such systems typically provide enough power to light three to six rooms and power a black-and-white TV each night. But the cost is well beyond the means of most African households."

The use of innovative financing schemes, like fee-for-service arrangements, is one way to overcome these high up-front costs, notes Mr. Porcaro. Installing solar panels to power multiple houses at once can also cut down on costs. More households could afford solar power, argues the World Bank, if governments were to remove barriers, such as high import duties, that increase the cost of the panels. Regional cooperation to facilitate trade is another major NEPAD goal.

African leaders are demonstrating commitment to bring solar power to rural homes. For example, a UNDP-GEF report on solar financing and delivery models notes that private sales, through dealers, initially dominated the market in South Africa, but that the government, a leading NEPAD proponent, later initiated a massive off-grid effort that is now fully active. Botswana, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and most countries in the region have developed solar markets, in many cases with special funds to support consumer credit.

Boost to businesses

Besides domestic use, people are harnessing solar power to run small businesses. Entrepreneur Abina Lungu operates a maize-grinding mill in Nyimba, eastern Zambia. With reliable solar energy, he can work well into the night to meet all his customers' orders. His house, close to the mill, is also lit by solar power. Mr. Lungu is one of the many villagers serviced by the Nyimba Energy Service Company (NESCO), an enterprise funded by the Swedish International Development Agency. To get power into a home or shop, NESCO installs a system that includes a panel, battery, charge controller and power points. The cost is $33.33, including the contract fee. Thereafter, consumers pay a monthly rental fee.

"I pay 30,000 kwacha [about $6.25] as a rental charge every month to NESCO," Mr. Lungu told the Integrated Regional Information Networks (IRIN), a humanitarian news agency. "For me, it works out cheaper to use solar because paraffin is more expensive, and even if electricity comes to Nyimba, not all the people will get connected."

No major marketing is needed to convince African citizens to turn to solar. The demand is high. NESCO says it has about 360 people on its waiting list. "We are struggling to satisfy demand," confesses Mr. Stanislas Sankhani, the company's project manager.

With a concerted NEPAD effort Africans will, hopefully, not languish in line for much longer. Solar electricity, states the World Bank, is as good as an electricity grid for rural households since they do not consume much power. In a modest Nyimba office, 320 kilometres away from the Zambian capital's grid, a sign confidently announces that the office is up to date: "Solar is good ... even in thatched houses; it will reach you wherever you are." ■

African expatriates look homeward

Skilled professionals answer NEPAD call to lend expertise

By ***Itai Madamombe***

Just a week after defending his doctoral thesis, Hailay Teklehaimanot boarded a flight out of the United States, back to Ethiopia. The 36-year-old physician is one of the few African emigrants who take that journey back home. Many more remain abroad.

"I defended my thesis on the 7th of August 2004 and flew out on the 15th. I didn't even go back for the ceremony," Dr. Teklehaimanot said. "If all the people with skills permanently migrate to the developed world, Africa will go down. America is what it is because of Americans. If we don't do something for Africa, who will do it for us?"

Panos / Giacomo Pirozzi

More Africans living abroad are keen to use their skills for Africa's development.

Some 20,000 professionals migrate out of Africa each year, estimates the International Organization for Migration (IOM), based in Switzerland. This loss of skilled manpower, termed the "brain drain," is one of the greatest obstacles to Africa's development.

The vision to lead the continent out of poverty has gathered momentum, spearheaded by the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). Governments are calling on all Africans, including those in the diaspora, to help claim the 21st century for Africa. More and more professionals are heeding the NEPAD call, leaving thriving careers overseas to bolster a middle class that can help accelerate development in Africa.

The power of an idea

"There is no greater power than an idea whose time has come," said Mr. Blessing Rugara, a prominent 35-year-old lawyer who left a large law firm in the US and headed to South Africa after 15 years abroad. "I couldn't think of a better place to be than home at this point in history," he told *Africa Renewal*. "The African renaissance vision got hold of leaders across Africa and they, through NEPAD, are insisting on good governance amongst themselves. You see the same vision in that 10-year-old child orphaned by AIDS, but stubbornly insisting on going to school, hoping for something better."

It is a rare pleasure, Mr. Rugara said, to be part of this developmental transformation. Africa's future lies in its people, he pointed out, emphasizing that "unless empowered by the people of Africa, the renaissance is largely empty." In South Africa, he co-founded Cicap Global, a venture that invests additional capital and management into fledgling companies, among them a pharmaceutical firm that manufactures essential drugs.

"The pharmaceutical company will enable an extraordinarily gifted African scientist, Collen Masimirembwa, who returned to Africa from Sweden, to put his medical degree and two PhDs to work for his people. We invested in him, he will invest in others and so the circle grows," says Mr. Rugara.

'You cannot eat patriotism'

Not everyone is ready to pack up just yet. Mr. Gichure wa Kanyugo, a Kenyan-born psychiatrist working in Boston, says Africa does not offer him, or colleagues like him, much hope. Now a naturalized US citizen, he said, "We would like to return home, but domestic conditions don't allow us to do so. You cannot eat patriotism, can you?"

The often-cited deterring conditions, says the IOM, include failing economies, armed conflict, unemployment and poor health care. These, among other reasons, propel one out of every three professionals to migrate, mostly to Europe and North America.

"We are operating one-third of African universities to satisfy the manpower needs of Great Britain and the United States," said world-renowned computer scientist Philip Emeagwali, putting the figures in context. "The African education budget is nothing but a supplement to the American education budget. In essence, Africa is giving developmental assistance to

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Kenya promotes 'responsible tourism'

NEPAD efforts safeguard environment, combat poverty

By ***Itai Madamombe***

The Severin Sea Lodge, set on the sprawling Bamburi Beach near Mombasa, has 400 rooms overlooking the Indian Ocean. Guests from Europe, Africa and within Kenya itself vacation there. The water is clean and the hotel is doing its best to keep it that way.

"Severin was the first hotel in Kenya to hire an environmental officer on its full-time staff," says Mr. Andrew Stuart, the hotel's managing director. "We were also the first hotel to have a biological purification plant, so we do not deposit waste water into the ocean, polluting it and endangering fish."

Alamy Images / David Keith Jones

Tourists view wildlife at a Kenyan reserve.

The purification plant, he explains, cleans waste water from rooms, the kitchen and the laundry before the water is allowed to seep through the coral into the ground. The plant purifies up to 150,000 litres per day, equal to waste water from 1,500 people. He added that the hotel has a comprehensive recycling system: paper, plastic and glass are passed on to dealers for recycling. It also encourages guests not to litter the beach.

The hotel is one of a growing number participating in an initiative to protect and preserve Kenya's world-famous coastline, which stretches a total of 1,420 kilometres from its border with Somalia in the north to Tanzania in the south. Vast tracts of mangroves, sea meadows, swamps and coral reefs — home to colourful flora and fauna — adorn the landscape. Visitors swarm Kenya's sand beaches each year, catapulting tourism to the second-largest contributor to the economy (after agriculture). The Kenyan government, in a bid to balance the demands of a fast-flourishing industry with the need to preserve the environment, embarked on numerous innovative joint projects with the tourism private sector.

