

Date and Time: Saturday, May 4, 2024 2:35:00 PM EEST

Job Number: 223508276

Documents (68)

1. [What the papers say: TIMES:](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

2. [A survey of multifarious Asian psyche](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

3. ["I'm no saint", admits berlusconi Under-fire Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi tried to laugh off the increasingly sordid sex scandal enveloping him, joking that he was "no saint". It was his first public comment since a magazine released what it said were conversations between him and a prostitute. Mr Berlusconi has been entangled in scandal for months over his alleged encounters with young women. But the controversy took on new life this week when L'Espresso magazine released tapes of the purported conversations at the conservative premier's Rome residence. "I'm no saint, by now you've figured that out," a smiling Mr Berlusconi told an audience of business executives and politicians in northern Italy at the opening of a road project.](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

4. ["I'm no saint", admits berlusconi Under-fire Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi tried to laugh off the increasingly sordid sex scandal enveloping him, joking that he was "no saint". It was his first public comment since a magazine released what it said were conversations between him and a prostitute. Mr Berlusconi has been entangled in scandal for months over his alleged encounters with young women. But the controversy took on new life this week when L'Espresso magazine released tapes of the purported conversations at the](#)

[*conservative premier's Rome residence. "I'm no saint, by now you've figured that out," a smiling Mr Berlusconi told an audience of business executives and politicians in northern Italy at the opening of a road project.*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

5. [*Political designs of Indo-US Military brass*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

6. [*And another thing...*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

7. [*Rajiv killers meet with justice 18 years after his murder*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

8. [*HighLights of the AAP National Wire at 14:30, Nov 10*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

9. [CROWN SITS UNEASY IN THIS CRISIS](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

10. [The 'international community' and their agenda on Sri Lanka](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

11. [The postponement of acceptance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

12. [News Digest 0700](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

13. [HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

14. [Lost and foundering](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

15. [*A bold move that plans for old age PENSIONS*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

16. [*Time to put a fullstop*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

17. [*Meeting Azavedo!*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

18. [*Immunisation for children in relief centres*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newsires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

19. [*INDIA / USA : OPEN LETTER TO BARAK OBAMA AHEAD OF HIS VISIT TO INDIA*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

20. [Serendipity in Sri Lanka](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

21. [VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 'BIAS'](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

22. [Resettling and improving health of IDPs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

23. [A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

24. [Sri Lankan army massacred 20,000 civilians, UN claims World at a glance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

25. [Party of one Everyone from Esther Rantzen to the bloke next door thinks that they can do a better job of being an MP than the present crop. Philip Collins dons the Martin Bell white suit to discover what running as an independent really entails](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

26. [Help trace suicide bomber](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

27. [Help trace suicide bomber- 1](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

28. [Sri Lankan army massacred 20,000 civilians, UN claims World at a glance](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

29. [Suspected LTTEers cadres caught posing as IDPs](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type

Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

30. [Sri Lanka Government recruiting Tamil police in Jaffna](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

31. [Child soldiers to be rehabilitated](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

32. [82,000 civilians flee Sri Lanka war zone: minister](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

33. [Programs on combating child labour](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

34. [Indian MPs to visit Sri Lanka Saturday](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

35. [*U.N. official expelled from Sri Lanka*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

36. [*Collaborative efforts for peace and development*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

37. [*A sad ending*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

38. [*Indonesian navy intercepts boat carrying Sri Lankans*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

39. [*Menon, Narayanan in Colombo for talks with Rajapaksa*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

40. [*DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF MAY*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

41. [DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL OF JUNE 4](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

42. [WEEKENDER Making a difference](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

43. [LETTERS TO THE EDITOR](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

44. [DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

45. [CHALLENGES BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE POST TERROR ERA](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

46. [*Sri Lanka : Tensions Mount as Camp Conditions Deteriorate*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

47. [*Hot under the sun, Yala wetlands protect fauna*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

48. [*GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY RELEASE 250,000 DISPLACED PERSONS FROM ILLEGAL DETENTION*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

49. [*LETTERS TO THE EDITOR*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers, Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

50. [*Editorial Roundup*](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

51. [Editorial Roundup](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

52. [Stress related mental disorders](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

53. [Empowering women in our communities](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

54. [Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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News

Narrowed by

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

55. [DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL 9 JUNE 2009](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

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Narrowed by

News

Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

56. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

57. [COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

58. [DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF JULY 20](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

59. [No Headline In Original](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

60. ["THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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61. [ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 200962. [STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 200963. [No Headline In Original](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 200964. [PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 200965. [TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009](#)**Client/Matter:** -None-**Search Terms:** "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE**Search Type:** Terms and Connectors**Narrowed by:****Content Type**
News**Narrowed by**
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

66. [GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

67. [DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

Narrowed by:

Content Type
News

Narrowed by
Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

68. [HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH](#)

Client/Matter: -None-

Search Terms: "Tamil Tigers" OR LTTE

Search Type: Terms and Connectors

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Publication Type: Newspapers,Newswires & Press
Releases; Timeline: Mar 31, 2009 to Nov 30, 2009

What the papers say: TIMES:

Press Association Mediapoint

October 19, 2009 Monday 2:02 AM BST

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Section: HOME NEWS

Length: 1587 words

Body

CRIME CZAR BLAMES BROWN FOR GROWTH OF YOB CULTURE

The Government's own neighbourhood crime adviser has accused Gordon Brown of letting people down on antisocial behaviour.

IRAN BLAMES BRITAIN FOR DEADLY ATTACK

Iran vowed revenge on Britain and the US yesterday after blaming them for a devastating suicide attack against the elite Revolutionary Guards that killed 49 people, including six senior commanders.

BUTTON GOES INTO OVERDRIVE TO WIN CHAMPIONSHIP

Jenson Button completed one of the most remarkable comebacks in the history of sport last night by becoming Formula One world champion after a thrilling Brazilian Grand Prix.

City:

GOVERNMENT DEBT 'NEARLY THREE TIMES HIGHER THAN OFFICIAL FIGURE'

Employers yesterday called upon the Government to get to grips with its ballooning debts as a new study put the true size of the public sector's net liabilities at £2,200 billion, almost three times official figures.

E.ON CONDEMNS OVERAMBITIOUS TARGETS FOR GREEN ENERGY

Government plans to generate 30 per cent of UK electricity from renewable sources by 2020 are doomed to failure, according to the chief executive of one of the world's biggest utility companies.

TELEGRAPH:

LENDERS TO CHECK ON HOME BUYERS' SPENDING

What the papers say: TIMES:

Home buyers applying for mortgages will have to provide detailed information about their spending habits under new rules to clamp down on reckless lending.

BUTTON RULES THE WORLD

Jenson Button became Formula One world champion yesterday after finishing fifth in the Brazilian Grand Prix.

AFGHAN CONFLICT LOSING SUPPORT, WARNS ARMY CHIEF

The public is losing faith in the military mission in Afghanistan and politicians must do more to win back popular support, the head of the British Army has said.

City:

BANKERS HIT OUT AT TAX PLANS AS TENSIONS SIMMER

The Government will undermine Britain's fragile banking sector, push jobs offshore and damage investor confidence if it embarks upon a new tax raid on UK banks, industry heavyweights are warning.

NATIONAL EXPRESS COOL ON £1.6BN STAGECOACH OFFER

National Express last night confirmed a ``highly preliminary" £1.6bn all share offer from rival Stagecoach but said it wants to push ahead with plans for a £400m rights issue to strengthen its balance sheet and maintain its independence.

INDEPENDENT:

'THEY GAVE ME 100 DOLLARS AND TOLD ME TO FEND FOR MYSELF IN BAGHDAD'

Abu Yousif is back home, back to Baghdad, where his brother was murdered and where, he believes, the same fate awaits him in the hands of the vengeful killers.

RBS DENIES IT WILL PAY OUT BUMPER BONUSES

The Royal Bank of Scotland yesterday denied reports that senior staff could be set to earn millions of pounds each in end-of-year bonuses.

BORDER AGENCY TO BE QUIZZED OVER FAILED DEPORTATIONS

The head of the Government's Border Agency is to be quizzed by MPs after around 30 asylum seekers were forcibly deported to Baghdad, only to be refused entry and sent back to Britain.

City:

BP SET FOR IRAQI OIL LICENCE AS CABINET APPROVES DEAL

Iraq's cabinet has approved a deal with BP to develop the huge Rumaila oil field in the country's first international energy deal since the American-led invasion in 2003.

MOULTON PLANS TO SET UP NEW BUYOUT VEHICLE

Jon Moulton, one of the doyens of the private equity industry, who six weeks ago quit the firm he had established after a row with his former colleagues, is set to return to the buyout sector after announcing plans to set up a new fund.

FINANCIAL TIMES:

BARCLAYS CHIEF WARNS OF ONEROUS REGULATION

What the papers say: TIMES:

The chairman of Barclays has warned that Britain's banks will be damaged if regulators are too rigorous in their implementation of a global crackdown on bonuses and capital requirements while other nations, such as the US, are lax.

TORIES AIM TO REVERSE BROADBAND AND BBC PROPOSALS

The Conservatives would reverse two of the main proposals in the government's Digital Britain bill and are considering plans to rip up the BBC's royal charter, according to the Tory shadow culture secretary.

SRI LANKA CLAIMS ARRESTED FUND CHIEF GAVE TAMIL TIGERS 'MILLIONS'

Raj Rajaratnam, the New York-based billionaire and hedge fund manager charged in an alleged insider trading scheme, was funding the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, which is considered a terrorist group by the US, the Sri Lankan government claimed yesterday.

Companies & Markets:

STAGECOACH SIGNALS FRESH INTEREST IN NAT EXPRESS

National Express said it remained open to a tie-up with Stagecoach, its bus and train operator rival, in spite of pushing ahead with plans for an emergency rights issue.

RUSSIA LOOKS TO RAISE 18BN DOLLARS WITH INTERNATIONAL BOND

Russia is to launch its first international bond in a decade to bolster its public finances and take advantage of the surge in demand for emerging market debt.

GUARDIAN:

FAMILIES FACE NUCLEAR TAX ON POWER BILLS

Government officials have drawn up secret plans to tax electricity consumers to subsidise the construction of the UK's first new nuclear reactors for more than 20 years, the Guardian has learned.

WHAT HAPPENS IF YOU PROTEST AT A BRITISH MINING COMPANY IN PERU

A British mining corporation is facing a multimillion-pound claim for damages after protesters were detained and allegedly tortured at an opencast copper plant that the firm is seeking to develop in the mountains of northern Peru.

TNT LOBBIES TO PUT ORANGE POSTMEN ON THE DOORSTEP

TNT, Britain's largest private mail operator, is pressing ministers to allow it to put its own orange-clad postmen on the streets in a door-to-door service that would further undermine a threatened postal strike, which is due to start this week.

City:

HOUSE PRICES IN CAPITAL SURGE PAST 2007 HIGH

Property asking prices in London have broken through the record high set in November 2007 as the drought of homes for sale around the country continues to distort the market.

BANKS MAY FACE WINDFALL TAX OVER BONUSES

The Treasury is considering using a windfall tax on the profits of the big banks if bosses fail to rein in executive bonuses.

EXPRESS:

What the papers say: TIMES:

VITAMIN PILL 'CANCER RISK'

Vitamin supplements taken by millions of Britons do nothing to stave off illness and could even cause cancer, a leading expert warned last night.

IT'S STRICTLY PERSONAL AS FANS TURN ON SULKY BRENDAN

Strictly Come Dancing fans have accused dancer Brendan Cole of storming off a live show to win sympathy votes after a judge likened his dance partner Jo Wood to a kangaroo.

ANGER OVER £5M BONUSES AT TAXPAYER-OWNED RBS

Fury erupted yesterday after it emerged that staff at state-owned Royal Bank of Scotland are set to get bonuses of up to £5million.

Sport:

TWEDDLE FLOORED BY GOLD

Beth Tweddle put a week of frustration and disappointment behind her to claim gold on the floor at London's O2 Arena in the World Gymnastics Championships.

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

Jenson Button became Britain's 10th Formula One world champion yesterday and said: "This was the best race I have ever driven in my life. I am it, I am the world champion."

MAIL:

NEW HOPE FOR IVF MOTHERS

British scientists have made a dramatic IVF breakthrough which could bring hope to thousands of women.

SINISTER THREAT TO LIFE-SAVING DRUGS

Health trusts are trying to reduce the number of life-saving drugs pioneered on the NHS, it was claimed yesterday.

POLICE ON ALERT FOR POST STRIKE VIOLENCE

Police chiefs have warned forces across the country to prepare for violent clashes resulting from the postal strikes.

Sport:

I'M NUMBER 1

Jenson Button was crowned King of the Track in Brazil yesterday and declared: "I'm world champion. Sorry, but I am going to keep on saying those words again and again."

ROVERS VICTORY IS A DUNN DEAL AS BURNLEY FOLD

When your team have not scored an away goal in four games, it is understandable that you start to travel more in hope than expectation.

MIRROR:

TOP BUTTON

Jenson Button last night dedicated his world championship victory to girlfriend Jessica Michibata.

What the papers say: TIMES:

CHERYL, WE SALUTE YOU

In a raunchy military-style outfit Cheryl Cole's sizzling performance was a wow on last night's X Factor.

BROWN PUTS WIND UP FAT CATS

Banks face a massive windfall tax on their profits under proposals being drawn up by the Government.

Sport:

I'M WORLD CHAMPION, BABY!

Jenson Button roared 'I'm world champion baby' as he raced to glory in the Brazilian Grand Prix.

PETROV'S POINTER FOR CITY

They say money can't buy you everything, but £250 million has bought Manchester City boss Mark Hughes character as well as talent.

SUN:

GREAT BUTTON

Jenson Button goes nuts in Brazil yesterday - as the new Formula One world champ.

GATELY'S 12-HOUR SEND-OFF

Boyzone raised a glass to tragic Stephen Gately at a 12-hour Irish wake.

CAT GETS MIGRANT UK STAY

An immigrant due to be deported home to Bolivia has won the right to remain in Britain - because he has a pet cat.

Sport:

FROM HERE TO ETERNITY

Jenson Button wrote himself into the history books in Brazil last night to complete one of sport's greatest comebacks.

BEACH REF AXED

Mike Jones is set to be bounced off this weekend's match list for his beachball clanger at Sunderland.

STAR:

CHERYL STEALS THE SHOW

Sexy Cheryl Cole is heading for No1 in the charts after a brilliant live performance last night.

BUTTON HAS IT SEWN UP!

Ecstatic race ace Jenson Button roared to the Formula One world title last night.

MILLION MIGRANTS ON THE WAY HERE

One million immigrants will come to Britain during the next five years and could cripple our economy, a group of senior MPs has warned.

What the papers say: TIMES:

Sport:

KING AND QUEEN

Jenson Button was finally crowned F1 world champion yesterday.

THEO'S CROCK SHOCK

Theo Walcott is out for three weeks after damaging his knee on his first start of the season.

Load-Date: October 19, 2009

End of Document

A survey of multifarious Asian psyche

Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka)

May 31, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 1028 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, May 31 -- 'That Deep Silence' is the latest anthology of short stories together with a couple of poems by versatile Sri Lankan writer in English, Punyakante Wijenaike. With a remarkable insight into human psyche, Punyakante Wijenaike surveys complex Sri Lankan socio-cultural landscape as wide as it could have been; from the poorest to the richest segments of individuals and their perpetual struggle to upkeep their culture and inheritance even under difficult circumstances. It is a bizarrely heart-rending and testing version of multi-faceted scenery.

