

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR JUSTICE

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Partnerships for Human Security and
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**Continued from May 2007 Volume 6 Number 3
Emerging Approaches to Healthcare,
Including Gender-based HIV and AIDS**

Timothy Thomas, Executive Director of the Staying Alive Foundation of MTV Network International said if global response to the AIDS epidemic did not dramatically improve, AIDS would consume at least one more generation. In 1998, MTV launched the Staying Alive Campaign on HIV and AIDS awareness education and prevention. It consisted of long and short programming, documentaries and concerts, which was free to broadcasters and NGOs worldwide. It's non-traditional content was designed to be provocative and sexually explicit. He explained how violence and sexually explicit messaging on television pushed in one direction, while the Staying Alive Campaign pushed back with graphic depictions of safe and unsafe sexual behavior and violence in the other direction. After viewing the ads, 77 % of all viewers said they were more likely to use condoms and more than 40% said the ads

prompted them to get tested for the disease. MTV reached 800 million households in 177 territories and was viewed in 90% of highly impacted countries. These campaigns worked, he said, but there were not enough of them and in some countries, the youth could not look beyond surviving the day. Information technologies, including cable, satellite, radio and even video games needed to be harnessed for HIV prevention in order to change attitudes and behaviors. NGOs and donors needed to rethink the delivery of HIV messaging. Telling girls they could say no to unwanted sex was only one part of the solution. Changing the way men and boys treated women in all aspects of life was equally important. **Frederica Perera, Center Director and Principal Investigator of the Department of Environmental Sciences of the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University** discussed the effects of environmental pollutants of women's reproductive health and child health and development. She said the issue of environmental pollutants was extremely important because it was often an invisible problem which went unseen and unrecorded. Among them were combustion by-products of fossil fuel energy, smoking, and second-hand smoke, pesticides, and indoor cooking in poorly ventilated areas. Her department conducted studies in the US, Poland, and China on the health impact of those pollutants on pregnant women and their children. The study concluded that exposure to those pollutants caused, reduced fetal growth, childhood diseases, developmental disorders, and was a bio marker for increased cancer risks. Low birth weight was a major cause of neo-natal deaths, causing more than four million deaths worldwide each year, mostly in developing countries. The occurrences of leukemia and asthma in children were also increasing worldwide. Multilateral action and partnerships were needed to prevent such exposure.

Question and Answer Period

Responding to a question concerning the gap between empowering women on the ground and the policies set at the United Nations, Ms Germain said the United Nations provided certain leadership standards for countries to follow and could be used by NGOs as a tool to hold governments accountable. However, the actual work was done from the ground up and took a long time to implement locally. Ms. Barroso stated in the past few decades, many NGOs had been formed to empower women but struggled with a lack of funding.

Responding to a question on the absence of any sexual rights in the Convention on Discrimination Against Women, Ms. Germain said NGOs needed to advocate for those changes through their own governments urging them to initiate a resolution and/or to support other governments that presented those views. Ms Barroso said her organization was working on a Bill of Sexual Rights; which would not be legally binding but would increase awareness.

Human Security: The Responsibility to Protect and the Peace Building Commission

Sarah Sewall, Director of the Carr Center for Human Rights Policy , John F. Kennedy School of

Government at Harvard, served as moderator of the panel session. During the 2005 World Summit, the affirmation of the responsibility to protect human beings from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing, and crimes against humanity followed with the development of the Peacebuilding Commission. “It is a shell that we hope will harden to fill in over time and each of us will have a role to play...” She indicated that affirmation alone would neither translate into success nor failure. Band-aids were preferred by the actors in the international community, words were easier to achieve than actions, and collective authority was often the shield behind which

individual responsibility was hidden. She noted civil society’s role was important and should partner with governments, military forces, and principal actors to create a ready-to-go capacity of resources in order to fulfill the responsibility to protect.

