

# GLOBAL NETWORK FOR JUSTICE

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*Excerpts from the FINAL REPORT of the  
59<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO Conference*

*UNFINISHED BUSINESS: Effective Partnerships for  
Human Security and Sustainable Development  
United Nations, New York  
6-8 September 2006*

## **OVERVIEW of Conference Proceedings**

The conference brought together over 1500 Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) representatives from 62 countries representing nearly 500 organizations. The three-day gathering of NGOs that work with the United Nations through the Department of Public Information (DPI) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) was held from 6 to 8 September 2006 at the UN Headquarters. The conference attempted to build on what had already been accomplished in many of the previous debates of the UN, including Informal Interactive Hearings by the General Assembly President with NGOs, civil society and private sector representatives. Speakers at the conference were asked to provide concrete examples of effective partnerships that would help the global community achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Furthermore, to ensure the widest possible exchange of views, all NGO delegations were asked to include one representative under the age of 30.

The importance of the Conference to both the NGO community and the United Nations was underscored by the high-level of UN participation, including both the incoming and out-going General Assembly Presidents, the Secretary-General of the UN, as well as high-level representatives and heads of the **Department of Public Information (DPI), International Labor Organization (ILO), United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), the World Bank, and the Office of the Millennium Campaign.**

The Conference featured interactive round-table discussions with representatives of Member States, civil society, the private sector and UN Officials. At the closing session, the round-table moderators returned to provide a summary of their respective sessions, highlighting the key points reflected in the panels.

In his final address as Secretary General, Mr. Annan defined the support of civil society groups as critical to his accomplishments and urged them to continue to wield their considerable influence responsibly.

## **Media and Public Outreach Initiatives**

To reach a wider audience, a dedicated interactive Conference website was developed, [www.2006.undpiconference.org](http://www.2006.undpiconference.org). The conference was covered live by UN Television for webcast on the UN website, which allowed online participants to pose questions to panel speakers, enabling real time participation. In addition, the website offered information and resource materials for participants and journalists and archived webcasts of the Conference. The internet Subcommittee of the Conference Planning Committee was also able to obtain a non-financial AdWord grant from Google, Inc. that gave 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> place ranking to

the Conference on Google.Com, thus elevating the awareness of the conference globally.

*This year, for the first time, the NGO Section has included in this report a DVD-ROM containing the web-cast of the entire conference.*

A background press release was issued in 12 July, media releases and workshops were held to promote awareness about MGDs and interviews of people from diverse backgrounds and different ages on the importance and relevance of MDGs in their lives. Two training workshops were organized on networking, ways of creating effective partnerships and the sharing of participants' best practices based on their experiences.

***Excerpts, statements and messages of the speakers from the Summary of Plenary sessions and Round-table Presentations***

#### ***Audio-Visual Introduction***

**“How Are You? The Millennium Development Goals”**

Produced by Girl Behind the Camera Productions  
**Raymond Sommereyns, Director Outreach Division, Department of Public Information** opened the Conference with a video project, which was produced during the 58<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on how the MDGs affect our daily lives. He emphasized the importance of technology in greater participation of NGOs and civil society at the conference.

**Jan Eliasson, Pres. of the 60th Session of the UN General Assembly** said, *“Without passion nothing happens in life but without compassion the wrong things happen in life. You in the NGO community are indeed guided by those two wonderful words- passion and compassion. Only in combination do they really work.”*

**Alvaro Gracia Linera, Vice-Pres. of Bolivia**, speaking via video-conference from La Paz, Bolivia on behalf of Bolivian President Evo Morales said that **development based only on industrialization was no longer sustainable. Such view led to diminished growth in rural communities and was eliminating agricultural development.** **“There are natural and human limits to a society driven by consumption”, he noted.** He advocated the realistic view for autonomous development. While countries should be able to determine their own form of development, **he warned that powerful countries still have the ability to keep them in a subordinate position by controlling credit and trade.** All peoples, irrespective of culture or geography have the right to have access to the world's knowledge and goods. Vice-Pres. Linera emphasized that everything human beings produced was universal property and should contribute to the betterment of humankind. These point of views were being debated by Governments and their peoples; the contribution of NGOs is critical. He called on NGOs and civil society partners to have a more open and pluralistic view of development, and to respect the culture and needs of all people.

**Katsutoshi Kaneda, Senior Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, Japan**, said the world was marked by an unprecedented surge in technical progress, economic development and the rapid global movement of goods, services, finances and people. This dynamism created numerous opportunities but also new threats, such as abject poverty, conflict, organized crime and terrorism, which necessitated a re-examination of approaches to security. The concept of human security had changes, from an understanding of defending national borders, to giving people the building blocks necessary to protect their own safety, livelihood and dignity. While States had the primary responsibility for protecting their citizens,

the human security had become people-centered. NGOs and civil society, therefore, had a major role in implementing human security as they best embodied the people-centered approach. NGOs were ideally suited to putting human security to practice on the ground, particularly through community-based development. The key, however, was to also integrate the government. The UN, NGOs and civil society had an increasingly important role in meeting the challenges in crises and sustainable development initiatives. He concluded by stating that the DPI/NGO Conference was a precious opportunity to mobilize energies to that end.

