

GLOBAL NETWORK FOR JUSTICE

A Project of New Orleans Bread for the World at the Twomey Center for Peace Through Justice
Loyola University New Orleans, Campus Box 907, New Orleans, LA 70118, USA

GCNFJ@LOYNO.EDU / WWW.GLOBALNETWORK4JUSTICE.ORG

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56th Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference, Sept. 8-10, 2003, UN, New York

“This year’s DPI/NGO Conference, **Human Security and Dignity, Fulfilling the Promise of the United Nations**, draws on the premise that our collective security is ultimately founded on the well-being of the individual. At the same time, it is a poignant reminder that such security, as called for in the UN Charter, remains elusive for hundreds of millions of people around the world. Universal human security is at the heart of the Millennium Development Goals, embraced by all Member States as a blueprint for building a better world in the 21st century. It is central to our campaigns for universal immunization and education, for food security, adequate housing and full employment. It is fundamental to Security Council initiatives for peaceful solutions to tensions and violence that threaten the peace and development of States and peoples.”
Excerpts from the Message of UN Secretary General Kofi A. Anan

The last decade of the twentieth century witnessed an upsurge of confidence in international cooperation. The United Nations Security Council found unprecedented unity. The global economy became increasingly interdependent. A cycle of major United Nations conferences set an ambitious agenda for human development for the new century, culminating in the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals by 149 Heads of State Government in 2000. These Goals heralded a unique confluence of international political will, policies and resources that promised to seriously

tackle entrenched global problems, particularly extreme poverty.

Today, there is concern that the post-millennium world might veer from this new spirit of multilateral cooperation. The North/South divide, the information technology gap, misunderstandings between cultures, armed conflicts and racial intolerance still pose serious challenges. The world is facing severe economic downturns, a breakdown in confidence in non-proliferation agreements, increased unilateralism and widespread public disillusionment with social and political institutions. These conditions require that the UN and its development partners divert already scarce resources away from efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in order to cope with humanitarian disasters, which are too often the result of man-made conflict. The traditional concept of security, viewed in national and military terms, is tied more to relations between states and among people. However, true human security – as recently defined by the Commission on Human Security – flows from the aspirations of people seeking a sense of well-being and dignity in their daily lives and for the future. This broader, human-centered vision is simple yet powerful. At a minimum, it requires meeting basic human needs and ensuring vital freedoms. The Conference presented a forum for civil society and the UN to jointly reassert their determination to assure that living in security remains an achievable goal and that living in dignity is not fleeting illusion but a reality achieved through common commitment and international solidarity among people.

Forty percent of NGO representatives were from developing regions from 65 countries. Young persons ages 16 to 25 participated special outreach through associated NGOs. Plenary sessions were broadcast live on UN TV and webcast (and are archived) on the Internet. Webcasts featured interactive capacity whereby Internet participants could access live discussion forums and address questions and comments directly to the panelists. For more information visit: <http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection>.

WORLD FOOD PROGRAM (WFP) FOCUS ON WOMEN AND AFRICA

In both its emergency and development projects, WFP has a special commitment to helping women gain equal access to life's basic necessities. It is estimated that:

- . Eight out of ten people engaged in farming in Africa are women and 6 out of 10 in Asia.**
- . In one out of three households around the world, women are sole breadwinners.**
- . Seven out of ten of world's hungry are women and girls.**

Experience also shows that in the hands of women, food aid is far more likely to reach the mouths of needy children. So when WFP drafts new operations, both for emergencies and development, women are top of its priority list. Visit <http://www.wfp.org>, or click World Food Program under Useful links at our website.

In Tanzania, activists focus on curbing hunger on the local level. In the villages of Shinyanga and Njombe, KIHACHA's (Food Security Organization) surveys revealed that high production costs, and an absence of adequate rural roads, seriously hinder the production level of many poor farmers, causing household food insecurity. In Ngorongoro, activists report that expensive livestock medicines, high farm inputs and dangerous roads impede farm production. Overall gender discrimination is seen as another serious problem that hinders progress in access to food since women, the majority of whom are farmers are denied equal access to land, capital and resources.

For farmers the rising cost of production was met with government subsidy cutbacks. Without adequate subsidies the farmers could not afford inputs and were forced to stop using fertilizer on soil that has been depleted from over-use. Without fertilizer, many farmers were not able to produce enough to sustain their families, therefore they called for government intervention in the form of reinstated subsidies. Under these kinds of circumstances many African governments lack real power to aid their people as international financial institutions and development schemes dictate uncompromising policies that force them to cut subsidies and other social programs in favor of debt repayment.

Many farmers in even the most remote villages now know that their inability to access credit and inputs (which has negatively impacted production) has its roots in macro-economic policies such as structural adjustment programs. Such programs are meant to stimulate prosperity with a free market approach, but have an adverse effect as Africans have little access to credit and markets. Farmers, who were once able to sustain themselves with occasional government support, now lack the means to provide for their basic needs.

As we have seen over the years, structural adjustment and other similar programs have severely limited African governments' power to act on behalf of their people, and have proved to be counterproductive in many African countries. The latest development plan for Africa, known as New Partnership for African Development or NEPAD is being questioned. NEPAD is an African initiative proposed by three African presidents, but its claim that the global free market will lift Africa out of poverty has left farmers in doubt. (The article was written by Timothy Dougherty, a summer intern at Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, News Notes September/October 2003)

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