Augustine Philip Mahiga, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the United Republic of Tanzania

stressed the important role of NGOs as partners and critics of governments. Due to the work of NGOs, governments were now beginning to understand that human security needed to be people-centered. Human security included poverty reduction, provision of services, human dignity and human rights. While governments were ultimately responsible for protecting the citizens and their livelihoods, they sometimes failed. At times, states were themselves the perpetrators of their own people’s sufferings and deprivation. Therefore, responsibility rested on the international community to combat genocide, crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and crimes of war. In the past UN had been accused of intervening against states under the pretences of humanitarian assistance and violating so-called state sovereignty. However that argument, he emphasized, was eroding, as new global society was emerging. Discourse on the responsibility to protect has broadened to include civil society and NGOs who bring a people-centered approach to human security and development.

Carolyn Mcaskie, Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support, Peacebuilding Commission, UN, “[If the main objective of the Peacebuilding Commission is to understand the root causes of conflict and to help countries to identify the elements needed for the path to peace, how can they do it unless all the players are involved?](#)”, emphasized how the [Peacebuilding Commission, in collaboration with governments and civil society, was most valuable in its rebuilding and reconstruction efforts](#). The controversy behind

humanitarian intervention was eliminated when the concept to 'intervention to protect' changed to a concept of 'responsibility to protect'. The Peacebuilding Commission was designed to assist countries emerging from conflict in order to avoid a relapse, which happened in almost half the cases. However, she hoped the Commission was seeking ways to develop a good working relationship between its members and civil society actors, and encouraged national governments to adopt broader consultative processes on the ground in support of their peace building strategies. In doing so, the Commission would be able to build the most inclusive and sustainable strategic approach to peace building.

Juan Mendez, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide said it was gratifying that the United Republic of Tanzania and Ghana had never allowed the debate in the Security Council to drift away from the needs of two million people in Darfur. The legal and philosophical basis of the Special Adviser's mandate was the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. He said the outcome document from the 2005 Summit placed the responsibility to protect, first and foremost, on the nation-state. If the state was willing but unable to protect its citizens, the international community must help it, and if the state was able but unwilling to protect its citizens, the international community had to intervene. Mr. Mendez was specifically asked not to make a determination on what constituted genocide, and not to act on the basis of hearsay but to corroborate the facts, keeping in mind the contextual history of the conflict to avoid making the situation worse. He concluded by saying the international community should act simultaneously and with adaptability in four areas for early action: physical protection, humanitarian relief, accountability, and peacemaking by containing the underlying conflict.

Eugenie Mukeshimana, Rwanda Genocide Survivor brought the audience to a standing ovation by sharing her experiences in Rwanda during the conflict while she was eight-months pregnant. At the beginning of her pregnancy, she never imagined she would have to question her survival, but then the conflict came. There were rumors that the US and the UN were in Uganda ready to help. However, these rumors were false, and were started by the militias to incite more killings before assistance actually arrived. *She stated the real issue of genocide and conflict was the concept of the self. While there were many advances in different areas of sciences, the priority should be to look at oneself and the direction of human nature. She said if people cared about other human beings, the genocide would not have happened.* She noted the importance of providing assistance to Sudan. Everyone knew what was happening in Sudan, but not enough was being done. Ms Mukeshimana could picture a pregnant woman in Sudan whose baby would not wait because of the conflict. It was claimed that genocide occurred because no one knew about it in Rwanda, but now what would be the excuse in Sudan? Who would speak for the victims?

Edward Jombla, National Network Coordinator, Network on Collaborative Peacebuilding, Sierra Leone claimed that the success of human security depended on economic, social and political development and sustainability. This meant addressing discrimination, poverty, and civic responsibility, and preventing conflicts. Populations in poverty were particularly vulnerable and were often utilized to commit evil acts for the benefit of those in power. Civil society was more than just the implementation of state policy; other issues such as unemployment and hunger were of equal concern and also affected security. The lack of job opportunities and poverty exacerbated the probability of violence. Even with training programs, the opportunities were limited

because of the competitiveness of the job market. Many people in Sierra Leone were still living in poverty – food security was of particular concern. Mr. Jombla welcomed the idea of working in partnership with the peacebuilding Commission, and hoped the views of the local population would be taken into consideration when decisions are made.