Protecting environment is 'good business'

"We must seek solutions together, so that tourists can continue to enjoy Kenya's attractions while preventing the destruction of those very things they come to see," Mr. Stuart says. "This is our policy at Severin Sea Lodge. We take serious measures to protect the environment that we depend on. It's good business."

Harnessing Africa's natural wealth to end poverty, but not losing sight of the sustainability of such undertakings, is a central premise of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). The Kenyan government hosts the NEPAD Coastal and Marine Secretariat (COSMAR) in Nairobi. COSMAR's major goal is to help countries reverse the trend of marine and coastal degradation. Over 40 per cent of Africa's population, estimates COSMAR, derives its livelihood from coastal and marine ecosystems and resources, and the percentage continues to grow.

"Africa's coastlines provide immense natural riches, but these are burdened by competing demands," notes Mr. James Kamula, who coordinates regional COSMAR projects from Nairobi. "The environment is under increasing stress due to continued overexploitation of resources. This threatens ecosystem productivity in the coastal area, and therefore economic growth. COSMAR is helping countries to include environment concerns in all development policies and actions," he told *Africa Renewal*.

About a million tourists come to Kenya every year and coastal resorts generate over 60 per cent of the visits, according to a UN report analyzing sustainable tourism in the country. The tourism sector, says the report, creates jobs for 11 per cent of Kenya's workforce. It diversifies the economy and boosts other sectors such as transport, food and beverages, entertainment and textiles. While the high volume is good for business, it is also taxing to prominent beaches.

Creating awareness

Seven countries — Kenya, Senegal, Nigeria, Ghana, Mozambique, Seychelles and Tanzania — are participating in a COSMAR public-private partnership to promote responsible tourism.

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Highways link 15 West African countries

NEPAD promotes better transport networks

By ***Itai Madamombe***

It is another busy day at Doxa Worldwide Movers, a freight company in Accra, Ghana. The general manager, Matthew Ackun, runs through final delivery orders. Two trucks, heavy with furniture, utensils and clothes, begin their 380-kilometre trek to Lagos, Nigeria. Three border crossings away, a relocating family expects its belongings to arrive on schedule.

Africaphotos.com / Robert Grossman

Better roads could greatly ease travel and trade between African countries

"The trucks will be there in only eight hours," Mr. Ackun says with confidence. While it is hardly a record-breaking time, it marks a vast improvement over conditions just a year ago. "The roads were so narrow they fit only two cars at a time — one coming, one going. Our drivers used to take the whole day to negotiate all the potholes, tricky corners and endless checkpoints from here to Nigeria." The roads are now better paved, he says, and in most urban areas the highway has double lanes. "We deliver three times faster."

The quicker trip is a result of continuing efforts by West African leaders to complete a 15-nation, 4,560-kilometre trans-West African coastal highway from Nouakchott, Mauritania, to Lagos, Nigeria. NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, gave West African countries an impetus to complete this unifying highway. The vision, developed by Africans for Africa, emphasizes the need to develop better transportation to boost economic links and local trade.

Trade among African countries accounts for only about 10 per cent of their total external trade, the lowest level of any world region. The problem, according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa, is that the continent's railways and roads often lead towards the ports rather than linking countries across regions.

A constant frustration

Poor road infrastructure is a constant source of frustration for Doxa Worldwide Movers when it transports goods from Côte d'Ivoire, Togo, Benin, Nigeria and other points all the way to Niger. "It's the nature of the job," Mr. Ackun says.

Business has grown since the company's birth 10 years ago, but so have the headaches. Mr. Ackun told *Africa Renewal* that to get to Liberia, containers often have to go to sorting hubs in Europe first, and then retrace their way back to Africa. Social unrest, little competition, poor roads and multiple checkpoints, he says, are partly responsible for the steep cost of moving goods within the region.

"It costs $1,000 to ship a 20-foot container to the United Kingdom," Mr. Ackun said. "You need $2,300 to transport the same container just next door to Liberia. By road, our drivers can be stopped five times in Ghana, six times in Togo, six times in Benin and easily 20 times within Nigeria alone. Sometimes for good reason, to protect against highway robberies, but some officials can be abusive." He added that he now has renewed hope that conditions could get better because of NEPAD's efforts to improve roads and border regulations.

"The Ghanaian government has been doing a lot to improve roads. It's gradual, but we are getting somewhere. I'd say, over the last four years, they completed about 60 per cent, maybe more, of the Ghana side of the highway. This is good for business."

West Africa has completed more than 83 per cent, or 3,777 kilometres, of the coastal highway, according to the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). The community is building the highways, some of the most ambitious construction projects in the region, under the auspices of NEPAD. The bulk of the remaining work is in sections that link to Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Sierra Leone. Years of conflict destroyed much of the infrastructure in those countries and they are barely starting to recover. The other ECOWAS countries are Benin, Burkina Faso, Cape

Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo.

Promoting trade

"This highway should boost economic activities by a large margin, especially trade, because it will allow people and goods to easily get to local and regional markets," says Ini Urua, who heads NEPAD efforts at the African Development Bank (ADB). "This is the NEPAD vision — to remove barriers between African countries," he told *Africa Renewal*. Unreliable and costly transport services hamper the growth of businesses and discourage many from investing in Africa, he noted.

Africa needs a better transportation system. The World Bank estimates that to construct adequate infrastructure, countries would, in the next decade, need to spend about 4 per cent of their annual gross domestic products on roads alone — a pricey undertaking considering African countries' many other needs. The ADB, the World Bank, the European Union, the West African Development Bank, the Danish International Development Agency and individual donor countries such as Japan are helping West African nations foot the bill for their regional highways.

Building the trans-West African coastal highway is critical, but landlocked countries, such as Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger, need access to their neighbours' ports. Such countries, Mr. Urua says, pay exorbitant fees to export or import their goods. At times, drivers have to pass through two or three countries to get to the port and can face cumbersome procedures clearing their goods. NEPAD, he adds, has prompted countries to work together in order to adopt measures that cut transport costs and travel time.

Beyond improving their trade prospects, good roads would benefit every African in other ways as well. The *African Economic Outlook 2005/2006*, issued by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the ADB, states: "In 1999, about 10 per cent of global road deaths occurred in sub-Saharan Africa with only some 4 per cent of the world's registered vehicles." Better roads reduce accidents and save lives. Passengers also travel comfortably when roads are paved and free of dust or potholes. Children can get to schools and adults to work on time.

Beyond promises

High-sounding pledges are noble, says Senegal's President Abdoulaye Wade, but only action counts. "We talk about African unity, we want African unity. Meanwhile we don't even have adequate road systems to go from one country to the other. Since 1960 every country has been building roads, but today we in Senegal can't just drive to neighbouring Guinea. You can't just get up and go by road to Mali. Why? Because their roads were not our problem. Every little country wanted to build its own."