**Joan Kirkby, NGO/DPI Exec-Com**, said it was a privilege being in New York at the UN Headquarters where NGOs received access information about world issues not readily available in daily press. She informed Conference participants about the weekly DPI/NGO briefings which offers opportunities for the coordination and dissemination of knowledge between NGO representatives and the UN. The Exec-Com. Also facilitates a series of NGO/civil society hearings organized by the Office General Assembly President. A recent survey on the level of recognition of the Committee's work revealed the need to get beyond New York and North America. Some suggestions included holding a yearly round table and appointing regional chairs to cover the six UN established regional groups, which could work with the UN Information Centers.

***“New and stronger partnerships, are an unavoidable necessity and as yet unfinished business that the international community needs to finalize quickly – the sooner the better.”*** Renate Bloem, President, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the UN.

**Michaela Walsh, Chair, 59<sup>th</sup> Annual DPI/NGO conference and Co- Chair of the Planning Committee**, expressed her desire for this Conference to be different from previous ones, not a setting for political speeches or theories but for speakers to share their grassroots experiences and their ideas about changing the lives of others. **She found that grassroots activists, particularly women, knew more about real life needs and concerns than Government agencies experts.** She also insisted on increased youth involvement in this year's Conference. Since the youth represent such a large proportion of the world's population, their views and ideas needed to be heard. She called on all participants to exchange ideas about the pressing issues of the day, including bridging the digital divide, lack of electricity and clean water, as global warming and other issues that affected sustainable development and human security. One of the objectives of this conference had always been to encourage and to facilitate networking opportunities. With that in mind she asked each person in the room under the age of 30, to find a more mature NGO representative, introduce themselves, exchange email addresses and agree to reconnect before the close of the Conference to share their experiences and discuss what they would take away from this meeting.

***Moving Development Forward: Accountability, Transparency, Equitable Trade Policies***

**Hans Blix, Chairman of Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission**, lauded NGOs for doing great work by demanding facts and transparency, and rendering valuable service by critically examining government action and inaction. Rarely had the need for acknowledging the reports of international fact-finders, views of NGOs and public opinion been as important and powerfully demonstrated as after the invasion of Iraq. **“In 2003, a**

**state and the people were sentenced, not by the world but some of the world, to war and invasion on erroneous grounds. It was not ‘peace through truth’ but ‘war through untruth’, he said.** According to the report by the independent international Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, the arms reduction and disarmament processes had stagnated in the past decade. He said it was necessary for NGOs to renew and reinforce their work in pushing that process forward. He also stressed the importance of Non Proliferation Treaty in preventing the further spread of weapons of mass destruction. Not only were many countries are failing to live up to their commitments to the Nuclear Non Proliferation Treaty, but the Comprehensive Nuclear test Ban Treaty of 1996 would be left in limbo unless United States and China agreed to ratify it. The security of states, Mr. Blix concluded, must be sought through international cooperation, development, rule of law, arms control, disarmament, and less through military force.

**Grace Nshemeire, Low Unit Pack Champion, Unilever (Kenya),** *“It’s not just NGOs that can make better the lives of the people at the bottom of the pyramid; we can also have the private sector coming in to improve the lives of people. The challenge is to bring them on..”* She focused on micro-level of trade practices. In Africa, she said, trade was driven by temporary stalls or retail outlets which sold small, low-unit packaged goods like single-use detergent or flour packs. Such retail operations, though small and fragile, greatly affected local economies in Sub-Saharan Africa, as they were often the main source of income and the main point of purchase for the majority of people. Retail outlets were often the first steps of entrepreneurship and provided a sense of empowerment to many people, not only for poorer segments of society. However, local councils would often harass these semi-permanent, informal stalls, forcing them to close down

and charging them exorbitant fees to reopen the same stall the very next day. She called for better licensing procedures and enhanced marketing linkages, particularly to local farmers. In addition, she said there was a need to extend credit units and to enable management/finance training.

**Mal Nuhu Ribadu, Executive Chairman of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission, Government of Nigeria,** highlighted the importance of ensuring accountability and the rule of law. “All countries,” he claimed, “would eventually develop, the question was how fast.” The main challenge preventing countries from fast-tracking the development process, he said, was poor governance and mismanagement. **“Only if corruption becomes history, can we make poverty history. No amount of grant or assistance will ever make a difference if corruption is there.”** He said that the Nigerian people and Government had begun rooting out bad management. In the last three years, Nigeria was able to obtain 80 convictions for corruption, recovering well over \$5 billion. For the first time, he claimed, Nigeria had a proper democracy. Eliminating corruption and mismanagement, he believed, was the only way for developing countries like Nigeria to take charge of their own development process and to end poverty. A corrupt leader in Africa, he asserted, should be treated like a terrorist, because their actions did more damage and sacrificed more lives than some of the worst acts of terrorism.