Questions and Answer Period

In response to two questions on what could be done about the youth who are often recruited during political disputes, Mr Mendez stated that his office could be one way, although not only the one, through which NGOs could bring information of potential genocide to an international arena.

Ambassador Mahiga expressed that by collective identifying and raising awareness, NGOs must network with one another to encourage action and to hold Governments accountable. By educating civil society, lobbying the governments, and working through the UN, human security could be achieved.

Ms McAskie answered by emphasizing that, while wars are sometimes inevitable, we needed to outlaw violence. She further stressed the need to understand the actual problem in conflict and post-conflict situations before looking for answer. For example, to simply characterize a conflict as ethnic violence might not be entirely accurate, as certain clashes between ethnic groups are less to do with ethnic tensions and more to do with obtaining power and controlling resources. She also said it was important for northern NGOs help build their southern counterparts in establishing credibility and empowering them in addressing local issues. In addition, she noted the UN had to be reformed in how it finances operations. On one hand, financing for resolutions on peacekeeping operations were mandatory while post-conflict assistance was voluntary. In other words, why

was it obligatory to fund armies but not to feed the children?

Ms. Mukeshimana noted not only that more money should be spent on education rather than the military, but recipients of assistance should also be consulted on their actual needs. She continued by saying that bystanders who knew about a crisis but did nothing to help the victims were worse than the perpetrators themselves.

Civil Society and Global Partnerships for Development

Zohreh Tabatabai , Director of Communications and Public Information for the International Labor Organization (ILO) served as the moderator for the morning round-table panel session, Civil Society and Global Partnerships for Development. She highlighted the importance of creating global partnerships for development to further the MDGs. The panel discussed how people could improve the world by providing clean water, decent employment, education, and healthcare. She noted creating such a global partnership for development would absolutely require the commitment and energy of all stakeholders.

Jan Eliasson, President of the 60th Session General Assembly and Foreign Minister of Sweden, focused his presentation on his commitment to the NGO community. During the 1992 crisis in Somalia, the importance of NGOs had become vividly clear to him. NGOs were not only crucial in delivering necessary humanitarian relief, but were also very good of recognizing the early warning signals. It was therefore necessary to build stronger links between the UN and civil society. Mr. Eliasson pointed out that while the NGO community was a friend of the UN, it was also a critic in helping to reform the organization. The relationship with NGOs had been built into the work of the Peacebuilding Commission and the Human Rights (HR) Council. In addition, NGOs may

valuable contributions and brought incredible energy to the General Assembly's High level meeting on HIV-AIDs, as well as, the meeting on the Disabilities Convention.

Haya Rashed Al Khalifa-Elect, sixty-first session of the General Assembly, United Nations, began her presentation by emphasizing the significant contribution of civil society to the UN's strength. The power of civil society, she claimed, could be witnessed in times of peace and crisis alike. In times of crisis NGOs were crucial in promoting non-violent solutions and key partners in delivering humanitarian services to the most dangerous places. In times of peace, NGOs spoke for the marginalized groups of society. Women's rights were a personal commitment of Ms. Al Khalifa, and NGOs have been pioneers in promoting the equality of women at all levels. She added that while the adoption of international targets was a positive step forward for the UNs more work needed to be done in their implementation, particularly for the MDGs. With so much discontent and despair around the world, she noted it was necessary to recognize the diversity and contributions of different sectors. Ms. Al Khalifa had valued civil society and would therefore work to maintain an open dialog with the NGO community.

Shamina de Gonzaga, Special Adviser on NGO relations, Office of the President of the General Assembly, addressed the importance of youth participation with the UN system. Further, she noted the change in consciousness on a global scale. One could now study the subject of sustainable development or not-for-profits, which showed a desire for people to become more engaged in those issues. In addition, there were no rules of procedure to govern the work of NGOs in the General Assembly; some meetings included a large NGO presence, others did not. Governments were sometimes reluctant to involve NGO. However, Ms De Gonzaga

believed NGOs could provide assistance without infringing on their decision-making processes. She added it was necessary to stop 'blame game', between rich and poor countries. She often heard complaints but she rarely heard solutions. In order to overcome this hurdle, she concluded, people needed to gear their energy towards ending circular dialogue. While NGO representatives were humanitarian in their work, they also had to be humanitarian in their daily lives.