A chief champion of NEPAD, Mr. Wade stressed that countries must pool together their resources and imaginations. "If we have a global strategy," he said, "then the first thing we'll say is, 'Yes, we need a good road that will take us to Mali, and on to Niger, all the way to Chad and the Central African Republic'." ■

Kenya: 'responsible tourism'

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A critical component of responsible tourism, COSMAR says, is ensuring that communities benefit from revenue accrued in their areas. According to Severin's eco-tourism development manager, Mr. Marion Teichmann, "One aspect of our programme is creating awareness and understanding of the environment, livelihood and challenges of the local communities. We offer a day tour where guests visit a school. They get to speak with teachers and students and learn more about education efforts in Kenya. Once we create awareness, many visitors want to help."

The project supports Utange Baptist Primary School in Mtwapa, near the Mombasa coast. The school, Mr. Teichmann said, has a very high academic standard, but most of the families who send their children there are subsistence farmers who struggle to pay the requisite fees. "The school has a programme in which sponsors can pay the fee for a bright but needy child. At present there are 14 sponsored children in Utange Baptist Primary School and we hope that we get more sponsors, in order to enable more children to get a good education," he said.

Mr. Nathael Malau, who deals with funding at the school, said the Severin tours make guests aware of the problems the students face and paves a way for them to help. "Through the sponsorship programme, visitors make a very great difference to the community, especially in families with several children. It becomes difficult to pay school fees for all children, while at the same time parents are not happy to have to make a choice which child should get a good education."

Sun 'n Sand Beach Resort, a hotel on the north coast of Kenya, is another company working with the government to promote responsible tourism. The hotel, together with Microsoft and the Ministry of Education, sponsored a NEPAD electronic-schools programme to bring computers and Internet access to Kikambala primary school in Kilifi district. Some 2,500 pupils of the school will benefit from the project.

Most Kenyan businesses, said Sun 'n Sand Managing Director Andinide Makumbi, concentrate on profit at the expense of their corporate responsibilities to communities. He challenged hoteliers to practice responsible tourism in order to positively affect the lives of poor Kenyans. "Profit alone," he said, "is never a measure of success." ■

African expatriates

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the wealthier western nations, which makes the rich nations richer and the poor nations poorer."

Depending on the course, the UN Development Programme says it costs African countries about $10,000 to $15,000 to train a student for four years. For medical doctors, this cost can shoot up to $40,000. And these are the people most prone to the brain drain.

Money, Mr. Emeagwali says, is the primary reason Africans do not go back home. "In theory, we are morally obliged to return to Africa. But in reality, an African professional will not resign from his $50,000-a-year job to accept a $500-a-year job in Africa."

Speaking of his own expatriation, Mr. Emeagwali, Nigerian-born but now a US resident, said his American wife and son are his primary reasons for not returning to Africa. "It would be inconsiderate of me to disrupt my wife's career and my son's education. Second, I never received invitations from government officials."

Values matter

African leaders have already planted the seed for change, Mr. Rugara argues, but that seed has to take root in each individual. He said whether the reasons are purely economic or include other personal factors, the decision comes down to values.

"The idea that any African abroad should get red-carpet treatment to come back home is obnoxious and downright ridiculous," Mr. Rugara said. "It's okay to live overseas and not do anything about Africa as an individual choice. However, you are making a value judgment on what you consider important and it has an impact on the continent that invested in you during your unproductive years."

To fill the human-resource gap created by the brain drain, the IOM says, African countries employ up to 150,000 expatriates from the West at a cost of $4 bn a year. Governments are now seeking to reverse this unsustainable trend. The African Union, the NEPAD parent body, amended its charter in 2003 to say that part of its mission is to "encourage the full participation of the African diaspora as an important part of the continent."

The Ethiopian government, for example, provides some relocation incentives. Dr. Teklehaimanot said he was allowed to bring in his car and property duty-free. While he hopes this type of incentive encourages others to return, he says, for him the stakes involved more than personal gain.

"If I had stayed in America, I would be earning five, maybe 10 times more," he said. "But when I heard about the Millennium project led by Prof. Jeffrey Sachs, and with the momentum built by NEPAD, I thought I have to be a part of these efforts to pull Africa out of poverty in an integrated way. Why deny yourself such value?"

The same week he left the US, Dr. Teklehaimanot joined the Center for National Health Development in Ethiopia, which is a project of Prof. Sach's Earth Institute at Columbia University, in New York City. When he practiced as a medical doctor before going to the US, most of the diseases he treated were preventable. Now back home with a PhD in epidemiology, he says that he "feels privileged to help end unnecessary suffering by injecting technical expertise into Ethiopia's efforts to meet its development goals."

Helping from abroad

The Ethiopian diaspora is one of the largest in Africa. The IOM says there are more Ethiopian doctors practicing in the US city of Chicago than in Ethiopia. But geographical location, for immigrants such as Zimbabwean-trained physician Dr. Pride Chigwedere, has become irrelevant in today's interconnected global village.

"Some of the more vital decisions that determine the fate of African countries are made in Washington, London and Tokyo," he points out. "It is strategic to have Africans at top institutions around the globe to make sure Africa is on the agenda, and favourably so, when critical decisions are made and resources allocated."

The measure, Dr. Chigwedere said, is not where you are, but what you are doing for Africa. He moved to the US in 1999 to join the Harvard AIDS institute as a research fellow and later as a PhD student. He has been proactive, he said, in increasing recruitment of African students into Harvard, channeling projects to Africa and setting up research partnerships with colleagues in Africa.

"My presence in America is a gain, not a loss for Africa. I'm part of the NEPAD vision," Dr. Chigwedere says. "Brain drain is not necessarily defined by where one resides; it is the loss of focus, the loss of will to contribute to a better Africa." ■

NEPAD needs greater momentum

Five years after it was launched, there has been progress in implementing the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has reported to the General Assembly.* This reflects efforts by both African countries and their external partners. But, Mr. Annan added, "the momentum of international support for Africa is not yet strong enough to be irreversible."

Financing agencies have provided more than $2 mn for NEPAD road, power and other infrastructure projects, and programmes are under way across Africa to improve farm productivity, better protect the environment and strengthen social services. On the external front, Africa's greatest gain has been in debt relief. There has been much less progress on trade. And while the Group of Eight industrialized countries promised to boost aid flows, reports Mr. Annan, the amount "is not rising nearly fast enough in G-8 countries . . . to be able to deliver on their pledges."

* *The New Partnership for Africa's Development: fourth consolidated report on progress in implementation and international support,* 2 August 2006, A/61/212, <www.un.org/africa/osaa/reports.html>.

What alternatives to oil in Africa?

Importers begin looking more closely at other energy sources

By **Renatus Nji**
Buea, Cameroon

As crude oil prices continue to soar on the world market, many African oil-importing countries are starting to think more seriously about ways to lessen their dependence on the fuel. They fear that continued high spending for imported oil and other petroleum products may jeopardize the economic growth they have registered in recent years. As a result, alternative forms of energy are starting to look more attractive.

Crude oil prices jumped from less than US$40 a barrel in 2004 to nearly $70 by September 2006. With expectations of increasing global demand, especially from China, experts predict that prices will remain relatively high for the next few years.

A gas processing plant in Tanzania: Africa has very large untapped reserves of natural gas, which burns cleaner than oil.

Reuters / Emmanuel Kwitema

That is good news for the 13 African economies that are currently net oil exporters. The challenge facing them is how to use the additional income in less wasteful ways than in the past. As UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi told a meeting of African oil and gas officials in Algeria in April, African oil producers should use "their gains to invest in infrastructure and diversify their economies."