The authoress has been greatly influenced by the ravages of war on the population, particularly on women. "A message of Love" is one of the short stories in which the widow's mindset is analysed against the war. A widow is in a white saree which was gifted to her by her Air Force Officer husband, who wanted her to remain like a bride. Ironically she now wears the same saree for his funeral as well. During the funeral she receives a valentine card that her husband posted before he went back to the war zone. And then it came, through the post, the card you must have posted before you flew to your death: a card embossed with white roses and pink hearts of love. A valentine to see me through the empty years aheadlike the last smile of sunset at the end of a day! It is clear that the days ahead are empty for her and that the valentine card will remember her husband's eternal love. The widow represents a generation of women who are widowed by war. Though woven around an incident, the story drives home the fact that community should also be concerned about the plight of widows. The poem "Can you hear me?" is a plea of a child-refugee for life. Here the hapless child does not ask for sun or moon but a decent life with a shelter. I have not been near a school For many months Or may be years? I cannot count I am not asking for much space Just a place to have a roof, Spread a mat And have a good night's sleep.I fear unlawful recruitment By unlawful bandits I have brothers and sisters Living on your borders Being sold to foreigners As sex slaves Please Mother Lanka Can't you hear us cry? The child wanted a secure shelter, education and protection that he/she may not be recruited by 'unlawful bandits' (LTTE). Some of his/her brothers and sister are sold to foreigners as sex slaves. I am a child Living in the conflict-torn zone Of your womb. Not enough blood supply Come this way. I am with my family, Bags packed to flee At any moment To a safe area. The child lives with the family in the war - torn zone where there is little supply and bags are packed so that they can flee at any moment. This has been a reality for thousands of Tamils in the North and East until Sri Lankan army liberated them. The poetess has effectively portrayed the mindscape of the hapless child and deprivation that people underwent in a situation of conflict. Perhaps, "Can you hear me?" is a tribute to generation of internally displaced persons. A Gilded Cage is a short story which is on the theme of incongruity in marriage. Daksha is a girl with an inhibition on marriage which is based on astrological predictions that she would die at child birth. However, she enters into wedlock on insistence of her mother and the story ends with thoroughly disenchanted husband filing a divorce case and marrying her best friend who agreed to bear children for him. Here the authoress tries to highlight the unfounded beliefs and their negative effects on the individuals. Ashes to Ashes is about a miserable evening of an architect. Although there

A survey of multifarious Asian psyche

were material comforts for the old man, he was lonely and isolation nearly killed him. What is needed in the evening of life is companionship which will help individuals to cope with the stress. Following architect's death, his old house which was built in harmony with nature, was sold to a beautician who converted it into a salon. Facing the sun set... traces a mindscape of a cancer patient and how it affects her life. Here the authoress masterly juxtapositions the nature with the changing moods of Nethra, the woman who suffers from cancer. It was the same maiden sun rays that greet her when she meets with the doctor, for the first time and in her last moments. As a writer sensitive to contemporary issues, Punyakante Wijenaike discusses the sensitive issue of homosexuality in the short story, Love is never wrong . The story is about a strong affair between two friends (Naran and Anish). Even after marriage `two inseparable duos' continue their relationship. However, the story ends with Naran finding a convenient way out and leading a split-life. Poem "Colombo" highlights the environmental degradation and how the once green city has, now, been turned into a concrete jungle. In times past Colombo was a beautiful, Peaceful city Of low roofed buildings With low parapet walls And unlocked gates. Today is a different picture Of the same city Crammed with traffic and blaring horns, Towering sky-scrappers That offer no shade, High walls with closed high gates... Here images of the past which defined the city of Colombo converge with those of the present. In place of a peaceful city, low roofed building and unlocked gates, now the same cityscape is occupied by `Towering sky-scrappers 'and `blaring horns'. So the milieu has changed. The poems such as Remembering Nihal (dedicated to late Nihal de Silva), Where have all our children gone? Night of Terror and short stories such as " The Decision", " Farmer's son", " The Wedding" and " Distance Dream" and " Tradition" cover diverse themes as well as equally diverse social strata, their ethos and their struggle for life. The authoress stands out for brevity of expression as stated on the back cover which make these stories short and to the point that very often they seem like reporting important events. However, apart from these shortcomings, the book stands out among contemporary Sri Lankan writings in English. The book offers a rich harvest of insights and should be on the must-read list. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka).

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: June 1, 2009

'I'm no saint', admits berlusconi; Under-fire Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi tried to laugh off the increasingly sordid sex scandal enveloping him, joking that he was "no saint". It was his first public comment since a magazine released what it said were conversations between him and a prostitute. Mr Berlusconi has been entangled in scandal for months over his alleged encounters with young women. But the controversy took on new life this week when L'Espresso magazine released tapes of the purported conversations at the conservative premier's Rome residence. "I'm no saint, by now you've figured that out," a smiling Mr Berlusconi told an audience of business executives and politicians in northern Italy at the opening of a road project.

Western Morning News (Plymouth, UK)

July 23, 2009 Thursday

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Section: Pg. 17

Length: 93 words

Body

Sri Lanka is preparing to rebuild its tourism industry following a 25-year civil war between the army and Tamil rebels. The eastern part of the island, once the base for the **Tamil Tigers**, has pristine beaches and now the government hopes to make it a popular attraction. Bernard Goonetilleke, head of the Sri Lanka Tourism Development Authority, said: "The eastern part of the country has the largest coastal area and we have already begun to take action to develop it. We are working to develop infrastructure and want to plant lots of trees."

Tourism boost

Load-Date: July 24, 2009

'I'm no saint', admits berlusconi; Under-fire Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi tried to laugh off the increasingly sordid sex scandal enveloping him, joking that he was "no saint". It was his first public comment since a magazine released what it said were conversations between him and a prostitute. Mr Berlusconi has been entangled in scandal for months over his alleged encounters with young women. But the controversy took on new life this week when L'Espresso magazine released tapes of the purported conversations at the conservative premier's Rome residence. "I'm no saint, by now you've figured that out," a smiling Mr Berlusconi told an audience of business executives and politicians in northern Italy at the opening of a road project.

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Tourism boost

Load-Date: August 21, 2009

Political designs of Indo-US Military brass

Pakistan Observer

September 25, 2009 Friday

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Section: Vol. XV; No. 267

Length: 1166 words

Byline: Lt Col Zaheerul Hassan (R) - Email: , zameer36@gmail.com

Body

Historically military muscle of the nations has generally remained subjugated to their political powers but the prevailing global scenario is beginning to present a 360 degree different picture to the past. In today's powerful countries the military leaderships have slowly and gradually tightened their grip on state affairs of US, India and Israel.

Political bosses of the said countries have started realizing that their runaway intelligence agencies (CIA, RAW and Mossad) are busy in derailing the political systems because of their own heinous agenda and covert designs. Conflicting political and military interests of this Troika (India- US - Israel) might play havoc with the already turbulent world.

To begin with, it's an open secret that the CIA has become a Frankenstein with a criminal network spread all over the world. From toppling anti US governments to carrying out cold-blooded target killings, its bloody track record can put to shame the worst criminals in entire world.

Following commentary on the ruthless American war machine by well known American writer John Kaminski in an article "Why We Need Martial Law" is thought provoking. "As an American, I am terribly ashamed of my country for the horrific things it has done, both to people around the world and its own citizens".

The above two paragraphs sufficiently cover the true American thinking about the future of US or we can say that clash between political and military leadership has now started. The recent economic crunch has dealt hard blow to American economy which ultimately may lead to her disintegration. CIA and former President Bush have tarnished the image of US particularly after 9/11.

American double standards with regards to Muslim world are no secret. Although saner elements in US, India and Israel are inclined towards establishing peace, those at the helm of affairs have different agendas to follow. India always claims to be a secular state and the largest democracy, but the reality is totally opposite to it. Indian society is facing acute ethnic problems and her democratic system is far from being true democracy.

Her basic democratic structure revolves around feudalism, capitalism, extremism, criminology and corruption. The nerve centre at capital is being ruled and supported by morally degraded elite, opportunists and extremists groups of so called secular democratic country. Fanatic elements of political and government institutions have taken Indian to a brink of collapse.

Political designs of Indo-US Military brass

India happens to be one of the few countries in the world which do not have cordial ties with any of their neighbours. It is interesting to note that other two countries falling in same category are US and Israel. Nexus of this troika has put the world peace at stake and is pushing it towards a possible nuclear conflict.

One more commonality can also be noticed that the unholy troika is being ruled by extremist Christians, Jews and Hindus. Though pretending and presenting themselves as custodians of true democracy and champions of human rights, the stories of their brutalism can be read and heard every where. Millions of Japanese, Vietnamese, Christians, Sikhs, Arabs and non Arabs' Muslims have become the victims of their barbarism.

The violation of human rights with regards to minorities, murdering innocent men, women and children through extra judicial killing, bombing Muslims in Gaza, Iraq, Afghanistan and in Kashmir are few examples of their joint treachery.

However the Troika's main agenda remains usurping Central Asian resources, containing China, targeting Pakistani nuke programme and maligning her security forces, unrest in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh Mutiny, grabbing Nepalese energy resources and occupying Arab's land by Israeli. India being the American Watchdog in South Asia, is constantly fomenting terrorism in the region always creating hurdles in normalization of bilateral relations with Pakistan Hindu extremists have strong hold on armed forces and intelligence agencies too.

In fact such fanatic elements do twist the government policies according to their own desires. They by pass instructions, overlook orders, stage covert actions against neighbouring countries violate policies and pressurize the government to design policies in the light of their extremist thinking.

In south Asia Pakistan, China, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka remained major targets countries for India. New Delhi interference in the shape of sabotage activities in FATA and Balochistan is no more a covert operation only. LTTE of Sri Lanka, Dalai Lama Movement and BLA of Pakistan are being supported by India. US are providing her unconditional support to India in launching terrorism in the regional countries.

In this connection Chiefs of Indian Armed Forces also started playing active role in the commenting, dictating and advising elected government in framing policies concerning Pakistan, China and Sri Lanka. Recently Naval Chief Suresh Mehta and Gen Deepak Kapoor gave statements to the media which were contrary to their government policies.

Indian Army Chief while addressing the news conference did not endorse his Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh point of view at Sharmul Sheikh in connection to normalization of relations with Pakistan. Naval chief too tried to dictate over Harpoon missile.

The question is why Pakistan should try to modify the old version of Harpoon missile once it is already in possession of latest technology. The statements of Naval and Army Chiefs came when confusion and panic on Indian government policies are at a peak.

Hindus fanatics in the intelligence agencies and armed forces never liked to resolve burning bilateral issues. For example Indian Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh failed to sustain extremists' pressure and thus changed stance over Sharmul Sheikh Stand.

Probably, both the chiefs appeared in the media on direction of extremists Hindu and tried to sabotage the congress's peace efforts to improve bilateral relations with Pakistan. Earlier too, in Jun 2009 Military Chief Gen Deepak Kapoor had been told to mind his language and "keep shut".

Such strict censure was conveyed to him after a series of comments that had driven the civilian government against the wall. Indian Services Chiefs need to be told to shun politics and not try to hinder the peace process between two countries. The serious deterioration in relations between Pakistan and India continues due to negative role of Indian intelligence agencies and her rogue armed forces.

Political designs of Indo-US Military brass

The indicators are that power hungry Indian and American military top brass have now starting thinking that economic crises of US and ethnic problems of India might only be resolved after taking over the governments and changing of political seen.

In short US and India need to be serious in resolving regional affairs. Political leadership should also be mindful that conflicting political and military interests with in the same government would prove fatal for their unity.

Load-Date: November 16, 2011

End of Document

And another thing...

London Lite
April 17, 2009 Friday
Edition 1

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Section: LETTERS; Pg. 10

Length: 190 words

Body

ALESHA DIXON is a beautiful, feisty woman and a brilliant role model. She looks amazing! I wish I looked like her!

Sophie, London

REGARDING your article on the Tamil supporter near death (Lite, yesterday). The Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (**LTTE**) are a vicious terror group that make al Qaeda look like choirboys, they are not simply a "rebel group". Mr. Subramaniam is a terror campaigner and should be arrested under UK anti-terror laws, as the **LTTE** is a banned group in the UK.

Dr Stuart Reiss, London

I HATE hearing **women** who claim they "can't" put on weight. Sit on your bottom, eat McDonald's and drink beer, don't do any exercise and in three months tell me you haven't put on any weight. It's just a way of making other **women** jealous.

Graham Werner, Penge

BLIMEY, what's going on with Mel Gibson's awful bouffant? He is definitely not one of those guys who gets better with age.

Cathy Gallagher, Stamford Hill

SO Thameslink trains will be driven by a computer? Great, I hope passengers see the change in their pocket. The train operator has no excuse not to cut the ticket price considering it is cutting its staffing costs.

Rob M, Gipsy Hill

Graphic

And another thing...

Role model: Alesha Dixon

Load-Date: April 17, 2009

End of Document

Rajiv killers meet with justice 18 years after his murder

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

May 21, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 193 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, May 21 -- The Truth, triumphed after 18 long years, as the key conspirators behind the cold blooded murder of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, bit the dust of the scorched earth off Mullaitivu on the eve of his 18th death anniversary.

Rajiv Gandhi, the seventh Prime Minister of India was assassinated in Sriperumbudur in Tamil Nadu, India on 21 May 1991. The assassination was carried out by a human bomb in the name of Thenmozhi Rajaratnam, a ***female*** member of the ***LTTE***, while Rajiv Gandhi was attending a political rally. ***LTTE*** leader V. Prabhakaran and its intelligence Chief Pottu Amman were indicted by the Indian High Court as the masterminds behind the operation. It was revealed that they had carried out the task using a suicide bomber, due to their animosity over Gandhi's decision to send the Indian Peace Keeping Force to Sri Lanka. After more than one and a half decades, fate beckoned these two terrorist murderers as they came to a cruel end of their own making, just a couple of days before they took the life of the much loved Indian leader, Rajiv Gandhi. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka.

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Load-Date: May 21, 2009

HighLights of the AAP National Wire at 14:30, Nov 10

AAP Newsfeed

November 10, 2009 Tuesday 2:51 PM AEST

Copyright 2009 Australian Associated Press Pty. Ltd.



Section: DOMESTIC NEWS

Length: 1776 words

Body

HIGHLIGHTS NATIONAL

CANBERRA - The federal government says many opposition MPs are living in "fantasy land" when it comes to climate change, but that criticism hasn't stopped more Liberals from denying man-made global warming. (Climate Update)

Climate Wrap to come

CANBERRA - Australia will help Sri Lanka "rehabilitate" its northern and eastern provinces in an attempt to reduce the flow of people fleeing the aftermath of the conflict with the Tamil Tigers. (Boat Smith)

CANBERRA - Australia remains committed to ensuring the 78 asylum seekers rescued at sea in Indonesian waters will disembark in Indonesia, Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard says. (Boat Gillard)

SYDNEY - The government has outsourced its immigration policy to people smugglers, federal Opposition Leader Malcolm Turnbull says. (Boat Turnbull to come)

Boat Wrap to come

SYDNEY - Police have given details of a man wanted in relation to the stabbing murders of a Sydney father and his adult daughter. (Bodies 2nd Update)

Bodies Wrap to come

CANBERRA - A fall in job ads for October isn't "unexpected", Assistant Treasurer Nick Sherry says. (Economy Sherry)

Economy Wrap to come

CANBERRA - Principals worried about a website that will use test results to pit schools against each other have warned the federal government there are some things that can't be measured. (Schools)

Schools Wrap to come

MELBOURNE - Federal police have spoken to former immigration minister Amanda Vanstone and three serving Liberal MPs over their roles in granting a visa to an alleged Italian crime figure. (Madafferi)

SYDNEY - People should not only remember those who lost their lives in wars on Remembrance Day, but also those soldiers who were damaged but survived, RSL state president Don Rowe says. (Remembrance to come)

HighLights of the AAP National Wire at 14:30, Nov 10

SYDNEY - Fairfax Media Ltd is forecasting modest advertising revenue growth for the second half of fiscal 2010 after saying it is experiencing an improvement each week. (Fairfax to come)

SYDNEY - Business conditions improved sharply in October to levels last reported before the global financial crisis in early 2008, a private sector report has found. (Business NAB Wrap)

MELBOURNE - The world's best golfer Tiger Woods has been taken aback by the hype surrounding his visit to Melbourne for this week's Australian Masters. (Golf Aust Update. Wrap to come)

MELBOURNE - Scene story from Tiger Woods' first appearance at Kingston Heath. (Golf Aust Scene to come)

MARYSVILLE, Vic - Australia's highest-ranked golfer Geoff Ogilvy believes he or another of the country's best players can beat Tiger Woods in this week's Masters at Kingston Heath. (Golf Open Ogilvy. Wrap to come)

ADELAIDE - Australian cycling star Stuart O'Grady is in hospital after collapsing at the Valencia MotoGP in Spain. (Cycling OGrady)

LONDON - Sophie Lavers knows beauty pageants have a bit of an image problem. (UK Miss Aust)

PERSIAN GULF - Australian soldiers operating in Afghanistan have continued a run of successes in uncovering insurgent caches of explosives. (Afghan Aust)

ABOARD HMAS TOOWOOMBA - One by one they approached the scales for the final weigh-in, five months after embarking on a protracted Middle East deployment well clear of the temptations of takeaway food and alcohol. (Toowoomba Weight)

ABOARD HMAS TOOWOOMBA - The seizure of significant quantities of opium resin in recent raids on insurgent hideouts highlighted that drugs were now a key source of insurgent funding, the commander of Australian forces in the Middle East Major General Mark Kelly says. (Toowoomba Kelly)

AUCKLAND - Tongans have been given yet another possible reason their doomed ferry Princess Ashika sunk - the captain was sleeping as it filled with water. (Tonga Ferry Wrap)

AUCKLAND - The black cab can stay but Tonga's eccentric king will have to shed many of his royal rights under a new plan to bring the ancient kingdom into the 21st century. (Tonga King)

AUCKLAND - A Kiwi MP has leapt from the frying pan into the fire by following an expletive-ridden email to a constituent with calls for the country's opposition leader to be shot. (NZ White)

KAMPALA - The Australian government has pledged 173 billion Uganda shillings (\$A103.96 million) to fight hunger in Uganda and other African countries over the next four years. (Uganda Aust Update)

CANBERRA - Coca-Cola has been issued with a formal warning over a spam marketing campaign but it was spared a monetary penalty, unlike the three other companies involved. (Spam)

CANBERRA - Opposition treasury spokesman Joe Hockey has denied he gave a major speech on religion as a way of enhancing his chances of one day taking over the Liberal leadership. (God Hockey)

CANBERRA - The issue of the planet's sustainability is trumped by the media, politics and short-term electoral cycles, says Greens leader Bob Brown. (Brown)

CANBERRA - There's no legal obligation on hotels to ensure drunk patrons don't drive him, the High Court has found. (Scott to come)

SYDNEY - Australian sporting codes have been accused of sending mixed messages to the public, by punishing drunken athletes or fans at they same time they "peddle alcohol" via lucrative sponsorships. (Alcohol to come)