Joseph Donelly, Int'l . Representative to the United Nations for Caritas Internationalis, began by saying he was representing NGO voices fro around the world, helping to expand the relationship between civil society, the UN and its member states. He emphasized the partnerships to be real and genuine, they must be mutual and participatory. NGOs must be the very type of partners whom they seek. Having sought the input of NGOs around the world, he gathered a list of issues of particular concern to NGOs, including: HIV/AIDS, financing for development, coordinating NGOs, access/proximity to Member States and decision making processes, human security, eradicating poverty, MDGs, arms control and disarmament issues,, ethnic / religious conflicts, environmental issues, roles of women, youth as partners not guests, and building partnerships. He concluded that as partners for peace, development and human security, NGOs should be responsible stewards for the global community. As Sec.-Gen. Kofi Annan recommended last year: 'be bold, and don't apologize.'

Question and Answer Period

Responding to a question on how to reconcile the views of developed and industrialized countries on UN reform, and how NGOs can help, Mr. Eliasson explained that the quality of the organization was contingent upon unity. While it was important to improve the management and secretariat structure, this could not be an issue for just one

country. It was in the interest of every country to have a well-functioning UN. It was absolutely essential that the various bodies of the UN and civic society groups work together. The UN should be thought of as catalyst between regional economic organization, corporations, and the Bretton Woods institutions. The inequities of the world system should be recognized. For instance, it was crucial to deal with the issue of the two-state solution in the Middle East. If the world wanted to reconcile many of the differences and restore some harmony in the organization, these basic problems needed to be addressed.

Ms. Al Khalifa said, according to the UN Charter, the role of the NGOs was limited. However, NGOs could play a crucial role by changing mentalities of the people in their countries. NGOs, she said, were most effective working at the local level, informing and educating people. Much had been done by the General Assembly to implement the MGDs, but they would only be achieved with civil society partnership.

Responding to the series of questions pertaining to youth, Ms. De Gonzaga explained as a young person, it was hard to be taken seriously; young people and NGOs had much in common, both were considered a threat and hard to control. On the issue of youth at the UN, there had been a dramatic change over the last ten years. It was important not only to attend meetings, but to have an issue that one really cared about. Mr. Donnelly cited the Model UN program as a means of bringing young people into the work of the UN.

Mr. Donnelly, responding to a question on improving NGO participation said perseverance and continued diligence beyond attending meetings was necessary. For two years NGOs have been calling on members of the Security Council to take action on Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda. Ms Tabatabai added partnerships did already exist; it was an issue of being at

the table when decisions were taken. Many governments did not have that level of comfort in dealing with NGOs.

Upon receiving many questions related to access to the UN premises, including the planned renovation of the Headquarters complex, Ms Tabatabai requested the participation of a Secretariat member who could address the issues.

John Clarkson of the Capital master Plan informed the audience about upcoming renovations to the Headquarters complex. He indicated renovations would begin in the summer of 2007. Such work would include renting swing space for displaced staff members and the setting up of conference provisions on the north lawn. The majority of the work would begin in 2008, with 25% of the current facilities under renovation, at any one time. NGOs would continue to have access to the same services during the renovation period. Conference facilities would be greatly improved with 2010 technology. Details of the Capital Master Plan could be viewed at www.un.org/cmp.

[New Orleans Bread for the World](#)

[Loyola University New Orleans](#)

[Campus Box 907](#)

[New Orleans, LA 70118, U S A](#)

[Phone: 504. 861-5834](#)

[Fax: 504. 866-8451](#)

[Email: gcnfj@loyno.edu](mailto:gcnfj@loyno.edu)

[Website: www.globalnetwork4justice.org](http://www.globalnetwork4justice.org)

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