But for the 42 African countries that are net oil importers (including three that also produce modest amounts of oil), higher world oil prices pose quite different challenges. Since countries must spend more for oil imports, they have less foreign exchange left for other essential imports. Businesses that rely heavily on energy and transportation are hit especially hard, making production more expensive and possibly leading to cutbacks and job losses.

Higher energy and transport costs are also usually passed along to consumers. The prices of many other goods and services are also pushed upwards, affecting the poor most severely. The African Development Bank (ADB) estimates that the inflation rate in oil-importing African countries will on average be about 2.6 per cent higher in 2006 than would otherwise be the case.

Short-term remedies

A number of these African oil-importing countries are responding with short-term measures to soften the immediate impact of high oil prices on their economies and consumers. Some have set import quotas to limit the use of oil products. Mr. Paul Obi, an economics instructor at the University of Buea in Cameroon, told *Africa Renewal* that such efforts "seek to bridge the financing gap arising from the oil price increases." By limiting imports, a country can save scarce foreign exchange needed for other products.

Until recently, one standard response to high oil prices was to introduce subsidies to keep down domestic fuel prices. But subsidies have serious financial drawbacks. In Ghana, the government subsidized prices in 2004 when the cost of imported fuel first began to skyrocket. Since domestic Ghanaian fuel prices were lower than in neighbouring countries that permitted higher prices, unscrupulous traders began smuggling out Ghanaian fuel. The government also spent some US$200 mn that year to pay for the subsidy, money that could have been used for priority development projects.

Today most African nations, including Ghana, have chosen to simply pass along the oil price increases. Instead of subsidizing oil prices, Ghana now seeks to help the poor offset the rising cost of fuel and transportation by eliminating primary school fees.

Citing Ghana's example, Mr. Sanjeev Gupta, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) assistant director for Africa, admitted in May that such measures have not completely protected consumers from rising prices. But the government has at least partially compensated for the higher costs. And by foregoing subsidies, African governments have experienced fewer financial losses than during earlier periods of high prices. "We have had no requests for additional finance to cope with the oil increases," Mr. Gupta observed.

Eyes on the future

Development experts argue that African oil-importing nations should seek ways to reduce their dependence on oil. That would make economic sense in the long term, especially as energy needs rise with growing economies and populations. But

it would also help preserve the environment, since most of the alternative energy sources are far cleaner and less polluting than oil, a carbon-based fossil fuel that must be burned.

Some African nations have already begun switching to non-oil energy sources that could potentially enable them to reduce their reliance on costly petroleum products. Those alternatives include "biofuels," as well as solar energy and electricity generated by water-driven hydro-projects. Although natural gas, like oil, is a fossil fuel, it is comparatively cleaner and can be easily transported through pipelines.

africanpictures.net / Guy Stubbs

An increasing amount of Africa's electricity is now being produced by water-driven hydro-electric generators.

Some alternatives are more feasible for some countries than for others. All entail a few economic or technical drawbacks, at least at their current stage of development. Moreover, efforts at economic diversification have generally proved quite complex and difficult in Africa, where policymakers and economic operators are preoccupied with numerous other immediate problems and find that it takes considerable capital and political will to alter existing production systems.

But the potential is there. According to the ADB, up to 10 per cent of East Africa's current energy needs could be supplied by the full development of just two alternative forms of energy: thermal power, which is produced from steam that emanates from below the earth's surface, and cogeneration, in which heat energy escaping from a power plant or industrial process is used to generate electricity.

Biofuels: far-fetched?

In his address to the African oil and gas officials, Mr. Supachai of UNCTAD noted that a week earlier he had been in Brazil, a country that has made considerable progress in developing biofuels. Such fuels are derived from organic matter — often sugarcane or maize — which is fermented to produce an alcohol known as ethanol. Usually ethanol is blended with petroleum to make a cheaper, cleaner-burning fuel. Brazil now uses half its sugar crop for that purpose, and produces enough ethanol to fuel half the cars running in the country.

"All this may seem a bit far-fetched, or at least far off, today," Mr. Supachai admitted to his listeners. "And you may well ask, of what interest are biofuels to Africa?"

Yet some African governments and companies are already showing an interest. In Senegal, the government is urging villagers and businesses to emulate Brazil's example. In Kaolack, young farmers are planting a local grass whose cellulose can be processed into ethanol. Near the town of Richard Toll, the private Compagnie sucrière sénégalaise (CSS), the country's main sugar producer, has signed a contract with an Indian firm that specializes in installing ethanol distilleries. The CSS hopes that within two to three years it can produce about 10,000 tonnes of ethanol annually.

Actis, a UK-based private equity investor in emerging markets, announced in April that it plans to invest $100 mn in agro-industries in East, Central and West Africa. This would provide up to half the funds needed by African agribusinesses to invest in growing crops including sugarcane, maize and sorghum, some of which are slated for biofuel production.

Elsewhere, D1 Oils Africa, a British bioenergy company, has developed 174,000 hectares of land in Zambia dedicated to crops for the production of biodiesel, a fuel derived from either vegetable or animal oils that is suitable for use in diesel engines. The company is a member of Zambia's task force on renewable energy and has been contracted to develop a biodiesel policy for the country.

Mr. Demetri Pappadopoulos, the chief executive of D1 Oils Africa, notes that support from the Zambian government has been paramount in developing the project, "which will result in cultivating oil-bearing crops as a sustainable source for the betterment of the country." The company is also conducting studies for similar projects in a number of other African countries.

Solar energy

Solar power is derived from the sun and converted into thermal or electrical energy. Solar energy requires no additional fuel to run and is pollution free. Sunlight can be captured as usable heat or converted into electricity by means of solar (photoelectric) cells or synchronized mirrors known as heliostats that track the sun's movement across the sky.

In Namibia, solar and wind power currently account for just 1-2 per cent of all electricity produced in the country. But the government is looking for ways to finance new projects to boost the sector, and in late August announced plans to increase the amount of electricity produced from solar and wind sources by at least 0.5 per cent a year, with solar energy taking the lead.

Mr. Shimweefeleni Hamutwe, an adviser on alternative energy at Namibia's Mines and Energy Ministry, told the Reuters news agency that the venture is still in its planning stage, with efforts focused on identifying funding for the projects, which could cost $5-10 mn a year.

South Africa's electricity supply company, Eskom, is exploring the possibilities of a 100-megawatt solar project to help generate more electricity for the country's main power grid. Feasibility studies began in 2001 and Eskom has now finalized the technological aspects

of the ambitious project.

One of the drawbacks of solar energy at its current stage of development is a relatively high initial investment. But the subsequent costs of operating and maintaining solar energy generation are relatively cheap. Some countries are exploring innovative financing schemes to enable communities to develop their own sources of solar power (see page 10).

Large natural gas reserves

Natural gas is another of Africa's underexploited fuels. It is usually found in oil deposits, and most of it is simply burned off into the atmosphere during oil extraction. When it is captured for commercial purposes, natural gas is today often used for cooking and heating homes. But it can also be harnessed for electricity generation.