SYDNEY - Men dominate the ranks of Australians suffering kidney failure, new figures show. (Kidney to come)

SYDNEY - Sydney comedians Tim 'Rosso' Ross and Merrick Watts have rejected rumours they've had a rift, saying they love each other like brothers and will continue to work together outside radio. (Nova Wrap)

HighLights of the AAP National Wire at 14:30, Nov 10

SYDNEY - Empire Of The Sun looks set for ARIAs domination after picking up their first three awards for the hit album, Walking On A Dream. (ARIA)

ARIA Wrap to come

SYDNEY - Seinfeld star Jason Alexander is only a stand-up comedian in Australia. (Alexander to come)

SYDNEY - A new family friendly children's pay TV channel without advertisements is set to compete with the ABC's new kids' offering. (Kids to come)

SYDNEY - NSW's corruption watchdog will be given the power to listen to tapes at the centre of the Michael McGurk scandal, under changes to be made by the state government. (McGurk)

SYDNEY - Figures from a NSW government survey have painted a damning picture of the state's emergency departments. (Emergency)

SYDNEY - A Sydney man accused of sending offensive letters to family members of deceased Australian soldiers has been described by his lawyer as a person who has "been preaching peace". (Monis to come)

SYDNEY - A woman who saw her six-year-old brother beaten to death by his mother and her boyfriend in 1993 says she still has traumatic flashbacks about the killing. (Hughes)

SYDNEY - Confidential documents concerning Paul Hogan's alleged tax fraud were accessed illegally by the Australian Taxation Office, which only followed guidelines in retrospect to establish a "veneer of respectability", a court has been told. (Hogan to come)

SYDNEY - TAFE teachers across NSW have walked off the job in protest at a "Work Choices style" decision by the Industrial Relations Commission over their salaries. (TAFE)

SYDNEY - Demand for community services by people in need has surged in a matter of months, new figures from the aid organisation Anglicare show. (Anglicare)

MELBOURNE - A man who admits taking part in the bashing of former Australian Medical Association boss Mukesh Haikerwal fears he will be stabbed in prison if he names in court the man who delivered the skull cracking blow to the doctor. (Haikerwal)

MELBOURNE - AFL star Dane Swan has been penalised after failing to pay his chunk of a \$100,000 settlement on time to a cleaner he brutally bashed at Melbourne's Federation Square in 2003. (Swan)

MELBOURNE - A 21-year-old apprentice electrician is recovering in hospital after he was slashed across the face with a beer bottle on the dance floor of a city bar, leaving a 25cm gash stretching from his eyebrow to his jaw. (Glass Wrap)

MELBOURNE - A man who says he was the intended victim of a meat cleaver attack allegedly arranged by a gangland widow and her daughter says he was feuding with them in the months before the attack. (Peirce)

MELBOURNE - Victorian fire authorities have defended lighting a backburn fire in extreme temperatures, saying they are trying to prepare for the fire season. (Bushfires Vic Update)

Bushfires Vic Wrap to come

BRISBANE - The Queensland government will cap political donations and ban success fees for lobbyists in the state's biggest overhaul of integrity measures in two decades. (Integrity Update)

Integrity Wrap to come

BRISBANE - Queensland's corruption watchdog has found no evidence of misconduct by former deputy premier turned lobbyist Jim Elder, but has attacked the state's department of planning for lax record keeping. (Lobbyists)

BRISBANE - Sad and silent, crowds gathered across Queensland on Tuesday to mourn the loss of so many men, women and children on the roads and to fervently hope the carnage slows. (Toll Qld Wrap to come)

BRISBANE - Conservationists can't rely on a report about lungfish to bolster their arguments against the construction of a southeast Queensland dam, a judge has ruled. (Paradise)

HighLights of the AAP National Wire at 14:30, Nov 10

BRISBANE - Four central Queensland men will face court after cavorting nude in a car wash. (Carwash)

CAIRNS - A paramedic and a rescue helicopter crewman have been injured after falling about 16 metres onto a merchant ship when their winch cable broke during a rescue attempt in the Torres Strait. (Winch)

PERTH - Authorities in Western Australia and Victoria are searching for a missing woman and her nine-year-old son. (Reitano)

PERTH - West Australian police are investigating a suspicious death after a man's body was found in the front yard of a house. (Death)

ADELAIDE - Two man have been charged with drug offences after police found 10,000 ecstasy tablets at home in Adelaide. (Ecstasy)

ADELAIDE - The South Australian government will confiscate and crush monkey bikes, or miniature motorbikes, being ridden on streets or in public places. (Monkey)

ADELAIDE - Environment group says Adelaide's record-breaking November heatwave is a warning to act on climate change. (Heat SA to come)

HOBART - A Tasmanian pub previously held liable for returning a drunk regular's motorbike keys, before he crashed and died, has been cleared by the High Court of any duty of care over the death. (Pub to come)

DARWIN - Defence housing in Darwin is substandard and needs to be replaced, says the head of a Public Works Committee. (Larrakeyah)

Load-Date: November 10, 2009

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CROWN SITS UNEASY IN THIS CRISIS

DAILY MAIL (London)

May 18, 2009 Monday

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Length: 1616 words

Body

PETER MCKAY

OUR dear Queen is said to have asked during a recent visit to the London School of Economics why no one knew in advance about the impending banking crisis. Which had the effect of suggesting to us that she had no prior warning.

Now she is reported to be 'deeply troubled' -- nay, 'livid', according to a rival account -- over the MPs' expenses row, and will tell Gordon Brown to get his house in order at their usual Tuesday meeting tomorrow. Implying she had no idea MPs were bleeding us dry over 'allowances'.

The point always made is that Her Majesty -- our Head of State, it's always necessary to remind ourselves -- is as much in the dark as the rest of us about chicanery in high places. And she is angry on our behalf. What a comforting thought as we learn that Parliament is compromised top to bottom by cheats.

Sadly, it's nonsense. Everyone who reads newspapers knew about the dodgy loans and acquisitions of major banks as well as what the consequences of a crash might be.

As for MPs' expenses, that wasn't a bolt from the blue either, nor was the fact that HM's Inland Revenue defers to MPs rather than hounding them, like it does the rest of us.

I have before me an article written by an old friend, Peter Paterson, in The Daily Telegraph of July 8, 1983. Under the heading 'Making allowances for your MPs', Peter writes of politicians 'fiddling' their expenses to effectively double their salaries.

He quotes the Top Salaries Review Body: 'We are concerned about accountability in respect of claims against the additional costs allowance.

'At present, all that is needed is for MPs to certify that expenditure has been incurred, without providing details other than the total amount. We do not consider that this is sufficient. . .'

(Peter tells me, incidentally, that he was congratulated by his editor, the former Tory MP Bill Deedes, with the words: 'Don't forget to put in some decent expenses, old boy'.)

As for the suggestion that we might now consider having fewer MPs, the Queen is familiar with this idea as well.

DURING a trip to Ghana in 1999 -- according to the diaries of that nation's then Deputy High Commissioner Craig Murray -- Prince Philip asked a local MP how many colleagues he had in the Ghanaian Parliament. Told the figure

CROWN SITS UNEASY IN THIS CRISIS

was about 200, Philip replied: 'That's about the right number. We have 650 and most of them are a complete bloody waste of time.'

Our national instinct is to protect the Queen from politics. We like to think she is above the petty bickering and corruption; that she is head of an institution uniting voters of all parties and represents everything noble and praiseworthy in British life.

But there's another point of view. The pressure group Republic, which seeks an elected head of state, says: 'The Queen has demonstrated that she is a lame duck head of state. It is during crises such as these that an effective leader is needed who can stand above the political fray.'

'An elected head of state who is chosen and respected by the people, and who has the mandate to speak for the people, would be able to show real leadership at this time.'

'The Queen is effectively pointless.'

She cannot act or speak out because she has no mandate and is not accountable to the voters. She cannot comment on expenses or corruption because her own family have their hands deeper in the taxpayers' pockets than any MP.'

Few agree with Republic, or want an elected head of state, but public attitudes can change very quickly. Who'd have thought we'd agree, without rancour, to ban smoking in bars, have women-only shortlists for Parliament and legally protected homosexual marriage / adoption rights?

The current public anger directed at Parliament could easily spread into a wholesale re-evaluation of our entire constitutional set-up.

Yesterday, Liberal Democrat leader Nick Clegg called for a written constitution. But can any modern constitution be written that protects the hereditary right of one family to provide our heads of state? What began as petty bickering over the perks of our rulers could bring down the entire rotting edifice.

SUING Portuguese police chief Goncalo Amaral won't bring back Kate and Gerry McCann's daughter Madeleine, or reverse the bestseller status of the former's book about the case.

It's sad how political this tragic story has become, the Portuguese -- for tourist revenue reasons -- blaming the McCanns in order to take attention away from their scarily amateur police investigation. So much for the European Union bringing us all together.

AT ALL OUR EXPENSES

GORDON BROWN benefits from the great scandal over MPs' expenses, according to one Westminster theory, because it damns all of them, even the innocent, and gives him a year, if he survives, to pretend he's cleaned up the system. It's like the recession again. Although Brown was responsible for the lax UK bank regulation which caused the crash here, he was able to pose as an international fiscal saviour by chanting his 'it began in America' mantra.

So it is with the expenses imbroglio. He has known since he came into Parliament in 1983 that MPs fiddle their expenses, but he took an interest in reforming this mess only when he sensed the let's-keep-things-as-they-are battle was lost and there was political capital to be won.

The bad practice and corruption at Westminster isn't only about mis-use of expenses and allowances. No democracy should allow someone to force and scheme their way into the premiership -- without having to endure a vote -- as Brown did when he prised Blair out of No10 and now hopes to hang on to the bitter end of the Parliamentary term won by the latter.

CROWN SITS UNEASY IN THIS CRISIS

Or, can tolerate a blatantly partisan Speaker who thinks the police exist to shield dishonest MPs from justice rather than feel their collars.

TV survivalist Bear Grylls is to be named Chief Scout today, succeeding former Blue Peter presenter Peter Duncan. 'As seen on TV' heroes are now preferred to real-life ones, even by the Scouts.

GO FOR IT, SIR ALEX

MANCHESTER United's manager Sir Alex Ferguson, 67, says he'll pursue more success for the team after 18 championship wins if he remains in good health. There are two schools of thought on this question, generally. Get out while you are ahead and enjoy what is left of your life. Or stay in as long as you can, doing what you enjoy -- what you are used to doing every day -- because retirement ennui might kill you sooner. Temperamentally, I'm with Ferguson. Managing a football team is surely the perfect way of extending boisterous childhood; of never having to apologise for taking sides or getting visibly furious over reverses; not to mention indulging to the extreme boyish delight in sporting triumphs.

You see the boy in old Alex's face every time he springs on to the pitch, be it in anger or exultation.

BAD GIRLS AND PAINTED NAILS

NEXT weekend they're marking the 75th anniversary of Depression-era gangsters Bonnie and Clyde in the northern Louisiana hamlet of Gibsland, where they were shot to death by sheriff's deputies firing 180 machine gun bullets in a roadside ambush.

I was in the area on another story 25 years ago and -- with the help of the local sheriff -- got an interview with the daughter of the undertaker who laid out their bodies. After selling me some pictures of the corpses, she recalled how she'd peeked into the mortuary to see the famous Bonnie and Clyde: 'Bonnie Parker's toenails were painted bright red, I remember. And ah always associated that afterwards with what happened to bad girls.'

NO ONE should holiday in Sri Lanka after what its government has done to the Tamil Tigers and their supporters, we are told on breakfast TV by perky voice-over queen Mariella Frostrup. That'll teach them!

IS THE PRESIDENT JUST FOLLOWING ORDERS?

PRESIDENT Barack Obama disappoints his supporters by preventing the release of new photographs of U.S. troops abusing prisoners and by retaining despised, recognisedbyno-one military tribunals at the Guantanamo torture camp on Cuba.

Washington correspondent Rupert Cornwell -- brother of David Cornwell, aka John le Carre -- says Obama has had to do this because 'the world is a vastly more complicated place when seen from the Oval Office, amid a barrage of security briefings prepared by experts whose job is to think the unthinkable seven days a week'.

And (he might have added) who think they, not the President, should be in charge of who America kills, and tailor their advice accordingly. Otherwise known as the military-industrial complex, which Americans were warned about more than 50 years ago by departing U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower.

What would they do if Obama failed to play ball? It doesn't bear thinking about.

ANNOUNCING on BBC's News 24 that the model Jordan -- known for her unfeasibly large, cosmetically-altered breasts -- and her husband, reputed pop singer Peter Andre, have decided to part after being married for five minutes, broadcaster Peter Sissons remarked dryly: 'I am sure you are as heartbroken as I am.' But Fleet Street's principal lady opinion formers -- known collectively as Glendas -- have analysed the subject in depth. Why are Jordan and Andre -- like the late, lamented Jade Goody -- of interest mainly to women, or, to be precise, British women?

CROWN SITS UNEASY IN THIS CRISIS

Two foreign ladies I know -- a Russian and a Pole -- asked me the same question. What explains the British obsession with celebrities? (Or nonebrities, as Yes Minister writer Antony Jay calls them.) I genuinely don't know. Like trailer-trash Americans -- but unlike Europeans generally -- we (meaning women, mainly) devour any rubbish about Jordan and Peaches Geldof (pictured), the daughter of a second-rate, retired pop singer. Surely universal suffrage isn't to blame.

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The 'international community' and their agenda on Sri Lanka

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

June 30, 2009 Tuesday

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Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, June 30 -- This discourse commenced to examine the reasons for the international community's hostility towards Sri Lanka when the country is engaged in a 34-year protracted struggle against the worst terrorist outfit in the world. Especially in an era, where the international community itself, has palpably realized the need to free the world from cross border terrorism.

An oracle In the first place, part of the problem of Sri Lanka lies in our perception of this international community as some kind of well-intentioned oracle who understands every problem in this world with a solution for same. The fact is that these nations that identify themselves as the 'international community' evincing world power are, apart from their violent colonial history of exploitation and aggrandizement, but a group of people (nations) with their own fallibilities, prejudices, forebodings and interests. When such concerns and interest are not patronized by the actions of other subject nations there is bound to be a divergence in focus leading to a conflict of opinion. It may be that Sri Lanka is desirous in ridding itself of the scourge of terror, but if such aspirations are not in the interest of the 'international community' then that may just not be the 'thing to do'. Facts may be stubborn but the 'international community' has enough power at its disposal to mellow such facts. It is the interest of the 'international community' and not the facts, that are always sacred. Mentally servile We, the people from countries like India and Sri Lanka do not probably see this because we, and our leaders, have been for centuries made mentally servile to the west and the English. Chandrika and Ranil thought they could never solve the conflict in Sri Lanka without the 'international community'. The sagacity of their thinking would be evident when the conflict reached such unmanageable heights during their tenure from 1994 to 2005 pushing Sri Lanka to the brink of being called a 'failed state' by the year 2005. Meddling Never in the history of the independent 60-year history of Sri Lanka had there been so much international meddling as was evident during this period of 11 years and never had this **LTTE** problem reached such an acute stage, pushing the country to the brink of its territorial, cultural, economical and peaceful existence. In the 16th Century, the western nations started to straddle the globe looking for 'fortunes'. They took slaves from Africa, conquered much of Asia and colonized America, Australia and New Zealand driving the indigenous populations to extinction. Gun powder was first discovered in China but it was used only for ceremonial purposes to make crackers and fireworks. The moment the west had access to it, the commercial armament industry was born. Man started killing man for profit and gain. In order to hide their true intentions, they adopted religion as their vanguard. They claimed that their quest in colonizing other countries was, to 'civilize' the world by propagating the message of compassion and kindness of God. But the methods used to colonize and rule were exactly the opposite of what that holy messenger of God, Jesus Christ, advocated. That was the beginning of western hypocrisy! Ultimate truth We in the Eastern part of the world, even then believed that materialism was very temporary in nature and instead the quest of humans should be for the ultimate truth of human existence on a plane beyond mere materialism. The west conquered us with commercial guile and guns; plundered and exploited; killed scores of men, **women** and children, rendered our fields bare, language consigned to the borrows and education superimposed to suit the needs of

The 'international community' and their agenda on Sri Lanka

chosen. 'Civilizing' They imported human labour from other countries and introduced 'balanced ethnic representation' to control the rebelling majority. All this, was in the name of 'civilization'. At that time the thinking in the west was that, 'the colonized nations deserved that fate because those nations are inherently inferior' and 'the God created blacks as slaves for the whites'. Then came the two World Wars, one after the other, costing millions of life and billions worth of property. It is a fact in human history that the first half of the 19th Century was reserved for the blood lust of imperial powers who tried to wrest control of the global affairs from one another for aggrandizement and vanity. But the war never would leave a single victor. It was a case of fluctuating fortunes and a never ending cycle of perpetual misery. The west was lost in its own avarice and lust for dominance. Hence, the west was compelled to change gear. From a position of domination and exploitation they swung to the other extreme of human rights and liberalism. But again the west lacked balance, from one extreme to the other, since they know of no middle path. Asian Emperor We in Sri Lanka knew this reality all this while, for it was Emperor Ashoka of India who sent us this message of 'never ending horrors of war' when he dispatched his Buddhist missives to neighbouring countries including Sri Lanka in 343 BC: advising them by his own conviction that there never was salvation in violence. He embraced Buddhism in which the foundation was ahimsa (non violence) and transformed himself as the 'Dharma (righteous) Ashoka' from the previous 'Chanda (Fierce) Ashoka'. Ashoka's kingdom spanned the entire Indian subcontinent, but despite all the glories of victories he was conscientiously more devastated by the agonies, his own victories inflicted, on the innocents. Hypocritical facades Ashoka, the greatest King in the history of India, propagated Buddhism through conviction that 'the conquest by Dhamma was more lasting and is the anti thesis of physical domination and devastation'. He had no ulterior motive to buy or serve time under hypocritical facades. Ashoka edicts, inscribed 2300 years ago in Kalinga, modern day Orissa in India, is today considered a forerunner to the Universal declaration of Human rights. The analogue cited therein for the relationship between State and its citizenry is that of a father and his children. It is not just about loving kindness but benevolence based on equanimity and justice; about the positive power of ahimsa; about the eight fold path that avoids the extremes. The west however, had discarded all this as an advocacy of 'heathens and pagan', until these universal truths dawned on them, the hard way, after the two world wars and 2300 years later. Hence it took millions of lives and billions worth of property of the two World Wars for the west to realize that the line demarcating superiority and inferiority is so thin and ephemeral that the fight for superiority is a 'wild goose chase'. The desire to dominate, brings about with it the law of the jungle where the roles of predator and prey are desultory. Elimination Wars could generate more wars finally leading to the elimination of man from the Earth. The west however took another 2300 years to realize this simple truth about man's unbridled greed, what King Ashoka realized in 343 BC. The term 'international community', as it is used in the popular jargon is an euphemism for these western capitalist nations. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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The postponement of acceptance

The Pioneer (India)

October 17, 2009 Saturday

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Dateline: India

Body

India, Oct. 17 -- The oldest and best-known secret is out - thanks to the diplomatic wrangling over the Goldstone report - but there is relevance for India as human rights wallahs trip the national resolve to end Maoism. A Saturday Special focus

The world's human rights community is on tenterhooks this Diwali. Reason: standing between them and utter irrelevance is the outcome of a debate now on in Geneva on whether or not the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) should ratify the Richard Goldstone report on the role of Israel in the Gaza conflict.