**Lester Salamon, Director of Civil Society studies at John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies,** explained that complex problems required the joint action of all three sectors: governments, businesses, and civil society. This new strategy has, he asserted, led to a technological revolution, which had utilized and developed new tools of

public action and was no longer restricted to the direct delivery of goods and services, such as micro-loans and grants, and social and economic regulations and vouchers. The split in the financing of public goods and their delivery has led to the production of a wonderful, yet dizzying array of options, which has expended the range of action and mobilized additional resources. In order to take advantage of those new opportunities, civil society needed to address three significant challenges, which he referred to as the Three C's: Consciousness, Conscientiousness, and Competence. Consciousness was the challenge of boosting civil society visibility and establishing it as a serious social actor. Conscientiousness referred to the challenge of transparency, not only of Governments but also of the civil society sector. Competence was the challenge of being effective. Mr. Salamon concluded by discussing the importance of the ***Handbook on Non Profit Institutions*** in the System of National Accounts to address and maintain the Three C's. The data in the Handbook not only demonstrated that the non-profit sector was an enormously dynamic and growing sector, but also made it possible for civil society to find new forms of collaboration with the business and government sectors.

**Christopher Sinckler, the Executive Coordinator of the Caribbean Policy Development Centre**, declared that the current trade system was more likely to undermine and wipe away development gains that it was to build upon them. While many Caribbean countries had economically grown and made significant strides in the area of human development between the 1970s and 1990s, they have in recent years, graduated back to poverty. Very few Caribbean countries have any industrial base, and have become totally dependent on tourism. Weaknesses are increased due to lack of

economies of scale, a limited export base, and a vulnerability to natural disasters. Mr. Sinckler, emphasized the need for Caribbean countries to be responsible for each other, and to form global and regional partnerships which will enable them to lift each other up and not sign agreements harmful to their interests. **"In building global partnerships to assist in the Millennium Development Goals aid...don't we have the responsibility to each other to ensure that we build partnerships not to pull ourselves down but to ensure that we lift each other up?"**

#### **Question and Answer Period**

Responding to a question on the illicit trade in small arms, Mr. Blix said overcoming the stalemate in the disarmament movement was of ultimate importance. He called on the NGO community to put pressure on governments and to start the drumbeat towards those changes.

Asked what suggestions he had for moving the rule of law forward, Mr. Nuhu Ribadu stated that good quality leadership was the key. If you had good leadership, resources available to the government would be successfully transformed. Through the rule of law, one could establish justice, and weed out corruption. Mr. Sinckler added that corruption bred uncertainty, and it would be impossible to construct modern societies and economies if people could not trust the systems and officials on which they depended.

Responding to questions on accountability, Lester Salamon said accountability in civil society organizations could only be addressed through transparency procedures, government laws, and regulations. In addition, the board of directors needed to fully understand their responsibilities.

When asked about nuclear power and the controversy in Iran, Mr Blix said he believed Iran should be restricted from producing weapons grade uranium, as it increased tensions in the region however; he was in favor of nuclear power as an energy source. All sources of energy, he claimed, had environmental problems. Hydroelectricity had created some of the worst environmental damages to local environments, and fossil fuels greatly threatened the global environment. Mr. Blix concluded it was not a matter of avoiding nuclear technology altogether. Rather, it was a matter of making nuclear energy safer and of creating the conditions in the world in which states did not feel the need for nuclear weapons.

#### ***Achieving Financial and Ecological Sustainability***

***Jane Pratt, Pres., United Diversity Forum, United States,*** shared about her organization, an Indonesian non profit that brought together sectors of society to forge a common vision for the future of the country. After the devastating effects of tsunami in 2005, they came together to rebuild an island... they discussed the values that would allow Muslims, Christians, Hindus, and Jews to live side by side on this island. She learned from her Indonesian colleagues what Margaret Meade said, **“Never estimate the power of a small group of people to change the course of history. Indeed, it is the only thing that has.”**

**Salvano Briceno, Director Secretariat International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/SDR)** began by saying that **risk reduction was an under-focused part of disaster management.** Disasters are caused by vulnerability to natural hazards. It can be concluded, therefore, that while natural hazards may trigger a disaster, the scale by which a disaster takes human life is dependent on vulnerability and not on the magnitude of **the natural hazard alone. Simply referring to**

**disasters as “natural “ was a “convenient lie”,** he claimed. Most resources were still focused on post-disaster reconstruction rather than on preventative measures. In order to shift the focus on from post-disaster reconstruction to preventative measures, the World Bank created a report under the Prevention Consortium to identify areas prone to hazard. Most geological hazards, such as earthquakes, continue to cause concern due to the larger number of people living in vulnerable areas. Environmental degradation, lack of urban planning and socioeconomic poverty were also causes of increased vulnerabilities. Because only 1% of the \$6 billion in humanitarian assistance went towards risk reduction, much larger investments were required. To that end, Mr. Briceno lauded the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development for launching a policy to dedicate 10 percent of its humanitarian aid to risk reduction and also praised Japan and Germany for their similar efforts. Explicit, systematic approaches for emergency preparedness needed to be incorporated in the development policy of a country.

## **To be continued in the next Issue**

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