Africa's proven gas reserves have grown strongly. In 1995, estimates showed the continent had about 6,300 bn cubic metres, but it was expected that by 2010 further exploration would increase known reserves to an estimated 17,650 bn cubic metres. Of the proven natural gas reserves in Africa, 78 per cent are in Nigeria, with the remainder concentrated in a few other countries — Algeria, Egypt, Libya, Angola, Mozambique, Namibia and Tanzania.

Egypt is currently exploring the construction of a liquefied natural gas plant in the Nile Delta, which claims much of the country's estimated 430 bn cubic metres of proven reserves. In Tunisia, gas development is centred on the Miskar field, 125 kilometres offshore, with 23 bn cubic metres of recoverable reserves. The current gas field development project there is British Gas's largest such project outside the UK.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has been promoting the development of a West African gas pipeline. The project, which is not yet fully financed, will eventually involve building a network of pipelines to carry liquefied natural gas from Nigeria's huge reserves to neighbouring Benin, Ghana and Togo.

Although natural gas is the cleanest-burning of all fossil fuels, it does still pollute. Another drawback is that building the plants to capture and liquefy natural gas is highly capital-intensive and it is more expensive to transport and store than are other liquid fuels. But the cost of building the facilities and pipelines is a one-time charge. Once developed, natural gas is a cheap source of energy.

Hydro-electricity

The generation of hydro-electricity is the main alternative source of energy currently being developed in Africa, but it has considerably greater potential that has yet to be harnessed. It is derived from water-driven hydro-turbines, usually built into dams across some of Africa's numerous river courses. Unlike oil, this source of energy is not used up in the process of generating electricity, so it is considered renewable and sustainable over the long term.

Some African nations have already begun switching to non-oil energy sources that could potentially enable them to reduce their reliance on costly petroleum products.

The Volta River project in Ghana is one of the continent's oldest and best-known hydro-electricity projects. According to the Ghanaian Ministry of Energy, it generated about 83 per cent of the total domestic energy produced in 2005. The main station at Akosombo generated 4,718 gigawatt hours, with another 910 gwh from the Kpong station.

Construction of the Manantali Dam in Mali's Kayes region began in 1988. The dam is managed collectively by Mali, Mauritania and Senegal through the regional Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Sénégal (OMVS). The dam's initial function was to irrigate 2,550 square kilometres of land and maintain the navigability of the Senegal River between Saint-Louis in Senegal and Ambidédi in Mali. Hydro-turbines were later installed with the help of World Bank financing, and the first megawatt of electricity flowed in Mali in 2001. The supply of power has since been extended to both Mauritania and Senegal as well.

Two dams were previously built at Inga Falls in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but because of the country's economic and political turmoil, they are currently inactive. The World Bank, among other groups, is now considering investing as much as $500 mn in their rehabilitation. A plan for a third Inga dam, a massive hydroelectric station, is also under investigation, with proponents of NEPAD arguing that it could also supply electricity to much of the region, including to South Africa if the Inga power lines were connected via the electricity grids in neighbouring Angola and Namibia. Construction costs are estimated at about $6 bn. The project has a potential generating capacity equal to that of all Southern African countries combined.

Like several of the other alternative sources of energy, a hydro-electric project requires heavy financing and considerable planning for its establishment. A vast area is required to hold water with a dam. Some dam projects have been controversial for displacing villages from the flooded areas, as well as for some health and environmental consequences. A number of development experts have argued that smaller-scale hydro-electric projects could be a solution to such drawbacks.

Which form of alternative energy — if any — an African country develops will depend to a great extent on its particular circumstances. Some countries have large natural gas reserves. A number have rivers and waterfalls suitable for hydro-electric energy. Almost all receive plentiful sunlight for solar power, and many are also in a position to devote agricultural land to biofuel crops. But political commitment, favourable markets and the availability of domestic and external investment capital are also weighty factors.

A few of Africa's oil importers suspect they have undiscovered oil deposits, and have invited oil exploration companies to see if they can develop their own domestic sources of oil, thereby reducing the need for imports.

But one thing is clear. If world oil prices remain high, more of Africa's poorer, oil-importing countries will have to confront the costs of inaction: stalled economic growth and increasing poverty. They will therefore likely move ahead with developing one or more of the alternative energy sources, even those now deemed to be somewhat "far-fetched." ■

Sudan crisis

from page 3

crowded and dangerous camps. Another 220,000 refugees have fled across the border into neighbouring Chad.

Bringing assistance to all these people has been a major financial, logistical and security challenge. Despite threats, attacks and other obstructions, the UN's World Food Programme (WFP), the International Committee of the Red Cross and numerous other humanitarian groups provide food, medical care and shelter, saving many lives.

But the recent escalation of fighting is seriously jeopardizing those efforts, especially in North Darfur, but also in South and West Darfur. In the two months up to mid-September, 12 aid workers were killed — more than in the previous two years. Many relief vehicles have been stolen. The attacks have forced numerous non-governmental relief organizations to pull out of the most insecure parts of Darfur.

According to the World Health Organization, 40 per cent of the population of North Darfur is not receiving health care, while vaccinations have dropped from 90 per cent in 2005 to a mere 20 per cent in 2006. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization reported in early October that some 224,000 people in North Darfur remained cut off from food aid, most of them for the fourth consecutive month.

Because of the insecurity, many farmers could not plant their fields. Livestock herders have been unable to migrate in search of the best pastures. Food scarcity may become especially severe, since much of the recent population displacement has been "in the very fertile areas, not in the arid areas," notes Mr. Niels Scott. He heads the Darfur regional office of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS), which supports the African peacekeeping mission there, alongside its main task of monitoring a separate peace agreement between the government and former rebels in southern Sudan.

Rebel rivalry, government offensive

The resurgence of fighting has come in the wake of a peace agreement that the government signed with one of the Darfur rebel groups in May, following negotiations in Abuja, Nigeria. AU mediators had hoped the pact would be the first step towards a more general settlement and would make it easier for African and international peacekeepers to protect civilians in Darfur.

Getty Images / Daniel Pepper

Nearly 2 million civilians have been driven from their homes in Darfur.

However, there have been few efforts by the government or the faction of the Sudan Liberation Movement/Army (SLM/A) that signed the agreement to implement its provisions. Instead of disarming the Janjaweed militia, the government has reportedly incorporated many of its fighters into the regular army. The Sudanese courts have done little to bring to account those suspected of war crimes.

Tensions have sharpened considerably between the SLM/A faction that signed the agreement, led by Minni Minnawi, a leader of the Zaghawa ethnic group, and the rebel forces that did not sign. The most prominent non-signers are a wing of the SLM/A led by Abdelwahid Mohamed al-Nur and the Justice and Equality Movement (JEM). The al-Nur group, which draws its support largely from the Fur, the largest ethnic group in Darfur, maintains that the agreement does not adequately address the Fur farmers' loss of land during the conflict. The JEM, which is led by former national politicians, advocates the overthrow of the central government in Khartoum. At least two smaller factions have also emerged, further complicating the political landscape.