If UNHRC ratifies the report, a dangerous message will be sent out for freedom-loving people all over the world. So says Israel and its friends in the West. If it does not, then the message will be equally dangerous for freedom-loving people all over the world. No prizes for guessing who says that. Confused? That's the name of the game in the human rights business. It's all about which side you are on.

Saturday Special has been following this debate closely for some time, not just as international news, but something close to the Indian reality. While world powers argue over the Goldstone report, our opinion makers have been divided down the middle over a uniquely Indian development - the government's decision to go all-out against Maoists/Naxalites whose war is not just against the Indian State, but also against our democracy and the Constitution.

The 'whose human rights?' debate got its highest spokesperson this month when Home Minister P Chidambaram said 'human rights activists will have to chose'. This set off media slanging matches between jholawallas and retired police officers. The normally erudite apologists of Left- wing terror went ballistic and scrambled to organise meetings and seminars denouncing the Indian State's authoritarianism. They were not much distracted by the brutal slaying of Jharkhand police officer Francis Induwar. But what about the credibility of the United Nations?

The UNHRC's ambivalence on the Goldstong report has raised serious concerns about the world forum's neutrality. While Israel and its western allies are celebrating its success in forcing the Palestinians to defer demands that the International Criminal Court investigate allegations of war crimes which took lives of 1,400 Palestinians, nobody can deny that the oldest internal dilemma of the UNHRC is out in the open. The Goldstone report has courted controversy by equating the Hamas' armed struggle with the Israel's military offensive in the Gaza Strip, categorising both as crime against humanity. Israel and its allies termed the report an attempt to undermine Israel's legitimate right to self-defense.

The final recommendations make no mention of Israel's security concerns. It is contrary to the international law. Article 51 of the UN Charter forbids all use of force except that for "self-defense if an armed attack occurs." Disputing some of the findings of the report, Israel said the Israeli International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT)

The postponement of acceptance

compiled a report on their research of the casualty figures published by the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR). The ICT claimed that many of those listed by PCHR as civilians, including civil policemen, were in fact hailed as militant martyrs by Hamas.

The moot point is that the UNHRC agenda is under a cloud. Since its inception in 2006, it has issued 25 resolutions against individual states, of which 20 targetted Israel. The colossal failure of the international body in recognising atrocities by others has obviously raised fear that its focus is Israel. The UNHRC has passed no resolution condemning 200,000 deaths in Darfur. Similarly, it failed to address systematic abuses in Belarus, China, Cuba, Equatorial Guinea, Libya and Zimbabwe. The Sri Lankan government's atrocities against Tamil citizens during war against **LTTE** had no effect on the 'slumbering' international body .

As per an estimate, 5.4 million people have been killed in the Democratic Republic of the Congo since 1998 but there has been no hint of an emergency UN session to discuss it or condemn it. Strangely, the UN is mandated with the moral authority to adjudicate on matters of international concern, yet an alarming number of its agencies are headed by countries whose human rights records range from questionable to appalling, including Libya, Zimbabwe, Algeria, Sudan, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Burma.

The dubious nature of the UNHRC was exposed when an NGO urged Islamic authorities to outlaw honour killings, **female** genital mutilation and the stoning of **women**. Egypt, Iran and Pakistan objected to the initiative as an "attempt to link bad practices" to Islam and UNHRC ruled "evaluation of a religious creed" inadmissible. In most recent case, the UNHRC voted to end its examination of systematic rape and torture of pro-democracy activists protesting against the rigged election in Iran. In this case, it has been nobody surprise that President Ahmadinejad goes scot-free after spewing out an anti-Semitic rant at the UN General Assembly, and willfully manipulate the fact denying the truth of Holocaust.

The Goldstone report and its possible burial have left the UNHRC between the devil and the deep blue sea. Faced with a clear and obvious case of war crimes, and pressure from the US to delay or bury the report, the UNHRC finds its going tough, as the failure to refer the war crimes charges for trial will not only be seen as exoneration of Israel, but as further proof of Israel subversion and control of the United States on the international body.

Now the deferment of the report, which could have been successfully used by the Palestinians, has put question marks on the vulnerability of UNHRC to western pressure, particularly the US. The intensity of US involvement and the UN reliance on the United States creates a situation in which decisions made by the US, for or against involvement, have a more significant impact on the outcome of the UN mission. This condition restricts UN decision making, and makes it vulnerable to vicissitudes of US arm-twisting. This is an alarming situation as this vulnerability in the UN approach sometimes creates political problems for the UN as some states start believing that UN actions are an extension of US policies.

It's US hegemony that forced the UNHRC keep its mouth shut on Guantanamo detention camp and other secret detention centres where detainees undergo inhuman torture. In 1999, NATO bombed Serbia with depleted uranium bombs, which caused a cancer outbreak in the region, but the UN seems to be oblivious. Following the Goldstone report, Israel's position is also very shaky. It is first a diplomatic disaster for Israel as the report shatters its continued attempt to portray itself as helpless victims of terrorism from Hamas. There is already fear in Israel. Vice-prime minister and strategic affairs minister Moshe Ya'alon cancelled his British visit after he was warned that he might face arrest on suspicion of war crimes.

What exacerbates the crisis for Israel is that the author of the report is no anti-Semitic, middle-eastern official, but a Jewish judge from South Africa. No longer can Israel seek protection behind charges of bias and prejudice. The future of this debate is highly exciting. But at stake is the future of human rights and the credibility of the UN system.

- The writer is Deputy News Editor, The Pioneer Published by HT Syndication with permission from Pioneer. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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The postponement of acceptance

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News Digest 0700

Canwest News Service

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Body

U.S. commander says Afghanistan situation "serious" - (REUTERS)

The commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan described the situation in the country today as "serious", but said success could be achieved there with a revised strategy.

U.S. Army General Stanley McChrystal delivered his assessment to U.S. and NATO commanders in a long-awaited review of strategy, the NATO-led force in Afghanistan said in a statement. Military officials have given no word in public as to whether McChrystal will seek additional troops.

France seeks help with Airbus A330 crash search - (REUTERS)

France wants to launch an expanded international effort to find the missing wreckage and flight recorders of the Air France jet which crashed in the Atlantic in June, the country's top crash investigator said today.

Around a thousand fragments of the Airbus A330 which crashed on June 1, killing 228 people, have been examined but most of the aircraft is still missing and it is still too early to say definitely what caused the crash, said Paul-Louis Arslanian, director of France's BEA air crash investigation board, told journalists.

European plane maker Airbus is expected to help fund the move, which could cost several tens of millions of euros, he said, adding an announcement could be made in the autumn.

The United States, Brazil, Britain and Germany are among the nations likely to take part, he said at a specialist briefing.

Authorities have been combing an expanse of ocean the size of Switzerland in a fruitless bid to find the voice and data recorders and the bulk of the plane, which plummeted some 30,000 feet (9,000 metres) in four minutes before crashing in an equatorial storm.

China reports new lead poisoning case - (REUTERS)

More than 200 children living beside an industrial park in southwest China have been found to have excessive lead in their blood, state media said, in the third such case reported in the last month.

Health authorities tested around 1,000 children in a neighbourhood of the city of Kunming, the official China Daily said.

Lead poisoning can build up slowly and occurs from repeated exposure to small amounts of lead which can harm a child's mental development. Health problems get more severe as the level of lead in the blood gets higher.

News Digest 0700

Parents are blaming the poisoning on a nearby industrial park, the report added, though the local environmental protection bureau denies there is a direct link with industrial pollutants.

The environmental bureau said the case has been caused by factors such as exhaust emissions.

Taliban ready if Afghan government fails, analyst warns - (REUTERS)

Afghanistan's government must fight corruption and quickly deliver services to Afghans, because Taliban militants are filling gaps and winning support to their cause, a top counter-insurgency expert said today.

The Taliban were already running courts, hospitals and even an ombudsman in parallel to the government, making a real difference to local people, said David Kilcullen, a senior adviser to U.S. commander General Stanley McChrystal.

Afghanistan has been in a state of political limbo since Aug. 20 presidential elections, with partial results so far placing President Hamid Karzai in the lead, but not by enough to avoid a second round against his main challenger, Abdullah Abdullah. But the election, which the Taliban failed to disrupt with rocket attacks, has been marred by allegations of fraud with around a third of the votes counted.

Kilcullen, an Australian military officer and adviser to past U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, said Karzai's government was failing to maintain a rapport with local people, who were now turning to the Taliban for court judgments, education and even fair taxation assessment.

Search ends for Highway of Tears victim - (CNS-UPDATE2-REMAINS)

RCMP yesterday ended their search for the remains of a young Alberta woman who went missing more than seven years ago along British Columbia's Highway of Tears.

But officers would not say what, if anything, they discovered during the hunt for Nicole Hoar, a 25-year-old tree planter from Red Deer, Alta., who disappeared near Prince George in central B.C. in 2002.

Police late last week descended on a two-hectare rural lot in the small lumber town of Isle Pierre, about 50 kilometres northwest of Prince George in central B.C. - a property once owned by a convicted murderer.

RCMP Cpl. Annie Linteau said Sunday that police had nearly finished their search at an unauthorized dumping area near Prince George but were awaiting the results of some tests before moving on.

Two dogs searched the Isle Pierre property yesterday, while a backhoe dug in the back corner of the rectangular plot of land.

The dog handler also wouldn't comment on whether they had found anything.

Linteau said RCMP will not publicize the results of the search until materials were analyzed in a police lab.

RCMP are still seeking tips from the public on Hoar's disappearance.

Hoar is one of 18 women who police say have disappeared since 1969 on Highway 16, a more than 700-kilometre stretch of road that runs from Prince George to Prince Rupert, B.C.

Some groups put the total much higher.

Police have said a former owner of the Isle Pierre property is a "person of interest" in Hoar's disappearance, although they have not specified whom.

Sri Lanka journalist jailed for 20 years on terror charges - (AFP)

Sri Lanka's High Court sentenced a Tamil reporter described by US President Barack Obama as an "emblematic example" of a persecuted journalist to 20 years in prison today for supporting terrorism.

J.S. Tissainayagam, 45, who contributed to the local Sunday Times and ran a website, Outreachsl.com, that focused on the island's minority Tamils, was found guilty on three counts under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA).

A court official said the charges included receiving money from the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to fund his website and causing racial hatred through his writings about Tamils affected by the conflict.

Obama mentioned Tissainayagam in a statement to mark World Press Freedom on May 1, describing him as an "emblematic example" of a journalist who was being persecuted for doing his work.

A large number of journalists and media rights activists were in court when the judgment was delivered after a trial that lasted nearly a year.

Calgary neighbourhood on alert for rats - (CNS-BRF-RATS)

A northeast Calgary neighbourhood is on alert for rats after residents discovered one of the rodents in the area last week.

A resident contacted the city after discovering a rat in a shed.

Bylaw officials euthanized the rat, but saw signs of burrowing and nesting leading them to suspect there could be more rodents in the neighbourhood.

Bylaw boss Bill Bruce wouldn't reveal the neighbourhood where the rat was discovered but said letters have been distributed to every house in the area telling them to keep an eye out for the rodents.

An Alberta border patrol program has helped keep the province essentially rat free since the 1950s.

Calgary bylaw officers receive about 125 calls a year reporting rats in the city, but the majority wind up as sightings of muskrats or large mice, said Bruce.

The rat discovered in the northeast neighbourhood was a Norway rat, a rodent known for damaging buildings and crops and carrying diseases.

Bylaw officers have set up traps, poison and bait in the neighbourhood and will monitor the area for at least the next three weeks.

The signs of nesting are particularly concerning, since the rats are prolific breeders, said Bruce.

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HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009

Associated Press Financial Wire

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Body

The following is a complete list of coverage plans for top news from The Canadian Press for Monday. If you have any questions, contact CP's National Desk at 416-507-2150.

Copy moves by 18:00 ET unless otherwise noted; all times ET.

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GENERAL

TORONTO@ In an unexpected turn of events, the U.S. Supreme Court announced Monday it has agreed to review the fraud conviction of the fallen media baron Conrad Black. The decision caught many legal experts who have followed the case by surprise. 468 words. By Chris Wickens. See Photos CPT101-103. Moves General (G) and Business (B). BC-Conrad-Black-Appeal. Moved.

OTTAWA@ Canada's chief public health officer says the country has seen the worst of the swine flu for now. Dr. David Butler-Jones told reporters Monday that it appears the virus is starting to wane for this season. 500 words. By Steve Rennie. BC-Flu-Cda. Moved.

TORONTO@ Labour concession talks between General Motors of Canada and the Canadian Auto Workers intensified Monday, several days past a government-imposed deadline, as the union president said demands were getting out of hand. "We believe we've already made the sacrifices necessary, we believe we're close to our limit," CAW president Ken Lewenza said in an interview. 520 words. By Tamsyn Burgmann. Moves General (G) and Business (B). Guard against duplication. BC-CAW-GM. Moved.

OTTAWA@ An electronic sweep of a major federal department has found hundreds of copies of what appears to be pirated software. And the lack of controls at Natural Resources Canada has placed the department "at risk of legal liability with associated financial damages," says a new audit. 400 words. By Dean Beeby. BC-Feds-Pirate-Software? Moved.

HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009

OTTAWA -@ Claims by Brian Mulroney that he cancelled an early version of the Bear Head armoured vehicle project while he was still prime minister are being questioned by a former Mulroney chief of staff. Norman Spector says there were never any explicit orders to axe the project, which now lies at the heart of a public inquiry into Mulroney's business dealings with Karlheinz Schreiber. 650 words. By Jim Brown. BC-Mulroney-Schreiber. Moved.

OTTAWA @The federal government has laid down new rules for Canada's spy agency following high-profile scandals in which Canadians were tortured overseas. But human rights activists say so much of the ministerial directions remain secret that it's impossible to tell whether they will lead to greater accountability. 650 words. By Jim Bronskill. BC-CSIS-Rulebook. Moved.

UNDATED@ While many Canadians take delight in marking the start of summer with the Victoria Day long weekend, hospital emergency workers go on high-alert bracing for what they call trauma season. As has become grim custom, paramedic crews across the country were called to a number of deadly incidents including highway, liquor-related and waterway fatalities killing young and old. 473 words. By Tamsyn Burgmann. BC-Long-Weekend-Fatalities. Moved.

MONTREAL -@A Quebec duo is hoping to revolutionize the way we find parking. The entrepreneurs from the Montreal-area launched a website called maplace.ca last month that allows users to sign up and put in the particulars of where and when you need a spot. Then the computer does the rest, tracking down the spot, reserving it and taking payment by credit card. Largely through word-of-mouth, their company is attracting attention, with about 700 people having signed up for the service. 650 words. By Sidhartha Banerjee. BC-Parking-on-the-Web. Moves (L) Lifestyles and (G) General. Moved.

MONTREAL @Claude Bechard, Quebec's minister of natural resources, is in the U.S. this week to promote hydroelectricity as a green alternative for America's energy needs. But industry insiders and environmentalist say he should expect a lukewarm reception. 600 words. By Jessica Murphy. BC-Que-Hydro-Ambition. Moved.