There have been reports of some fighting among the non-signers, but most frequently between them and Mr. Minnawi's faction, whom they accuse of now siding with the government. Civilians have often been caught in the crossfire and on occasion appear to have been deliberately targeted.

The rebel activities, UN Special Envoy to Sudan Jan Pronk told the Security Council in September, "provided the government with an excuse for continuous attacks and air raids." More than 10,000 additional government troops were moved into Darfur as part of a major offensive launched in late August. The Darfur peace agreement, Mr. Pronk said, "is nearly dead. It is in a coma."

Defiance and pressure

Recognizing that its peacekeeping mission does not have the capacity to protect civilians under such circumstances, the AU asked the UN to step in with a well-financed and -equipped international force. On 31 August, the Security Council authorized such a force by agreeing to send

some 17,000 UN peacekeepers to Darfur, on top of the 10,000 "blue helmets" already in southern Sudan.

Actual deployment, however, was contingent upon the consent of the Sudanese government. So far, there has been no consent. President Omer Hassan al-Bashir and other Sudanese officials have repeatedly rejected the notion of a transition from the AU mission to one involving non-African troops under a UN flag, which they portrayed as an "imperialistic" plan to "recolonize" Sudan — even though the government has already consented to the presence of UN peacekeepers in the south.

Some members of the Security Council have suggested the possibility of international sanctions to further pressure the authorities in Khartoum to agree to a UN force in Darfur. But other members do not now favour such a course. As a result, notes UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide Juan Mendez, the Sudanese government "relies on the disunity in the Security Council to avoid the imposition of sanctions."

Under the urging of other African countries, the Sudanese government did signal its acceptance of an extension of the AMIS mandate to the end of 2006, with an increase in the number of its troops. Some Security Council members see this as an interim measure. According to US Ambassador John Bolton, "we can strengthen AMIS as we [are] simultaneously preparing for the UN handover."

Speaking up

At the same time, said Secretary-General Annan, further international pressure should be applied to secure Sudanese acceptance of a robust international peacekeeping force. "Individuals and governments alike must make themselves heard," he said in September. "Whoever, in Africa or beyond, is in a position to influence the government of Sudan must do so without delay."

The following month, President Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria — the country with the greatest number of troops in AMIS — used especially sharp words in a speech at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. It is not in the interests of Sudan, Africa or the world, he said, "for us all to stand by and see genocide being developed in Darfur."

Many groups and individuals around the world also have been speaking up in defence of the people of Darfur. In late August, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) and the Sudan Organization Against Torture (its local affiliate) called for an end to violations of human rights in Darfur, rejected the Sudanese government's deployment of more troops, called for strengthening AMIS and urged more efforts to secure Sudan's consent for a UN peacekeeping mission "with a strong mandate for the protection of civilians."

It is not in the interests of Sudan, Africa or the world "for us all to stand by and see genocide being developed in Darfur."

— Nigerian President Olusegun Obasanjo

On 17 September, a day of solidarity with the people of Darfur brought protesters into the streets in locations around the world. In London demonstrators rallied outside the Sudanese Embassy, while Muslim, Christian and Jewish leaders delivered a plea and said prayers outside the residence of Prime Minister Tony Blair. Between 20,000 and 30,000 people rallied in New York City. In Rwanda, survivors of the 1994 genocide called for action to halt the Darfur crisis, while other events were held across Africa, from Dakar to Sudan's Juba Mountains.

That same day, 31 human rights and civil society organizations from 10 predominantly Arab countries (Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Iraq, Morocco, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan, Tunisia and Yemen) issued a declaration urging the Sudanese authorities to accept deployment of UN forces in Darfur, disarm the Janjaweed militia and punish anyone carrying out rape or other sexual violence against women in Darfur.

Following the demonstrations, the Darfur Consortium, a coalition of more than 40 Africa-based and Africa-focused civil society organizations, welcomed the AU's decision to extend the AMIS mandate and urged the Sudanese authorities to accept UN peacekeepers. Speaking on behalf of the consortium, Mr. Alioune Tine of Senegal, president of the Rencontre Africaine pour la Défense des Droits de l'Homme (RADDHO), declared: "In the new Africa, the veil of sovereignty must be pierced when a state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens from massive violations of international humanitarian law." ■

Ghana governance

from page 5

the recommendation to permit partisan politics in the elected District Assemblies. Placing a cap on the number of ministries fell outside the constitution, the government maintained. In Khartoum, however, President Kufuor seemed to soften his stance, noting that a referendum could be organized to amend the constitution, if changes are needed. Then at the end of April 2006 he carried out a major cabinet overhaul, which included reducing the number of ministers from 88 to 70.

Other initiatives include one to establish an institute to help increase the capacities of local governments, and one to repeal the libel law to make it easier for the news media to expose instances of corruption. Reinforcing the APRM review's criticisms of the amount of poverty in Ghana's northern regions, members of Parliament, civil society groups and others held a two-day meeting in the northern town of Tamale in July to demand "affirmative action" to redress the north's historical disadvantages.

To further strengthen governance in Ghana, the government also drafted a detailed and comprehensive Programme of Action to address the shortcomings highlighted by the review. Initially, the government estimated the total cost of these new measures at US$2.8 bn, but by the time of the Khartoum meeting the estimate had risen to $5 bn. President Kufuor hoped that donors and investors would be more forthcoming now that Ghana has undergone its peer review. The completion of the APRM, he said, "demonstrates our commitment to democracy and good governance as prerequisites for development." ■

AFRICA AGENDA

3-5 November 2006, Beijing (China) — Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation. The largest and highest-level meeting between Chinese and African leaders since China and Africa started forging cooperative ties in the 1950s. Contact Yuxia Li, tel (86) 10 65963312, fax (86) 10 65963372, e-mail <li_yuxia@mfa.gov.cn>, website <www.fmprc.gov.cn/zflt/eng/>

6-9 November 2006, Sede Boqer (Israel) — Deserts and Desertification: Challenges and Opportunities. Sponsored by Ben-Gurion University, UN Convention to Combat Desertification and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Contact Zoe Groner, tel (972) 8 659 6977, fax (972) 8 659 6889, website <www.desertopportunities.org/site/>

14-16 November 2006, Windhoek (Namibia) — Youth in Africa: Participation of Youth as Partners in Peace and Development in Post-Conflict Countries. An expert group meeting to devise strategies and mechanisms to include youth as central stakeholders in rehabilitation, reconciliation, and rebuilding of war-torn communities. Organized by the UN Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in cooperation with the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. Contact Wasantha Bandarage, tel (1) 212 963-9245, e-mail <bandarage@un.org>, website <www.un.org/africa/osaa>

15-18 November 2006, Guatemala City (Guatemala) — 12th International Anti-Corruption Conference. Organized by the IACC Council and Transparency International. Contact Gypsy Guillén Kaiser, tel (49) 30 343820662, fax (49) 30 34703912, e-mail <ggkaiser@transparency.org>, website <www.12iacc.org>

16-18 November 2006, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) — The 5th African Development Forum: Youth for Leadership in the 21st Century. Organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa jointly with the African Union. Contact Kwabia Boateng, tel (251) 115 44 35 71, fax (251) 115 51 22 33, e-mail <kboateng@uneca.org>, website <www.uneca.org/ADF/>