VANCOUVER@ Is the voter vanishing in Canada? Recent federal and provincial elections indicate that just over half the eligible voters make the decision for the whole electorate when they go to the polls to vote. 755 words. By Terri Theodore. BC-Voter-Turnout. Moved.

HALIFAX @Political analysts are predicting Tuesday's televised leaders debate in Nova Scotia could be the true kickoff for what has so far been a cautious election campaign. The debates Tuesday's is the first of three times the leaders will get together face-to-face before the June 9 election could prove critical for the leaders in the 35-day campaign. 700 words. By Keith Doucette. See Photos. BC-Elxn-NS-Debate.

TORONTO@ The role that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder should play in deciding violent offender status for a man with a long rap sheet of sexual assaults including one against a seven-year-old cousin will be weighed by Ontario's top court Tuesday. The man's condition, caused by his mother's drinking during pregnancy, went undiagnosed and untreated for decades and was among the reasons a trial judge refused to name him a dangerous offender, which would have seen him jailed indefinitely. 841 words. By Michael Oliveira. BC-Fetal-Alcohol-Assaults. Moved.

TORONTO@ Another big grocery store chain will soon force shoppers in Ontario and Quebec to spend a nickel for each throwaway bag, a move that is praised by environmentalists who say putting a price tag on plastic is the only way to curb its use. 450 words. BC-Plastic-Bag-Pay. By Tamara King. Moved.

WORLD

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka@ Sri Lanka declared Monday it had crushed the final resistance of the **Tamil Tigers**, killing rebel chief Velupillai Prabhakaran and ending his 25-year quest for an independent homeland for minority Tamils. State television broke into its regular programming to announce Prabhakaran's death, and the government information department sent a text message to cellphones across the country confirming he had been killed along with top deputies, Soosai and Pottu Amman. 1,200 words. By Ravi Nessman. BC-Sri-Lanka-Civil-War. Moved.

See also:

BC-Sri-Lanka-Protest. Moves General (G).

BC-Sri-Lanka-Europe. Moved.

BC-Sri-Lanka-Timeline. Moved.

BC-Sri-Lanka-Doctors. Moved.

COLOMBO, Sri Lanka@ Velupillai Prabhakaran transformed a small band of poorly armed rebels into one of the world's most sophisticated and ruthless insurgencies and then made a string of miscalculations that led his **Tamil Tigers** to total defeat at the hands of the Sri Lankan military. 720 words. By Ravi Nessman. See Photos. BC-Sri-Lanka-Prabhakaran. Moved.

KANDAHAR, Afghanistan@ Canada will still have lots to do in Afghanistan even if its combat role ends as planned in 2011, Defence Minister Peter MacKay said Monday at the end of a visit to Canadian forces. 450 words. By Colin Perkel. See Photos. BC-Cda-Afghanistan-MacKay. Moved.

See also:

BC-Afghanistan. Moved.

WASHINGTON@ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday he is ready to resume peace talks with the Palestinians immediately, but any agreement is contingent on their acceptance of Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. His comments came after a meeting with President Barack Obama, who bluntly told the Israeli leader it was time to get back to the negotiating table. Netanyahu and Obama met for more than two hours at the White House and focused on Mideast peace talks, Iran's nuclear program and the U.S.-Israeli relationship. 600 words. By Steven R. Hurst and Amy Teibel. See Photos. BC-US-Israel. Moved.

GENEVA@ China, Britain, Japan and other countries urged the World Health Organization on Monday to be very cautious about declaring the arrival of a swine flu pandemic, fearing that a premature announcement could cause worldwide panic and confusion. WHO bent to their wishes. As the agency opened its annual meeting, WHO Director General Dr. Margaret Chan said she had listened carefully to the concerns of member states and would follow their instructions. 500 words. By Frank Jordans. See Photos. BC-Flu-WHO. Moved.

BUSINESS

UNDATED @It's a white-collar worker's nightmare: giving a presentation that gets you fired. It happened to the chief financial officer of Motorola Inc. this year. And the lawsuit he filed afterward provides a rare peek into dysfunctional relationships at the top of a major company. 1203 words. By Peter Svensson. See Photo NYBZ171. BC-Motorola-Ex-CFO. Moved.

UNDATED -@ European investors are being lobbied by Greenpeace to force an energy company with a good environmental record out of Alberta's oilsands. But the company, StatoilHydro, argues that its work to bring hard-to-reach oil to market will leave only a small environmental footprint. 650 words. By John Cotter. Oilsands-Greenpeace-Statoil. Moved.

CALGARY@ Calgary-based fertilizer giant Agrium Inc. (TSX:AGU) is asking shareholders of U.S.-based fertilizer producer and distributor CF Industries to demand the company negotiate a mutually beneficial merger agreement with the Canadian business. The request is contained in a statement issued Monday by Agrium president and CEO Mike Wilson, after the Deerfield, Ill.-company rejected Agrium's latest revised offer to acquire all of CF Industries' outstanding shares. 433 words. By Ken Trimble. BC-Agrium-CF. Moved.

MUMBAI, India@ India's stock market surged an unprecedented 17 per cent, forcing trade to close for the day, after the Congress party's definitive victory in national elections set the scene for long-delayed economic reforms. Within seconds of opening, the Bombay Stock Exchange's benchmark Sensex vaulted 2,110.79 points, or 17.3 per cent, to 14,284.21, triggering the historic shutdown Monday. By Erika Kinetz. See Photos. Moves Business (B) and World (B). BC-India-Markets. Moved.

SPORTS

HOCKEY

PHOENIX @The immediate future of the Phoenix Coyotes should become a little clearer on Tuesday. That's when a bankruptcy hearing will be held to determine who controls the Coyotes a decision that will dictate whether Jim Balsillie's bid to buy the NHL team will proceed. 600 words. By Chris Johnston. BC-NHL-Coyotes-Bankruptcy. Moved.

DETROIT @ The Red Wings have been winning without goals from usually reliable scorers Pavel Datsyuk and Tomas Holmstrom. The Chicago Blackhawks will probably have a hard time doing the same if young stars Patrick Kane and Jonathan Toews are shut down as they were in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals. 600 words. By Larry Lage. See Photos. BC-NHL-Blackhawks-Wings. Moved.

See also:

BC-NHL-Avalanche-Roy, 3rd Writethru. Moved.

BC-NHL-Bruins-Future. Moved.

BASKETBALL

INDEPENDENCE, Ohio@ They both skipped college, were No. 1 overall draft picks one year apart and won Olympic gold medals last summer. Now Dwight Howard and LeBron James meet in the playoffs beginning

HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009

Wednesday when the Orlando Magic face the Cleveland Cavaliers in the Eastern Conference finals. 600 words. By Tom Withers. BC-NBA-LeBron-&-Superman.

LOS ANGELES@ For now, all is well with the Lakers. After an erratic and baffling seven-game series against Houston, the Lakers get to start over. Waiting for them is the rested Denver Nuggets on Tuesday night for the start of the Western Conference finals. 600 words. By Bernie Wilson. BC-NBA-Nuggets-Lakers.

TORONTO@ A bit of the fate of the Toronto Raptors lies in several numbered ping-pong balls. But general manager Bryan Colangelo said whatever pick his team lands when the NBA draft order is determined by Tuesday's lottery, he's confident there's a decent player out there to be had. 600 words. By Lori Ewing. BC-NBA-Lottery-Raptors. Moved.

See also:

BC-NBA-Lottery-at-25. Moved.

BC-NBA-Rockets-Wrapup. Moved Datafile only.

BC-NBA-Celtics-Future. Moved.

BASEBALL

UNDATED@ A.J. Burnett has not won since April 14. He's averaging a walk in every other inning he pitches. He's yet to deliver a victory before the ever harsh critics at new Yankee Stadium. In the past, that would have unhinged the right-hander, especially in the first year of a heavily scrutinized \$82US.5-million, five-year contract. He would have felt the need to justify the deal every time he pitched, to win over teammates and fans each time out, the way he did when he signed for \$55 million over five years with the Toronto Blue Jays. Not anymore. 976 words. By Shi Davidi. See Photo CPT107. BC-BBL-Going-Deep. Moved.

ARLINGTON, Texas@ So far, it's all very good for the Texas Rangers. They have won seven in a row and lead the AL West by 4 1/2 games. This from a team that hasn't been to the playoffs in 10 years. "It gives us momentum and confidence, but it's May," manager Ron Washington says. 600 words. By Stephen Hawkins. BBL-Rangers-Roll.

AUTO RACING

CHARLOTTE, N.C.@ The drama surrounding Jeremy Mayfield's suspension enters a second week after the driver threatens legal action. He says he took a prescription drug mixed with an over-the-counter allergy medicine. His explanation has created confusion, and NASCAR has done a poor job clearing it up. 600 words. By Jenna Fryer. BC-AUTO-NASCAR-Column. Moves Datafile only.

INDIANAPOLIS@ Alex Lloyd and his wife, Samantha, have it all planned for race day. They'll get to the track early before taking their usual positions he in the cockpit, she along pit row. Then they'll spend the next three hours hoping their second daughter arrives fashionably late. It's been in the works since doctors gave the Lloyds their due date: May 24. 600 words. By Michael Marot. AUTO-Indy-500-Due-Date. Moved.

SOCCER

ISTANBUL, Turkey@ Werder Bremen will hope to make up for a disappointing league campaign by beating Shakhtar Donetsk to capture the UEFA Cup on Wednesday and then use that success as a springboard to also

capture the German Cup. But while Thomas Schaaf's team chases a cup double it has slipped to 10th in the 18-team Bundesliga and is out of contention for qualification for the Europa League, which replaces the UEFA Cup next season. 500 words. By Rob Harris. BC-SOC-UEFA-Cup-Preview. Moved.

LONDON @ Carlos Tevez is looking for another team even though he wants to stay with Manchester United, and fans have been pleading for months to keep the Argentine striker. What seems on the outside to be a logical move just doesn't happen in the world of Carlos Tevez. 600 words. By Robert Millward. BC-SOC-Tevez-Column. Moved Datafile only.

WEMBLEY, England @David Beckham teamed up with Prime Minister Gordon Brown to launch England's bid for the 2018 World Cup on Monday, saying that winning the hosting rights would be as satisfying as anything he's accomplished on the field. 650 words. By Robert Millward. See Photos. BC-SOC-WCup-2018-England, 1st Writethru. Moved.

See also:

BC-SOC-Barton-Peschisolido. Moved.

BC-SOC-Shorts. Moved Datafile only.

BC-SOC-Juventus-Ranieri, 4th Writethru. Moved.

BC-SOC-Tottenham-Redknapp. Moved Datafile only.

BC-SOC-Wenger-Madrid. Moved.

BC-SOC-Man-City-Hughes. Moved Datafile only.

FOOTBALL

UNDATED @ New Orleans could get back in the Super Bowl rotation this week. NFL owners will award the 2013 Super Bowl to New Orleans, Glendale, Ariz., or South Florida, where their spring meetings will take place in Fort Lauderdale. Owners also could vote on a proposal to expand the regular season to 17 or 18 games. 600 words. By Barry Wilner. BC-NFL-Meetings. Moved.

ORCHARD PARK, N.Y.@ Lights, cameras, T.O.! No stranger to attention, Terrell Owens drew plenty of it on a Monday that was busy even for the high-profile receiver. 735 words. By John Wawrow. BC-NFL-Bills-Owens, 2nd Writethru. Moved.

OTHER SPORTS

UNDATED@ After spending his first year evaluating the Canadian rugby talent at his disposal, former All Black Kieran Crowley now has five matches to prepare his squad for a pair of crucial World Cup qualifying games against the U.S. Eagles in July. The countdown starts Saturday when Ireland visits Thunderbird Stadium in Vancouver. 450 words. By Neil Davidson. BC-RUGBY-Canada. Moved.

See also:

BC-RUGBY-Wilkinson-Toulon. Moved.

HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009

UNDATED@ Tim (The Thrashing Machine) Hague can teach kindergarten or beat the snot out of you. And school's out at present. The six-foot-four, 275-pound heavyweight from Sherwood Park, Alta., making his UFC debut, looks to school kickboxer Pat Barry at UFC 98 on Saturday night in Las Vegas. 760 words. By Neil Davidson. BC-MMA-UFC-98-Thrashing-Machine. Moved.

CHARLOTTE, N.C.@ Michael Phelps is heading to the mountains. Eat. Sleep. Swim. That's about all the winningest Olympian will be doing during his time at the U.S. training centre in Colorado Springs. 874 words. By Paul Newberry. BC-SWIM-Phelps-What's-Next. Moved.

ENTERTAINMENT

TORONTO @ Nearly 40 years after quietly slipping into John Lennon and Yoko Ono's "bed-in for peace" in a Toronto hotel as a teen, Jerry Levitan still gets chills whenever he returns to the scene. "I opened the door and I had goosebumps," the Toronto lawyer and eternal Beatles fanatic said in a recent interview inside Room 769, dubbed the John Lennon Suite, at the King Edward Hotel. He's written a new book about the experience. 500 words. By Victoria Ahearn. See Photo CPT104. BC-BOOKS-Jerry-Levitan. Moved.

NEW YORK@ Woody Allen agreed Monday to a \$5 million settlement in his lawsuit accusing a trendy clothing company of using an image parodying him as a rabbi without his permission. Both sides announced the settlement to be paid by American Apparel's insurance company on the morning a trial was to start in federal court in Manhattan. 415 words. By Tom Hays. See Photo NYSW101, NYSW102. BC-FILM-Woody-Allen. Moved Entertainment (E) and Business (B). Moved.

NEW YORK @ Fox will try dancing in the fall to match its singing in the spring. It also will add four new comedies and budding late-night comic Wanda Sykes next season and give "Dollhouse" creator Joss Whedon another chance. 670 words. By David Bauder. See Photo NYET338, NYET339. BC-TV-Fox-New-Season. Moved.

LOS ANGELES @ The final "American Idol" performance episode could be the weirdest concert ever televised. In one corner, there's over-the-top Adam Lambert, the dominating presence who transformed Johnny Cash's "Ring of Fire" into a sitar-infused spectacle and tackled "Whole Lotta Love," the first-ever Led Zeppelin tune performed on Fox's "Idol." From the outset, he's been the ambiguous rocker next door, most comfortable but not scary in eyeliner and studded leather. 596 words. By Derrik J. Lang. See Photo NYET844, NYET845. BC-TV-American-Idol-The-Contenders. Moved.

CANNES, France@ The Cannes Film Festival's latest contenders are a cinematic odd couple British director Ken Loach and French soccer legend Eric Cantona, who stars in Loach's festival entry "Looking for Eric." It turns out that Loach an unflinching social realist whose subjects have ranged from troubled teens ("Kes") to illegal immigrants ("It's a Free World") to the Irish war of independence ("The Wind That Shakes the Barley") is a passionate believer in what one character in the film calls "the great god of football." 652 words. By Jill Lawless. See Photo CAN122, CAN105. BC-FILM-Cannes-Looking-for-Eric. Moved.

LIFESTYLES

UNDATED @Albert Hammill likes to refer to his medical appointment at the new integrated care clinic at St. Paul's Hospital in Vancouver as his "three-in-one." Plagued by heart disease, Type 2 diabetes and severely diminished kidney function, Hammill no longer needs to make separate appointments with the multiple specialists he needs to

HL:The Canadian Press Budget for Friday, April 24, 2009

see his conditions can now all be dealt with during one visit. 787 words. By Sheryl Ubelacker. See Photos VCRD108-112. BC-HealthMatters-Integrated-Care. Moved.

WEEKEND REPEATS

VANCOUVER @A leading expert in human trafficking says he, the RCMP and Ontario police are in talks with Craigslist officials in hopes the mammoth online classified ad company will make significant changes to its erotic services section to prevent sexual exploitation in Canada after similar action in the United States. 900 words. By Camille Bains. BC-Craigslist-Sex-Ads. Repeats story originally moved Sunday.

MONTREAL -@With bathing suit season right around the corner, spring is traditionally the time of year many women consider implants as a means of filling out their bikini tops. But one Montreal doctor is cautioning Quebecers in particular to do their homework before going under the knife. Dr. William Papanastasiou said more than half of all implants in Quebec are saline compared to just 10 per cent in the rest of Canada. He's a fan of the cohesive gel variety used almost exclusively in Europe and increasingly in Western Canada and believes Quebec doctors aren't up-to-date on the latest trends. 865 words. By Tobi Cohen. See Photos GMH201-206, PCH105. BC-Breast-Implant-Debate. Repeats story originally moved Sunday.

CALGARY -@ A new report has found there is no exit strategy for male sex-trade workers in Western Canada. The report has also found they often end up alone and without support, and that comprehensive changes are needed. 660 words. By Bill Graveland. Sex-Trade-Men. Repeats story originally moved Sunday.

OTTAWA@ The Ontario liquor board has fired at least 10 workers in the last year for scooping up Air Miles meant for customers. The employees were nabbed after the Liquor Control Board of Ontario gained access to their Air Miles accounts and found they were using personal cards to accumulate points on customer sales. 425 words. By Dean Beeby. BC-Liquor-Miles-Fraud. Repeats story originally moved Sunday.