27-30 November 2006, Johannesburg (South Africa) — Africa Water Congress 2006. A gathering of senior decision makers dedicated to improving water management in Africa. Contact Nerina Van Wyk, tel (27) 11 516 4052, fax (27) 11 463 6000 e-mail <nerina.vanwyk@terrapinn.co.za>, website <www.terrapinn.com/2006/waterza/>

28-30 November 2006, Kampala (Uganda) — Role of Research and Technology in the Attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. Bringing together scholars, researchers and managers of tertiary and research institutions in Africa. Tel (256) 782353775, e-mail <ugsociety@mulib.mak.ac.ug>

22-24 January 2007, New Delhi (India) — 7th Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. Organized by The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI). Contact Annapurna Vancheswaran, tel (91) 11 2468 2100 or (91) 11 2468 2111, fax (91) 11 2468 2144 or 91 11 2468 2144, e-mail <avanche@teri.res.in>, website < http://static.teriin.org/dsds/2007/index.htm>

22–25 January 2007, Gauteng (South Africa) — HIV/AIDS: The Impact on Your Business. The event will take an in-depth look at the effect of HIV/AIDS on businesses. Contact Fran Lupton, (27) 11 669 5111, email <fran.lupton@iqpc.co.za>, website <www.aidsafricaconference.com>

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

11-16 September 2006, Havana (Cuba) — 14th Summit of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). Website <www.cubanoal.cu/ingles/index.html>

13-16 September 2006, Nairobi (Kenya) — Global Youth Employment Summit. Organized by UN-HABITAT, the UN Human Settlements Programme. Website <www.unhabitat.org/categories.asp?catid=511>

18-24 September 2006, Nairobi (Kenya) — 4th Africities Summit. The summit focused on progress in slum upgrading in Africa, women's empowerment within African local authorities and decentralization. Website <www.africites.org/index_eng.php>

AFRICA BOOKS

Women and Collective Action in Africa by Filomina Steady (Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire, UK, 2005; 224 pp; pb $24.95, hb $75)

African Union: Pan-African Analytical Foundations by Kofi Kissi Dompere (Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2006; 272 pp; pb £29.95, $35)

L'Afrique de l'Ouest, entre espace, pouvoir et société: Une géographie de l'incertitude by John O. Igue (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 650 pp; €34)

Global Capitalism: Its Fall and Rise in the Twentieth Century by Jeffry A. Frieden (W.W. Norton, New York, USA, 2006: 448 pp; hb $29.95)

Contending Political Paradigms in Africa: Rationality and the Politics of Democratization in Kenya and Zambia by Shadrack Nasong'o (Routledge, Oxford, UK, 2005; 224 pp; hb $80, £45)

Trial Justice: The International Criminal Court and the Lord's Resistance Army by Tim Allen (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 230 pp; hb £36.99, pb £12.95)

Les conquêtes de la médecine moderne en Afrique, ed. Jean-Paul Bado (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 176 pp; €22)

Le défi social du développement: globalisation et inégalités, ed. Christian Comeliau (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 240 pp; €23)

Voices of African Women: Women's Rights in Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania, ed. Johanna Bond (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina, USA, 2005; 456 pp; pb $45)

Emerging Capital Markets in Turmoil: Bad Luck or Bad Policy? by Guillermo A. Calvo (MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, 2006; 547 pp; hb $45)

Uniting Africa: Building Regional Peace and Security Systems by David J. Francis (Ashgate Publishers, UK, 2006; 296 pp; pb £25)

Ethique et développement durable by Yvan Droz and Jean-Claude Lavigne (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 176 pp; €18)

International Migration: Globalization's Last Frontier by Jonathon W. Moses (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 288 pp; hb $55, pb $17.95)

Diasporas Within and Without Africa: Dynamism, Heterogeneity, Variation, eds. Leif Manger and Assal Munzoul (Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 2006; 240 pp; pb SEK290, $35)

Insiders and Outsiders: Citizenship and Xenophobia in Contemporary Southern Africa by Francis B. Nyamnjoh (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 288 pp; hb $85, pb $29.95)

De la philosophie et des philosophes en Afrique noire by Mamoussé Diagne (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 120 pp; €15)

The Politics of Land Reform in Africa: From Communal Tenure to Free Markets by Ambreena Manji (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 224 pp; hb £50, pb £14.99)

A Tale of Two Africas: Nigeria and South Africa as Contrasting Visions, eds. Ali A. Mazrui and James Karioki (Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2006; 360 pp; £25, $39.95)

L'épidémie du sida en Afrique subsaharienne: Regards historiens, eds. Philippe Denis and Charles Becker (Karthala, Paris, France, 2006; 440 pp; €29)

Putting Development First: The Importance of Policy Space in the WTO and International Financial Institutions ed. Kevin P. Gallagher (Zed Books, London, UK, 2005; hb £65, pb £18.95)

Don't Let Them Die: HIV/AIDS, TB, Malaria and the Healthcare Crisis in Africa by Chinua Akukwe (Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd. UK, 2006; 180 pp; pb £18.99)

Empire with Imperialism: The Globalizing Dynamics of Neoliberal Capitalism by James Petras, Henry Veltmeyer, Luciano Vasapollo and Mauro Casadio (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 224 pp; hb $75, pb $25)

Reimagining Growth: Towards a Renewal of Development Theory, eds. Silvana De Paula and Gary A. Dymski (Zed Books, London, UK, 2006; 320 pp; hb £70, pb £19.95)

Somalia: Diaspora and State Reconstitution in the Horn of Africa, eds. A. Osman Farah, Mammo Muchie and Joakim Gundel (Adonis and Abbey Publishers Ltd., London, UK, 2006; 350 pp; pb £23.50, $31.50)

A F R I C A

IN BRIEF

More Africans getting AIDS drugs

More than a million people in sub-Saharan Africa, ten times more than three years ago, are now receiving life-saving HIV/AIDS drugs in Africa, the World Health Organization (WHO) reports. In 2003, only 400,000 people in developing countries had access to such medicines. By the end of June, the total had risen to 1.65 million, or 24 per cent of all those estimated to be currently in need, the WHO announced in August at the International AIDS Conference in Toronto, Canada.

The organization warns, however, that the vast majority of those needing anti-retroviral drugs still do not get them. About 39 million people around the world have HIV and 7 million of those infected in low- and middle-income countries need anti-retroviral treatment. Also, the effort to expand access "has so far left children behind," says WHO's AIDS programme director, Mr. Kevin De Cock. An estimated 800,000 children, 15 years old and under, need anti-retroviral drugs. Although they constitute 14 per cent of annual AIDS deaths, such children make up only 6 per cent of recipients of the drug therapy. ■

Shift in IMF votes cuts African share

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) formally approved a plan to increase the voting power of four middle-income countries — China, Mexico, Turkey and South Korea — during its annual board meeting in September. However, as a result, the collective voting share of sub-Saharan African countries was cut in half.

The IMF says the decision is part of a two-step process to reform its quota system in order to grant member countries a voice in the organization based on their "relative positions in the world economy." The system dates back to when the IMF was founded after the Second World War, and it was last revised in 1999.