HALIFAX@ The Green Party of Nova Scotia was a mere five weeks old when the last provincial election was called in 2006. And yet, as party leader Ryan Watson quickly pointed out in an interview Sunday, they were still able to field candidates in all 52 ridings and capture 2.3 per cent of the popular vote. 495 words. By John Lewandowski. Repeats story originally moved Sunday, May 17. BC-Elxn-NS-Greens. Repeats story originally moved Sunday on the Atlantic regional (A) wire.

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Lost and foundering

The Australian

July 13, 2009 Monday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Length: 1868 words

Byline: Paul Maley

Body

The rising tide of boat people has ignited a tense political and social debate, but we should not lose sight of the people-smuggling trade's human toll, writes Paul Maley

IT is hard to reconcile Kevin Rudd's description of people smugglers as "the scum of the earth" with the forlorn Indonesian fishermen who appeared before a Perth court earlier this month.

A total of 11 men were convicted and jailed. They were found guilty of transporting 147 asylum-seekers between December and March. The convictions brought to 14 the number of people smugglers jailed by Australian courts in the past four months.

Yesterday, another boat arrived, the 17th this year. It was carrying 73 people, bringing to about 900 the number of arrivals this year.

When authorities process these new arrivals, separating the passengers from the crew, the adults from the minors, there will doubtless be more charges, more convictions and more press releases. Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor has been quick to praise the sentences.

"People smuggling is a crime that exploits vulnerable people during times of desperation and demonstrates a callous disregard for the law," he says.

"Organisers, skippers and crews of people-smuggling ventures face long jail terms if caught and convicted."

But to others -- the Indonesian government, for example -- the sentences are pointless, largely misdirected and unlikely to make any dent in the problem.

According to Indonesia's ambassador to Australia, Primo Alui Joelianto, some of those convicted didn't know they were going to Australia.

"Our staff went to the detention centre in Christmas Island and in Perth and they found that some of the fishermen told them that they didn't know anything," Joelianto tells The Australian.

"They were just asked to bring persons to fish and to go somewhere. Then, in the middle of the sea, they were told that they had to go to Australia."

Lost and foundering

It's hard to believe they were as innocent as that. But scum of the earth?

Whatever their level of knowledge, the fact remains the men who sent them continue to operate untroubled by the efforts of Australian or Indonesian police. The real people smugglers are largely invisible.

Protected by Indonesia's inconsistent legal system, they operate with relative impunity across the sprawling archipelago, which is teeming with small fishing villages populated by people willing to strike out for Australia with a handful of asylum-seekers if the price is right.

The extradition to Australia in May of Iranian-Iraqi Hadi Ahmadi was a rare example of the authorities nabbing an alleged kingpin. Ahmadi is accused of facilitating the passage of more than 900 people travelling on four boats in 2001. But Ahmadi's extradition was the exception that proved the rule.

Indonesian authorities have limited options when it comes to pursuing the smugglers. People smuggling is not an offence under Indonesian law. As such, Indonesian police are forced to detain people for minor matters, usually visa violations. Police rarely get high up in the food chain.

Indonesia's weak legal regime is the reason the Australian government is working with Southeast Asian countries to amend their legal codes.

The Attorney-General's Department is working with Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and The Philippines to address the problem. The hope is that by fortifying countries across the region, people smugglers will be unable to exploit legal differences across the region, shifting their activities to the softest jurisdiction.

Exacerbating the problem is the fluid nature of the people-smuggling business. The smugglers are changing their tactics. Whereas in the past smugglers operated in plain sight, accommodating their passengers in downtown Jakarta and feeding them at Jalan Wahid Hashim McDonald's -- conveniently located near the UN headquarters -- these days they are more careful.

Alive to the risks of electronic eavesdropping, they are wary of mobile phones and the internet. Nor do they put their charges up in downtown boarding houses. Instead, they house them in remote locations while they wait to undertake the final leg of their voyage to Australia. That's if they leave from Indonesia at all.

Increasingly, the focus of illegal activity is moving to Malaysia. The largest boat to arrive this year -- an ocean-going vessel carrying 193 Tamils -- had been tracked by authorities at least as far as Penang.

Malaysia's entry requirements have Australian authorities worried. A secular Muslim state, Malaysia has loose entry requirements for visitors from other Muslim countries. As such it has always been a favoured destination for Middle Eastern asylum-seekers whose ultimate destination is Australia. But whereas in the past it was a transit point, authorities are concerned it has become a staging point for the journey to Australia.

Customs and border security have been given money to establish new posts in Malaysia and Sri Lanka, plus boost their presence in Indonesia.

The Australian Federal Police has also been showered with funds, setting up joint strike teams with the Indonesian National Police -- reportedly 12 across Indonesia -- in an effort to disrupt the smugglers.

Rudd and Foreign Minister Stephen Smith last week paid a joint visit to the Malaysian Prime Minister, Najib Razak in a bid to shore up co-operation from our prickliest Asian neighbour. The measures undertaken by Rudd amount to a multi-pronged diplomatic and law enforcement offensive aimed at stopping the boats before they leave Southeast Asia. But will they be effective?

Authorities stand a reasonable chance of stemming the tide of boatpeople borne to Australia via organised smuggling routes. The syndicate that recruits passengers in Pakistan or Afghanistan, flies them to Malaysia then puts them on a rickety boat to Australia, is prone to disruption by law enforcement, providing the rest of the region co-operates.

Lost and foundering

But the present wave of asylum-seekers comprises two categories of migrants. Middle Eastern refugees -- the men, women and children arriving by boat from Indonesia and Malaysia -- account for most of the unauthorised arrivals this year.

But there is growing concern Australia will be flooded with refugees fleeing war-ravaged Sri Lanka. Ever since government troops overran the last stronghold of the Tamil Tigers in May, Sri Lanka's ethnic Tamils have been holed up in refugee camps in the country's north.

About 300,000 people have been forcibly detained in the camps in conditions that gravely concern the UN. Suspected Tamil fighters are reportedly being removed by authorities to unknown fates.

Australian authorities worry that the 193 Tamils intercepted in late June could presage a boat-borne exodus of Tamils fleeing retribution. Australia's security services are alert to the potential security risks of ex-Tamil fighters passing themselves as refugees.

While a tough Australian policy response may stem the tide of refugees travelling via organised routes, there is nothing the Australian government can do to prevent a torrent of people whose passage has been forced by an acute humanitarian emergency.

The government knows this. It is why the Department of Immigration and Citizenship and other agencies have been active in Sri Lanka, working with local authorities to warn Sri Lankans of the risk involved in undertaking the hazardous journey.

Amid all this furious diplomatic activity, the Australian public has barely stirred. An issue that -- on the telling of some -- once turned elections now fails to register.

Privately, the government is concerned that will change, that the issue will reach a tipping point and that the number of refugees will hit a level the public finds unacceptable, perhaps provoking a Hansonite backlash.

Tellingly, a Newspoll conducted for The Australian in April found that only 36 per cent of voters believed a tougher regime would make any difference in cutting illegal arrivals, while 57 per cent believed it would do nothing to stop boat people.

The finding blunts a key line of opposition attack: that a softening of Australia's laws is behind the present influx of boat people. This is both ironic and unfortunate for the opposition which is, in part, right when it says the changes have encouraged asylum-seekers.

Everybody from the International Organisation for Migration, to the Indonesian ambassador to Australia, to the AFP to the boatpeople themselves, acknowledge policy changes have played some role.

Even the federal government has grudgingly conceded the changes have been a factor. Immigration Minister Chris Evans says people smugglers have used the changes as a marketing ploy, although he is emphatic that global instability abroad is the principal driver.

But whether or not the changes have been decisive on provoking the flow of boats, as opposed to influencing activity at the margins, is a more complicated question.

The government has certainly been effective in persuading the public that ``push" factors are the main reason for the surge. Evans has pointed to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees report showing a 28 per cent increase in the number of refugee claims worldwide in 2008.

But in Australia the number of boat arrivals has gone from virtually zero prior to Labor's changes, to almost 1000 this calendar year. Clearly there is something else going on.

Lost and foundering

Whatever it is, the opposition has been singularly unsuccessful in gaining traction on the issue. Malcolm Turnbull got his party into an awful muddle when he raised the prospect of reintroducing three-year temporary protection visas for refugees as a deterrent.

Turnbull says the policy option should be high on the agenda, but stopped short of committing to reintroducing the controversial visas should the Coalition win the next election.

Turnbull knows the measure will never win the support of the left-Liberal rump of Petro Georgiou, Judi Moylan and Russell Broadbent. To push too hard would be to risk opening up a damaging schism within the party and turning a story about Labor's inability to stop the boats into yet another story about Turnbull's uncertain authority.

Again, there is irony there. One of the key arguments used by Evans and the refugee lobby to justify the abolition of TPVs was that they loaded up the boats with women and children because TPV holders had no family reunion rights.

What is that if not an implicit acknowledgement of the relationship between Australian policy and the behaviour of refugees?

What all parties agree on is the need to stop the boats. For one thing is clear: as long as the boats continue to sail, people will continue to die. The boats are rickety, the seas are treacherous and most of the Middle Eastern asylum-seekers can't swim.

The fate of the 80 or so Afghan asylum-seekers whose boat is believed to have gone down off the Indonesian island of Sumbawa last week emphasises the point. About 15 of those on board have been accounted for. A text message sent by one of the passengers to refugee advocate Ian Rintoul as the boat was foundering succinctly conveys both the perils and the terrors those who would risk the journey are subject to.

``I don't know da location," it reads. ``My mb has no power now. I cnt contact u anymore. May God help us."

Load-Date: July 12, 2009

A bold move that plans for old age; PENSIONS

The Age (Melbourne, Australia)

May 19, 2009 Tuesday

First Edition

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Section: NEWS; Letters; Pg. 10

Length: 1836 words

Body

IF YOU dig a layer deeper than the spontaneous voter reaction, the Federal Government's proposal for an increase to 67 for eligibility for the age pension is a realistic - and courageous - recognition of changing health standards and economic realities. It is obvious that people are staying fit and healthy years longer than they were when the retiring age of 65 was adopted generations ago. This is a welcome development, but it has fiscal consequences that must be faced sooner or later. It is to the Government's credit that it is willing to take a long-term view and plan for the future, despite the danger of losing votes and presenting the Opposition with the chance of making opportunistic criticism. Robert Corcoran, Edithvale Caught in the middle! AM in my late 40s. Not a high income earner. I have never received a benefit from the government. No first home buyer grant. No baby bonus.

No child-care rebate. No paid maternity leave. Nothing. I did not receive superannuation until it became compulsory when I was 32, so not much accumulated there. To pay for all of these, I and others around the ages of 45-53, now have to subsidise those who have received or will receive some or all of these by working for another two years. Annoyed? You bet I am. Helen Brown, Drysdale Aside from the realities NOT sufficiently disabled for a disability pension, but not able enough to work until 60, let alone 67. Enough super, however, to live off the lump sum or a rental property income - not the public purse - for another 30 or so years. Should such people not be allowed to take their super savings at 55 or 60? What sort of grim, income twilight zone would the Government's superannuation pay-out scenario be for these people? We may be living longer but that does not mean we live at the same performance level until 70 or 60, or even 50. Many limiting conditions begin manifesting themselves in middle age. Not all of them are due to bad living habits and not all are manageable by mere lifestyle modifications. Ensuring some quality of life may necessitate retirement. The Government is looking at figures, not personal realities. Politicians beware. The baby boomers are looking towards retirement and they are watching your every move. Daria Fedewytsh-Dickson, Prahran A fraction less! I HAVE not seen any comment concerning the budget's proposed shabby treatment of pensioner couples. A couple used to consist of a single pensioner plus a partner, receiving jointly about one and two-thirds of the single life pension. The budget proposal seems to suggest that equity is to be achieved by increasing the single pension, and effectively reducing the joint pension to just over one and a half times the single life rate. Can someone show me how two can live as cheaply as one and a half? Con Lilley, Narre Warren South Education is not the primary focus! I HAVE followed The Age's coverage of the international education industry in Melbourne, including Sushi Das' most recent article ("Melbourne college accused of offering 'grades for cash'", 18/5) with interest. I am concerned that the industry has changed, from one in which our leading tertiary and vocational institutions offered high-quality education and training to international students, into something approximating a legalised immigration rort. Specialist international training colleges have proliferated in Melbourne. Many offer courses seemingly designed to maximise permanent residency points, not educational quality, let alone excellence. I have no idea how employers, here or overseas, rate the merits of these courses or

A bold move that plans for old age PENSIONS

how prepared they are to employ staff based on them. However, they must be considered inferior to qualifications gained from better-known institutions. Governments need to consider what kind of international education industry they wish to facilitate. The current situation would seem to benefit the providers' private interests at the expense of the public interest and the reputation of our wider education sector.

Adam Coleman, Ascot Vale Places to go JASON Koutsoukis (Focus, 18/5) illustrates clearly the appalling treatment of Palestinians in Lebanon. Compare this with the welcoming by Israel of Druze, Baha'i and hundreds of thousands of Jews, all of whom fled unfriendly, often hostile, other Middle Eastern lands, leaving behind property, and family memories in many cases going back to the days of the Roman Empire. Those Arabs who stayed in Israel have a vote in elections, practise their religion freely, and even the women can, and do, study at university. As an example of Israeli tolerance, one of the dominant views of Haifa from the harbour is not of a synagogue but the Baha'i temple. Go to Iran and you can see the destroyed remains of the original. The Palestinians who chose to leave Israel should have received proper resettlement by wealthy, oil-rich Arab nations.

Peter Cohen, Caulfield Humanity required JASON Koutsoukis' story of a people without a country, without human rights and without a future is simply heart-rending. We, the civilised people of the West, are the creators of this great tragedy of the Palestinian refugees. We have a moral duty to remedy the situation. If we do not, we who are fortunate in having a country, human rights and a future, will lose our humanity.

Bill Mathew, Parkville Rail idea is a bright spot amid gloom FORMER lord mayor Kevin Chamberlin is right about extending the underutilised Flemington Racecourse train line to service a gap in the rail network in western suburbs (The Age, 18/5). I think every Melburnian was hoping for a comprehensive transport plan, rather than the half-hearted one that was released late last year by the State Government. Extending the Flemington line to at least Highpoint, via Victoria University and the Western Hospital in Footscray, would make sense, and connect three major activity hubs to the rail network. The new medium density housing developments west of Highpoint and the proposed new estate on the former Commonwealth ammunitions site would also greatly benefit from a rail line into the city. Although the inner-city rail network is said to be congested, the service could terminate at North Melbourne, where people could change for connecting services. Now why wasn't this idea in the plan? And what about extending the Alamein line to Rowville via East Malvern Station, Chadstone shopping centre, Oakleigh station and Monash University? Steve Stefanopoulos, Armadale Gaps and getting on THE Brumby Government's shocking and ill-conceived decision to discontinue funding Reconciliation Victoria is a significant policy change from the position of his predecessors. Reconciliation is a community-wide task that requires more than miserly short-term thinking. The Brumby Government has turned its back on reconciliation, despite recent studies demonstrating that a significant underlying cause of disadvantage and poor health in Aboriginal communities is the prevalence of racism and cultural misunderstanding in the general community. The Premier has failed to recognise that if we don't close the gap in our relationships we will never close the gap in health and wellbeing outcomes.

Peter Lewis, chairman, Australians for Native Title and Reconciliation in Victoria, Fitzroy Look to the future PAUL Krugman (Comment, 18/5) is right in saying that an effective international climate change agreement will be characterised as much by coercion as by co-operation and goodwill. The US and other countries will simply force recalcitrants like Australia to cut greenhouse gases by the required amount, or face tariffs and quotas. This soon-to-emerge reality is yet another reason why Kevin Rudd has to abandon his expensive attempt to be the curator of an industrial museum and instead put the emphasis on industries, designs and practices that have a future.

Tim Thornton, Northcote No need for China to lead on this PAUL Krugman is less than honest in his presentation of the case for China to act on climate change, and is only playing the blame game. The US under Barack Obama is yet to offer any concrete policy or reduction targets. We can only take Krugman at his word that significant action will be taken shortly. At the moment, the West seems to be squirming in its seat rather than making any real shift to combat climate change. Krugman's comparison of gross domestic products to assert that China's large emissions are a result of inefficiency is not valid. Whereas the US is predominantly a service-based economy, China is the manufacturing base of the world. China has always asked the West to lead it in greener generation and transportation. At the moment only symbolic gestures are being made by the US and Australia towards the goal. The US and Australia have two of the largest reserves of coal in the world. If use of coal is the admitted root cause of global warming, where is the plan to stop or at least reduce mining it in these countries? Manjit Singh, Mooroopna Save the Tamils WHILE the conclusion of any war should be welcomed, the victory claimed by the Sri Lankan Government against the Tamil Tigers will simply reaffirm the discrimination Tamil civilians have experienced in their own country for more than 30 years. Already, in the nation's capital, the Sinhalese majority is celebrating with placards saying, "Soldiers, our race salutes you" - however, there is no placard to explain to Tamils how they have been "liberated". Instead thousands of Tamils wait in "camps" to be "processed". What this actually means must be

A bold move that plans for old age PENSIONS

monitored by the international community to protect the voiceless Tamil civilians. Erik du Plessis, Doncaster East Run the numbers www.wolframalpha.com is the invention of a maths wizard and is said to be able to answer almost any question put to it (The Age, 18/5). I tried "Melbourne to Sydney" and was given the distance, flying time, time of day, populations and elevations. I tried "Melbourne to Bendigo" and received the same package of information. Unfortunately, wolfram could not find its way from Bendigo to Birchip, but it was able to return the data for Bendigo to Ballarat, Mildura, and Swan Hill. If anyone needs directions to Birchip, just ask a policeman. David Bell, Birchip My lips are sealed LIZ Conor (Comment, 16/5), I shall happily never again pass a "fat-chick" remark, or any other derogatory remark about women, as long as, equally, you can guarantee that women will never pass derogatory remarks or discriminate against me for: my baldness, my bad teeth, my impotence, my halitosis, the fact that I must be gay as I've never married, my pigeon-toed gait, my penchant for the opera and the ballet, my inability to communicate in precisely the same coded linguistics as my female work colleagues, my less than mod dress sense, my mediocre income by comparison with other "available" males, my gravy-stained work ties, and the unfortunate fact of my not driving the "right" sort of car (an impeccably preserved Leyland P76, if you must know). Whattya say, Liz. We got a deal? Paul Dawson, Wangaratta

Graphic

CARTOON BY DYSON

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Time to put a fullstop

Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka)

November 22, 2009 Sunday

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Dateline: Sri Lanka

Body

Sri Lanka, Nov. 22 -- They say the hand that rocks the cradle rules the world. Each and every earth-dweller still believes in this age old saying as the female gender of the human race has proven it beyond any doubt over generations.

It is the woman who transmits the knowledge and experiences of the present generation to the future, bridging the generation gap moulding youngsters, thus leading the way to the future. That's how they ruled the world with their soft touch, and will continue to do so in a broader perspective and under different situations and conditions the future woman may have to face.

Unfortunately, woman and her contribution to society never received due acknowledgement throughout history unless where highlighted by great philosophers such as the Buddha.

This condition has worsened in the face of unpredictable changes occurring in the global community, which has created a rat race among the people, in their desperate attempt to grab the best out of the lot. This desperation has made people forget the true values of life, culture and their upbringing. All values and social norms have been discarded, making the woman and the girl child unprotected.

The time has come for all of us, irrespective of gender, to delicately reconsider this valuable component of our cultures, where negligence that is currently taking place causes inestimable damage to the entire future. Protecting the woman and the girl child.... It is time to initiate actions from all walks of life and engage people to come together and end violence against women.

In December 1999, at the 54th session of the United Nations General Assembly, the world accepted November 25 as the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. The day was declared in the Resolution 54/134 adopted at this Assembly.

November 25 was chosen as it was the day 'the Butterflies' ('Las Mariposas') - the Mirabal Sisters of the Dominican Republic - were savagely killed by henchmen following the orders of the dictator, the then ruler of the Dominican Republic, Rafael Trujillo. The Mirabal Sisters, namely Patricia Mercedes, Bolgica, Minerva Argentina and Maria Theresa from Salcedo of the Dominican Republic braved their way fighting the ruthless dictatorship of Trujillo and his fascist government. On November 25 in 1960, Patricia, Minerva and Maria Theresa were abducted and brutally killed while returning from their visit to their husbands who were incarcerated by Trujillo to silence these women.

The story, as reported, says that the car these women were travelling in was stopped by these henchmen and the women led into a sugarcane field where they were mercilessly beaten and strangled to death. Their car was thrown off from a mountain cliff known as 'La Cumbre'.

Time to put a fullstop

The murder never silenced the outrage against the dictatorship as Trujillo expected. Instead he was assassinated six months later.

Where are we now? Are we better or worse? "Cases of violence against women are reported more than they used to be a few years ago," said Kanthi Dissanayake, the Deputy Director of the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau. As Dissanayake explained, though we cannot see a reduction in the number of cases, more are now being reported. "It may not be reported by the victim; even an outsider or neighbour would report either to us or to the Police," she explained. The people, especially women, are more aware of the injustices taking place and are stronger due to today's economic and social expansion.

The role of a woman in the society, at home and at work, has changed. The role has altered from the traditional conservative housewife and mother, to a more challenging career woman. Today's world demands a versatile, skilful power woman and not just a housewife.

Yet, violence against women still occurs worldwide. "It is the most atrocious manifestation of the systemic discrimination and inequality women continue to face, in law and in their everyday lives, around the world. It occurs in every region, country, and culture, regardless of income, class, race or ethnicity," the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan said in one of his messages issued on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

According to records at the Children and Women Division of the Sri Lanka Police, from January to September this year, a total of 1900 cases were reported as minor offences against women while another 573 cases were reported as major offences. Out of the minor offences, 1003 cases were of causing bodily injuries and 74 on domestic violence. There were 658 cases of sexual harassment. The reports were from all areas of the country. Under major offences, 200 rape cases were reported in 2009.

The number of minor offences were higher in 2008, a total of 2,299, with 874 major offences, of which 303 were rape cases.

Gender-based violence is damaging to the society as a whole. It can prevent women from engaging in productive employment, and girls from attending school. It makes women more vulnerable to forced and unprotected sex, which plays a key role in the spread of HIV/AIDS. It takes a deep and enduring toll on the entire family, including and especially on the next generation.

If society can treat the woman with equal dignity, respecting her as a human being, it would provide a solid answer to this problem. Yet, disrespecting humanity has become a plague infecting every nook and corner of the world.

"While considering the harassment and injustices women face islandwide, we are giving special attention to the vulnerable groups among the Internally Displaced Persons of the North," said Director of the Sri Lanka Women's Bureau Pradeepa Serasinghe.

"As soon as the welfare centres in Cheddikulam in Vavuniya were set up, we made arrangements to send our Women Development Officers working islandwide to start counselling and skills development programs to empower the women in these groups," she said.

With mass resettlement taking place at the moment, some of these Women Resource Centres have closed down. They are functioning in IDP Welfare Centres where people are still sheltered.

Explaining the Government's efforts in eliminating violence against women, Minister of Child Welfare and Women Empowerment Sumedha Jayasena said focus is given to 'Priority to Mother' (Mawata Mul Thana) under the Mahinda Chinthana. "To eliminate violence against women, it is important to empower them economically and socially," the Minister added.

Accordingly, women's societies function islandwide in a systematic structure where women can voice their grievances and injustices at the Divisional Secretariat level.

Time to put a fullstop

"This benefits most rural women. We have a pilot project in the Moneragala district where we assist the most needy women to uplift their lives, and we have a very relaxed approach," she said, adding that they are hoping to spread this goodwill gesture to other parts of the country in the near future.

On assisting the needy women among the displaced families in the North, Minister Jayasena said with the finalisation of resettlements in the North by early next year, the Ministry will start its next phase in empowering these women.

"Due to LTTE terrorism, we could not have Women Development Officers in the North and East. But, with the present situation, we have the possibility of appointing such officers in these areas under resettlement and we can easily expand our work," the Minister added.

Along with these national level projects taking place, a huge responsibility lies with individuals. Each responsible citizen should be well aware of the detrimental effects of violence against women on the well-being of the world as a whole.

It's more an individual responsibility to redouble efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women. This requires us to change the mind-set, still all too common and deep-seated, that violence against women is acceptable. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka). For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Meeting Azavedo!

Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka)

April 26, 2009 Sunday

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Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, April 26 -- When Sri Lankan writers are at a loss for a theme they fall back either on the conflict in the North or on above topic. The writer, readers would cynically observe fares no better. Could be or could be not. In fact once I came across a pathetic piece on a young descendent of the royal line of an African country, Ethiopia, if I remember correct, who after the Britishers had made pell-mell of its dynasty removed the prince to England, dressed him in European attire and began to teach him English. But what did he finally do he pined for his home and hearth and for his mother and then died just hating the English.

The biggest compliment the reigning queen of England assumed that she had paid him was, "Poor sweet boy. He hardly looked an African!" Tell that to Obama! I have also heard of a sad story in our own country of the wife of a patriot who was shot by the British requesting the foreigners to educate her son in English as a compensation for making him fatherless. They readily consented and had him admitted to a hostel in a premier English college in Colombo but the boy pined day and night for the fields and the cascading waterfalls of his upcountry terrain, for the warm embrace of his mother that he developed a psychosomatic illness and passed away in the dormitory never having mastered the English alphabet, which turned out to be his phobia. However not all went the same way. In fact a good deal of literature put out by today's younger generation writing in English-most of them expatriates- reveal the fact that they have become the beneficiaries of their grandfathers deciding to quit the native home and hearth and make full use of the Western education and aligned culture. The nostalgic longings they exhibit here and there could be genuine or faked to deceive the reader that their heart is still with Mother Lanka. The stark truth here is that the broad thinking and intellectualism they display have transcended national, racial and religious barriers. Can one say, "Much ado about nothing", No. At least nothing, to the conquistadors themselves. I remember having a chat with a former Minister of Cultural Affairs. Now don't run away with the idea that every other day I have chats with such formidable characters. But he was a sweet ageing man and knew a lot and we had to patiently wait on our seats till the prize - winners lined up to receive their awards. He said that he has just returned from a trip to Lisbon where he had tried to trace documents with regard to their period of rule here and was disappointed. He learnt that at the time the Ferenghi rule ended here, Portugal was in turmoil due to domestic issues and all documents were removed to Brazil. Some which were later brought back to Lisbon too made their exit when an earthquake destroyed the building in which they were kept. I cannot vouch for all what he told me for I have not been to Lisbon myself. And while we are so preoccupied with these invaders and hold umpteen seminars and symposiums on their rule here along with many other aligned topics, the Portuguese seem to be quite oblivious of us. For they were almost the super - power in the world in the 16th century. They were ubiquitous having stretched their empire from the North Coast of Africa to Macau in China. No international law existed to regulate their activities. Might was right. The Iberian peninsula itself had suffered for centuries from Moorish yoke and now liberated, the Portuguese were groping their way to power and glory. In 1454 the Congo basin was discovered and in 1494 Vasco Da Gama made his famous voyage to India rounding the Cape of Good

Meeting Azavedo!

Hope. Then in 1,500 Cabraal discovered Brazil for Portugal. Excuse the dirty word, 'discovered'; used since these countries had existed ever since the world began. Even the mighty sub-continent of India, world historians would say was discovered only in the 15th century whereas the Upanishads and the Vedas with their philosophical speculations were being recited around midnight fires at the foothills of Himalayas when those in Northern Europe were running wild in the nude or wrapped in leaves or animal skins braving the freezing cold and nettled forests. Portugal, frenzied by their initial successes just plazoned ahead. And of course Papal power formed the main prop. Both were in need of help in an amazingly widening world. The doctrine preached by Christ had expanded from the shores of Galilee to European lands north of the Mediterranean due to Roman king Constantine's conversion and Vatican had become the world's embassy of Heaven. All other faiths were regarded as pagan and had to be wiped off the earth. The Pope needed a partner for this sinister plan and little Portugal was willing. It would give a moral justification for their land grabbing too. The Three Bulls issued by the Pope in 1493 partitioning 'the newly discovered lands' between Spain and Portugal culminated the process. 'Bull' was certainly an apt word for this brazen and utterly illegitimate act of partitioning a major part of the world between two countries just because they were of a particular faith. Peculiar dramas trailed this process. Some politely call them 'Synthesis of civilizations'. Some impolitely call them Denigration of very high civilizations. The battle still goes on filling intellectual vacuums for those who have nothing much to do. Vast majority of the world's population spend their time finding ways and means of sustaining themselves and their families. For a fortunate few such effort is redundant. And if they are academically inclined that long period of what is known as the period of imperialism throws up many an interesting topic, some even descending to trivia if viewed via a normal perspective. The fusion of words, of dress, of customs, of even racial amalgamation - these read tantalizing while some would just scoff at the whole thing and say things like Que Sera Sera, whatever will be, will be. For it is just one world full of humans who keep tripping on each other. I once met a Portuguese **female** at a party. She had a pretty face and a way of dishing out compliments as saying that our island is very beautiful. Her generosity made me say that their race once ruled a part of our country. May be I wanted to find out how she would react to that. 'Did we? Oh. Jesus. Never knew that. And so far away'. 'It was partly to propagate the message of Jesus that they came so far'. She sidled up to me and confided three things. One, that history was never her forte. Second that I was very human. Human? Gods! Had **LTTE** propaganda succeeded in projecting that the Lankan Sinhalese are an inhuman lot en masse and human ones one comes across rarely. Third fact was, 'You know we are a very poor country now'. Ditta Dhamma Vedaneeya Kamma, I intoned. What, she exclaimed utterly perplexed. 'Punishment follows atrocious behaviour, is the general meaning'. She gave up on me and turned to another. Azavedo was her surname. Could be a descendent of General Azavedo who is said to have spiked babes of families who refused to be converted. Sometimes he is said to have watched with glee from the balcony of his Malwana Palace the tiny corpses being thrown to the Kelani river bend flowing by. But Miss. Azavedo who sat by me was a farcry from him and 25 generations had trekked in the intervening period. She turned to me again to share a packet of roasted gram and I told her, 'You too are very human'. Not because of the gram but the friendliness bubbling in her. In the world of humans, what would you expect humans to be except humans? Inhumans, can abound among Yakshas and Rakshas but even they are said to be human tribes carrying totemic names. Better stop trying to unravel the human issue, yet concentrate on the sameness of humans. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Sunday Observer (Sri Lanka).

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Immunisation for children in relief centres

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

July 7, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 95 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, July 7 -- The Health Ministry will launch an immunisation program for children below five years at Relief Centres in Vavuniya.

Under this scheme, children below the age of one, will be vaccinated against measles and **female** children above the age of one will be given Rubella vaccination. "These children while under the **LTTE** control were denied of any such facilities," Ministry sources said. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: July 7, 2009

INDIA/USA: OPEN LETTER TO BARAK OBAMA AHEAD OF HIS VISIT TO INDIA

States News Service

November 18, 2009 Wednesday

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Byline: States News Service

Dateline: NEW YORK, NY

Body

The following information was released by Amnesty International USA:

Dear Mr. President:

On behalf of Amnesty International USA, I urge you to candidly address human rights concerns in India during your upcoming meeting with the Prime Minister of India Manmohan Singh and to press him to make substantive improvements. Prime Minister Singh will be the first leader to receive a state visit at the White House after you became the President. While you are honoring him with this state visit, Amnesty International urges you not to forget the plight of women, men and children who are facing numerous human rights abuses in India and to make public statements emphasizing that human rights are central to US-India relations.

Your meeting with Prime Minister Singh in the White House represents an opportunity for you to directly communicate your concerns about human rights in India. While you discuss economic cooperation and civilian nuclear partnership with the Indian Prime Minister, it is vital that you also raise human rights concerns affecting millions of Indian citizens. Amnesty International strongly urges you to include human rights concerns in India in your joint communique with the Indian Prime minister Manmohan Singh and to address human rights concerns during your joint press conference with Prime Minister Singh.

Even though India is the world's largest democracy, serious and disturbing human rights abuses are ongoing, including rape, extrajudicial executions, deaths in police and military custody, torture, cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests, and dowry deaths. The Government of India not only fails to prevent these abuses, but also shelters members of security forces from facing justice. People living in several of the northeastern states of India and in Kashmir, religious minorities, those belonging to the lowest social order called "Dalits", and indigenous communities called "adivasis" face the brunt of these abuses. Other socially and economically marginalized groups including women face discrimination at the hands of the police and criminal justice system. Although laws were passed to address some of these human rights abuses, serious concerns remain about the implementation of such laws.

Some of the specific contexts in which mass abuses were or continue to be committed include:

Mass killings of Sikhs: Over three thousand Sikhs were massacred when the governing Congress Party incited mob violence targeting Sikh civilians in reaction to the 1984 assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards. Scores of women were gang raped and some were burnt alive. After two decades, a judicial

INDIA / USA : OPEN LETTER TO BARAK OBAMA AHEAD OF HIS VISIT TO INDIA

commission concluded that members of the governing Congress Party were involved. Twenty five years have passed since the massacre, but only a few have been brought to justice for this mass killing.

Mass killings of Muslims: In 2002, over 2,000 Muslims were massacred in Gujarat as a reaction to a train fire that killed 59 Hindus. This train fire was blamed on Muslims. Hindu mobs allegedly incited by state Bharatiya Janata Party members went on a killing spree targeting Muslims. Several hundred Muslim women and girls were gang raped and some were burnt alive. Pregnant women and children were also targeted. After nine years, very few individuals have been brought to justice.

Bhopal tragedy: Several thousand people have died and many more continue to die from a 1984 gas leak at Union Carbide's pesticide plant in Bhopal in 1984. Twenty five years have passed since the leak occurred, but the plant site has not been cleaned up and toxic wastes continue to pollute the environment and ground water. Tens of thousands continue to live with debilitating illnesses. Despite numerous efforts, survivors continue to be denied adequate compensation, medical help, rehabilitation, and justice.

Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958: The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 has remained in effect in "disturbed areas," including Kashmir and large parts of the northeastern states of India for over forty years. This act is a major contributor to mass human rights abuses in these areas of India. This law protects Indian security forces from prosecution by requiring permission to prosecute from India's Central Government--permission which is rarely given. As a result, security forces often take the law into their own hands and commit mass human rights abuses against the civilians. This law has facilitated grave human rights abuses, including "disappearances," rapes, extrajudicial executions, and deaths resulting from torture.