African officials did not oppose increased voting power for other countries, but stressed that it should not be at their expense, considering the extent of Fund activities and lending on their continent. With 17 per cent of the quota, the US is the largest shareholder at the IMF. Its quota share remained unaltered by the September decision, but the Fund's 47 sub-Saharan member states saw their relative share fall from 5 to 2.5 per cent. ■

Call for protection of migrant women

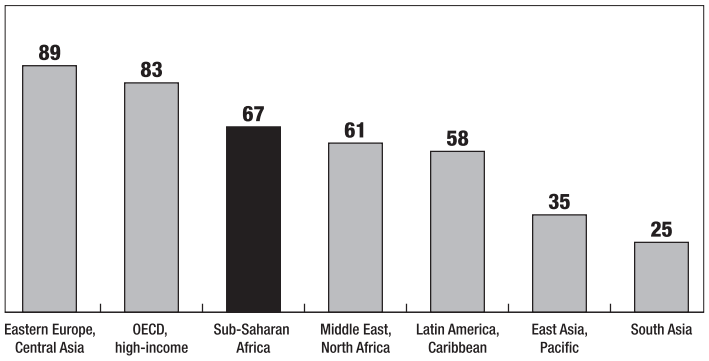
Even though they constitute half of all international migrants and contribute billions of dollars in cash and services, the needs of women are often overlooked and ignored, says the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) in a report, *State of World Population 2006*, released in September.

The report "calls on governments and individuals to recognize and value the contributions of migrant women, and promote and respect their human rights," says UNFPA Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid. Out of 191 million migrants worldwide, some 95 million, are women and they contribute a significant portion of the money remitted home by migrants ($230 bn in 2005). In Africa, women constitute 47 per cent of the 17 million migrants, many of whom stay in Africa while others move to North America and Europe. ■

Africa rapidly improving its business climate

Africa is doing well in reforming its business environment, according to the World Bank and its private-sector financing arm, the International Finance Corporation (IFC). In fact, the continent is reforming at a much faster pace than Asia, Latin America and the Middle East, argues a joint report of the two institutions, *Doing Business 2007: How to Reform*, released in September. Its pace of pro-business reform lags behind only two other regional groupings, Eastern Europe/Central Asia and the wealthy industrialized nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The report ranks 175 countries' everyday business regulations in 10 areas, including starting a business, acquiring licences, registering property and protecting investments. Two thirds of African countries made at least one reform in 2005/06, with Ghana and Tanzania ranking among the top 10 reformers. Côte d'Ivoire reduced the number of days required to register property from 397 to 32. The number of procedures for starting a business in Burkina Faso was cut from 12 to 8 and the total time required to complete them fell from 45 days to 34. Tanzania reduced the costs of registering a new business by 40 per cent, while Kenya eliminated its paper-based customs administration in favour of an electronic data system.



Source: Doing Business 2007, *Washington: World Bank and International Finance Corporation, 2006.*

Despite progress, Africa countries still have the most complex business regulations, notes Mr. Michael Klein, IFC chief economist and a vice-president of the World Bank. "They would greatly benefit from new enterprises and jobs, which can come with more business-friendly regulations," he added. "Big improvements are possible."

AFRICA WATCH

GREAT LAKES REGION

Summit to push for peace, integration

On 14-15 December, heads of state from Africa's Great Lakes region will meet in Nairobi, Kenya, to sign a pact designed to bring peace, stability and prosperity to countries long troubled by civil wars and conflicts with each other. In the pact are projects, programmes of action and protocols which have been negotiated over the past two years by the governments and peoples of the 11 countries taking part in the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, sponsored by the United Nations and the African Union.

UN / Mark Garten

"If we can stabilize and bring about development here, we can help to build a stronger Africa."

—Ibrahima Fall, special representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region

The pact, says Mr. Ibrahima Fall, special representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Great Lakes Region, provides a framework for building cooperation and regional integration among the countries of the region in four areas: peace and security; democracy and good governance; economic development and regional integration; and social and humanitarian matters. "This is one of the most important regions of Africa, politically, strategically and, in terms of potential wealth," notes Mr. Fall. "If we can stabilize and bring about development here, we can help to build a stronger Africa."

The conference is supported by a group of donor countries, known as the Friends of the Great Lakes Region, co-chaired by Canada and the Netherlands. The group will remain involved as the conference enters its implementation phase. The countries participating are: Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. ■

RESPONSIBLE LENDING

Norway cancels 'illegitimate' debt

Norway set a precedent in October when it announced the cancellation of $80 million in "illegitimate" debt accrued by five developing countries — Egypt, Ecuador, Peru, Jamaica and Sierra Leone. It was the first time any creditor nation used a lack of legitimacy as a criterion for debt cancellation. Norway's International Development Minister Erik Solheim said the decision was taken following recognition by the government of "a development policy failure." Between 1976 and 1980, the country exported ships to developing countries mainly to benefit Norway's crisis-ridden domestic shipbuilding industry, rather than to serve development in the countries concerned. "Cancelling these debts will have consequences for how we think about responsible lending in the future," he said.

Anti-debt activists have long advocated cancelling debts resulting from negligent lending policies, including to unaccountable governments. "This is a groundbreaking decision which has huge ramifications for other lenders that acted irresponsibly in the past," said Ms. Gail Hurley of the non-governmental group European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad). "It is not fair that the populations of debtor nations continue to pay the price of corrupt, negligent and politically motivated lending in the past. Today the silence has been broken and we urge other creditor countries, in particular in Europe, to follow Norway's bold lead." ■

AID DELIVERY

UNCTAD calls for new approach

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is calling for a new approach to aid delivery, including the establishment of an independent fund administered by the UN, if rich countries are to fulfill their promise to double aid to poor countries. In a report released in September, UNCTAD argues that a new arrangement should replace "the current chaotic system in which too many agencies … are pushing too many development projects that sometimes compete with each other, often don't match recipients' development goals, are costly to administer, and frequently leave African governments confused and stymied by their numerous rules and conditions."

The report, *Economic Development in Africa 2006,* says that aid to Africa should not only be doubled, but also disbursed multilaterally, perhaps by a UN fund independent of political pressures. The money should be aimed at assisting African countries to produce a diverse range of products and create more jobs, through predictable disbursements over long periods. ■

APPOINTMENTS

The UN Secretary-General has appointed **Mr. Shola Omoregie** of Nigeria as his new representative in Guinea-Bissau and as head of the UN Peacebuilding Support Office in Guinea-Bissau (UNOGBIS). Mr. Omorogie has been with the UN since 1978 in a variety of posts. He served as the first resident representative of the UN Commissioner for Namibia in Botswana (1978) and later in the same capacity in Angola. He also has been with the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and, just prior to his new appointment, with the Security Council Affairs Division of the UN Department of Political Affairs.

Mr. Victor da Silva Angelo of Portugal has been named by the UN Secretary-General as his executive representative for the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL). He will also continue to serve as UN Development Programme (UNDP) resident representative and UN resident coordinator in that country. He has previously represented UNDP in the Central African Republic, East Timor, Gambia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, and was UNDP's deputy regional director for Africa at headquarters in New York.