Northeastern States: One of the areas "hidden" from international attention is the region of northeast India. Numerous abuses are taking place in this area, largely facilitated by the above-mentioned Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958. Security forces kill, rape, "disappear" and commit other gross human rights abuses with virtual impunity.

Kashmir: The Indian side of Kashmir is another area where Indian Security forces commit mass human rights abuses with impunity. Once again, the abuses are facilitated by the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958 and other similar laws. The civilian population of Kashmir has paid a high price for the conflict. Thousands have disappeared over the years.

Abuses against "Dalits": India's caste system involves a social hierarchy in which individuals are considered to be born into a particular caste in which they remain throughout their lives. Outside these caste categories are the "untouchables", now commonly known as "Dalits", whose occupations -- sweepers, tanners, sanitation workers, etc -- are viewed as "polluting" the community. Nearly 200 million people in India belong to this category. This system has been called India's "hidden apartheid." Abuses against "dalits" are numerous and take many different forms, including: parading of naked Dalit women through the streets, socioeconomic discrimination, killings, arson-burning of Dalit communities, gang rape, bonded labor, denial of land rights, and many more. The police and the criminal justice system also discriminate against Dalits. Though important strides have been made, much remains to be done.

Abuses against "Adivasis": The indigenous communities called adivasis face immense pressure from dam and mining development projects and settlements. Adivasis face socioeconomic discrimination as well as discrimination by the police and the criminal justice system.

Mr. President, Amnesty International urges you to secure a meaningful commitment from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to improve India's human rights situation. It is essential that human rights be treated as an important issue like trade and civilian nuclear partnership.

At a minimum, we urge you to press Prime Minister Singh to take the following steps:

INDIA / USA : OPEN LETTER TO BARAK OBAMA AHEAD OF HIS VISIT TO INDIA

Chhattisgarh: Ensure protection of civilians in ongoing and proposed military actions against Maoists-Naxalites in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal and other states. Stop harassing and arresting human rights defenders. Maoists must also end their violence against civilians.

Kashmir/Manipur: End impunity and make armed forces personnel accountable for human rights violations. In particular repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers Act in Manipur and other parts of the North Eastern States and Kashmir where imposed. Ensure that any replacement act is in line with international human rights standards.

Justice: Bring to justice those involved in the mass killings of Sikhs and Muslims.

Bhopal: Ensure establishment of the promised empowered Commission on Bhopal for the rehabilitation of Bhopal Gas victims, with adequate resources and capacity. In conjunction with the companies involved (including US based Dow Chemical), the Government of India should ensure effective measures to address the long-term impacts of the Bhopal gas leak, including proper clean-up and remediation of the factory site, medical care, regular supply of adequate safe water for the affected communities, and economic rehabilitation.

And with regard to India's foreign policy:

Mr. President, we also urge you to discuss India's International role and to urge India to use its close relationships with Burma and Sri Lanka to:

Burma: Urge Prime Minister Singh to engage with the Burmese authorities to end serious and systematic human rights violations and to release over 2,100 political prisoners including Aung San Suu Kyi.

Sri Lanka: Urge Prime Minister Singh to follow up on the promise made by the Sri Lanka Government to India that it would release the IDP's within six months. Six months have passed, but still there are tens of thousands of civilians detained in military run internment camps. Secure access to an estimated 12,000 people (including children) suspected of links to the LTTE who have been detained. They have been denied access to ICRC and legal counsel.

Mr. President, we urge you not to miss this opportunity to speak for those whose rights have been violated in India. They need your help.

Sincerely,

Larry Cox

Executive Director

Load-Date: November 18, 2009

Serendipity in Sri Lanka

The Irish Times

October 17, 2009 Saturday

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Section: TRAVEL; Pg. 15

Length: 1898 words

Body

This ancient land still feels magical and undiscovered and is full of unexpected encounters, writes **BARBARA LOFTUS**

ON MY BACKPACKING adventures, I'd always enquire among the well-travelled people I'd meet: What's the most beautiful country you've visited? and so often, the answer would be Sri Lanka. But every time I was close to booking, there was trouble involving the *Tamil Tigers*. Earlier this year, I finally succumbed and booked the flights, and sure enough, the conflict intensified. But I went anyway, a little nervously, and I'm glad I did.

Since then, the Sri Lankan government has declared victory over the rebels after decades of bloodshed. The hope now is that the ending of the 26-year civil war will mean lasting peace and signal a fresh start for tourism in what is potentially one of the most attractive holiday destinations in Asia.

While the Department of Foreign Affairs and British Foreign Office continues to advise against all but essential travel to the north and east of Sri Lanka (the centre of the troubles) and common-sense caution when travelling elsewhere, for good measure I checked in with an old BBC colleague based in Colombo, who confirmed that sticking to the south, west and centre of the island as we did would ensure safety for travellers. In any case, it is always worth checking in with the Department of Foreign Affairs prior to travelling.

While the Sri Lankans badly need and deserve a lift right now, we could all do with a little serendipity in our lives these days. And if you make your way to this magical island of Serendib, you will find it in abundance. Steeped in the tea-warm Indian Ocean off the southeast coast of India, Sri Lanka really lives up to its name, which means beautiful island in local Sinhalese. Although best known as Ceylon, it was originally known by fable as the Kingdom of Serendip. And this remains the essence of modern-day Sri Lanka. It still feels magical and undiscovered, full of unexpected encounters, places and experiences.

Since the heady days of backpacking, I have to admit I've become very demanding. I want it all from my holidays. And as holiday time becomes ever more precious, I don't want to just lie on the beach. I want tasty food, culture to bewitch and beguile, mesmerising natural beauty, accommodation with character and style, and, for even more indulgent moments, shopping and spa opportunities galore. And Sri Lanka has it all, except tourists so go now.

Bone-shaking roads and nightmare traffic are on the list of authentic Sri Lankan experiences. Unfortunately, exploring this beautiful country is still best done by car and driver. My advice would be not to attempt too much, as too many bumpy rides could ruin your holiday. But have no doubt, it's worth slogging it out to explore the country's colonial and cultural heritage.

Serendipity in Sri Lanka

This ancient land is blessed with a slew of sites of amazing historical and archaeological significance. A mix of Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, Christian and indigenous cultures have left their mark, and seven of these have made it on to Unesco's list of World Heritage Sites: the sacred city of Anuradhapura, the ancient capital Polonnaruwa, the lion rock citadel Sigiriya, the caves of Dambulla, the Tooth Temple in Kandy, the Dutch colonial fort in Galle and the natural rainforest in Sinharaja.

You could spend weeks savouring these sites, but our time limits dictated we be selective, so we were whisked away from the teeming furnace that is the capital city, Colombo, and wound our way up towards Kandy in the centre of the country. This is exactly as I had envisaged colonial Ceylon as a child. Hill country, as its known, is a cool lush oasis of emerald-layered tea plantations, with fresh country air circulating pretty English villas and gardens.

The British built themselves a hill resort here, with one of the finest golf courses in Asia – Victoria Golf Club is apparently unmissable – plus excellent trout fishing and a horse-racing track. If you're gasping, stop by the Glenloch tea factory for a history and tasting of Ceylon Tea, but if you've come for world heritage, the Tooth Temple will be your first stop. A sacred destination, it's believed to house the tooth of the Lord Buddha himself. The tooth relic is removed from its shrine only once a year, during the Esala Perahera, a 10-day torchlight parade of dancers and drummers, dignitaries and decorated elephants. It may be the largest Buddhist celebration in the world.

Next up, the Cultural Triangle lies in a convenient cluster close to Kandy. The cliff-top citadel of Sigiriya is a hell of a hike, but worth it for the paintings of pneumatic women that adorn the stone, alongside poems inscribed 2,500 years ago.

Polonnaruwa is a rambling complex of ruins, but go early to marvel at the huge standing and reclining Buddhas, and mind the thieving monkeys. Anuradhapura, centred around the sacred Bodhi tree, is bursting with the remains of a once huge, ancient city, which was the seat of Sinhalese power. If your stamina is flagging, get to the cool courtyard of Kandy House for refreshments.

We eventually made it to the fortress city of Galle, on the south coast, where we spent most of our trip. The Portuguese may have come for the spices and gemstones, but the Dutch can take credit for the remarkably preserved fort, perched boldly on a headland at the edge of the city. This World Heritage Site is built entirely within walls and ramparts, and houses a microclimate of rare buildings, tumbledown colonial villas and special people.

Wandering the narrow streets is to enter a time warp – goats queuing in the post office, the clickety-clack of lawyers on their typewriters outside the courthouse, the lighthouse keeper busy, old ladies making lace on the doorsteps. I loved it, and I loved the stunning gemstones winking at me from shop windows even more. Everyone has something to sell, but it never feels aggressive. Past the mosque and Dutch-built churches, we repaired for tea and scones in true colonial style at the Amangalla Hotel's veranda, overlooking the sea. Later, our tuk-tuk passes the cricket ground just outside the fort, hinting at Sri Lanka's true passion, probably the most cherished legacy of its colonial past.

While there's no denying the still visible devastation of the tsunami, which visited this area, the people have shown extraordinary resilience and courage in rebuilding their city and their lives. We met many wonderful locals who regaled us with stories of Irish kindness and support. Boats and buildings bear the names of Irish people and businesses that donated time and money. We met a Cork family who have been coming to Sri Lanka for many years. They narrowly escaped tragedy that fateful day in 2004, but continue to spend time in the country they love, fundraising and supporting the locality as much as possible.

Geoffrey Dobbs is one of many expats making a life and a difference here. He runs a number of luxurious boutique hotels, and set up adoptsrilanka.com after the tsunami. He's also done a stellar job enticing lovers of literature to the Galle Literary Festival. We missed it in early February, but Edna O'Brien, Thomas Keneally and Germaine Greer were part of the unique event.

This area has some of the most gorgeous and intimate accommodation, from beachside architectural icons to boutique hotels and luxury villas, that you will find anywhere. I can still hear the waves crashing onto the rocks outside my window at the Lighthouse Hotel and still feel the benefits of the Ayurvedic spa.

Serendipity in Sri Lanka

We felt entirely safe during our travels throughout the country, and it certainly left us wanting more. Travel experts are optimistic for the future of Sri Lanka as a destination in the long term, for it is truly magical. Better still, it's a good-value option, from its low cost of living to eating out and affordable accommodation.

Serendipitous indeed.

Where to stay

The Galle Face Hotel.

Galle Road, Colombo 3, Galle. 00-94-112-541010, gallefacehotel.com. A colonial seafront landmark with a newly renovated Regency wing worth staying in.

Kandy House. Ratwatte Walauwa, Amunugama, Gunnepana, 00-94-814-921394. An eight-room manor house, lovingly furnished with antiques. Enjoy the relaxing courtyard curry evenings.

The Lighthouse Hotel Spa. Dadella, Galle. 00-94-912-223744, jetwinghotels.com. The most renowned architect in Sri Lanka, Geoffrey Bawa, built this remarkable hotel on a stunning location between rocks and palm-fringed beach. Perfectly proportioned rooms, a sea-view spa, terrace drinks and food, and unforgettable sunsets. This hotel is best for a relaxing break for honeymooners and families alike.

Galle Fort Hotel. 28 Church Street, Galle Fort, 00-94-912-232870, galleforthotel.com. This friendly fort mansion has suites around its colonnaded courtyard. Buzzy atmosphere and good food.

The Sun House and The Dutch House. 18 Upper Dickson Street, Galle, 00-94-914-380275, thesunhouse.com. Two beautiful colonial homes on a hill outside Galle offering romantic accommodation and cosy furnishings. Check out the website for more boutique and beachside villa accommodation across Sri Lanka from the same owners.

Where to eat

The Gallery Cafe. 2 Alfred House Road, Colombo 3, 00-94-112-582162, paradiseroadsl.com. Not to be missed for excellent food in a stylish courtyard setting. A boutique and gallery will keep you busy between courses.

Aluwihare Kitchen and Heritage Centre. 833 Dambulla Road, Matale, 00-94-662-222404. On the way to the Kandy/Cultural Triangle area, this centre has two good restaurants and folk art for sale.

Helga's Folly. 32 Frederick de Silva Mawatha, Kandy. 00-94-812-234571, helgasfolly.com. An eccentric but charming place to spend an evening.

Amangalla Hotel. 10 Church Street, Galle Fort, 00-94-912-233388. Don't miss the tea and scones on the veranda of the Amangalla Hotel, inside the fort.

Where to go

Kandy/Cultural Triangle. Two days are needed to see it all, and one ticket gets you into three of the island's most spectacular sites. Ask your driver or guide to organise your trip.

Sri Lanka has rainforest (Sinharajah in particular) containing more species than anywhere else on the planet, bar the Amazon.

En route to Kandy, visit Pinnawela Elephant Orphanage (00-94-356-5804). Best to visit at feeding or bathing time, 9.15am and 4.15pm.

Where to shop

Serendipity in Sri Lanka

For silks, saris and sapphires, don't miss Laksana's gems (30 Hospital Street, Galle Fort, 00-94-777-900170). For homeware try Barefoot (Church Street, Colombo 3, 00-94-112-580114). For beachwear and beaded bags go to Mimi Mango (Leyn Baan Street, Galle Fort, 00-94-777-513473).

Getting around

Sri Lanka in Style (00-94-112-396666, srilankainstyle.com) is a bespoke travel service that will tailor a tour and accommodation to fit your needs, budget and time frame. See also Experience Sri Lanka (00-44-207-924 7133, experiencesrilanka.com). Both can arrange a driver to pick you up from the airport and stay with you for a day or a week, advising on the best sights and offering good tips on where to eat and where to stay. Tuk-tuks are fine for short jaunts – don't forget to haggle.

i-escape.com is an excellent site for the independent traveller, with great boutique hotels options.

Go There

Sri Lankan Airlines (srilankan.aero) fly directly from London Heathrow to Colombo. Sunway (sunway.ie) and Twohigs (twohigs.ie) both offer packages to Sri Lanka.

Load-Date: October 17, 2009

VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 'BIAS'

States News Service

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Body

The following information was released by Human Rights Watch:

Several recent media reports have suggested that Human Rights Watch has compromised its political neutrality and showed an anti-Israel bias by meeting with potential donors at receptions in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere in the Middle East. These reports are based on misleading assumptions and incorrect information which we address here.

Human Rights Watch visited Saudi Arabia in May 2009 and attended two private receptions held to discuss our work in the Middle East and beyond. Among the false allegations about the trip made on blogs and in the editorial pages of the Wall Street Journal, the National Post and the Jerusalem Post were that Human Rights Watch tried to raise money "to counter the Israeli lobby," that Human Rights Watch failed to criticize Saudi Arabia's rights record, that Human Rights Watch does not recognize Israel's right to self-defense, and that Human Rights Watch is somehow linked to terrorism.

The Saudi Receptions

Human Rights Watch visited Saudi Arabia in May with the aim of starting to build a human rights-supporting constituency within Saudi Arabia, as part of our larger effort to create a diverse global funding base beyond our traditional donors in Europe and North America. During this trip (en route to which our researcher on Saudi Arabia was detained at the airport for six hours), we attended two private receptions in Saudi Arabia, in Riyadh and Jeddah, as well as receptions in Beirut and Amman. We held a similar reception in Tel Aviv in April.

These receptions were in private homes, hosted by people interested in Human Rights Watch who invited other guests to learn more about us. We discussed the work of the organization globally and in the region. Among the investigations and reports discussed were ones on human rights abuses by Israel and Hamas, including during the Gaza conflict, which had recently been a focus of Human Rights Watch, as well as Lebanon, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia.

The roughly 50 guests at the reception in Riyadh included three with governmental affiliations: the spokesperson for the Ministry of Interior; the deputy head of the Human Rights Commission, a governmental organization; and a member of the Shura Council, a government-appointed consultative body. None was solicited for funds, nor would Human Rights Watch ever accept funds from such officials, in any country. However, as in all countries, government officials are important interlocutors for our advocacy on Saudi human rights policy. We have had extensive conversations with Saudi officials, including at the most senior levels, about their country's human rights

VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 'BIAS'

record, and welcome those conversations whenever we can have them. Our host extended an invitation to the Interior Ministry spokesperson both to signal that Human Rights Watch is a reputable organization operating openly in Saudi Arabia and to offer our staff the opportunity to present concerns about Saudi policy. The previous night, the spokesperson had helped secure the release of our researcher from the airport. Human Rights Watch has previously met with senior Interior Ministry officials to discuss Saudi rights abuses.

This trip has been misused by critics to suggest impropriety by Human Rights Watch, as well as a broader "anti-Israel" bias. False allegations include the following:

"Fundraising to counter the Israel lobby"

Human Rights Watch did not try to raise money "to counter the Israeli lobby." In discussing our work on Gaza, we noted criticism that Human Rights Watch is biased against Israel and juxtaposed that with claims often heard in the Middle East that we are "soft" on Israel because of our US donor base. We never tried to raise funds to counter such attacks. We did ask for funds to support Human Rights Watch's work both in the region and worldwide.

"Failure to Criticize Saudi Abuses"

A blog posting republished in the online Wall Street Journal claimed that Human Rights Watch had "no time to criticize Saudi Arabia's abysmal human rights record" during the trip. That is false. Our audience had come to the events in Riyadh and Jeddah precisely to hear about what lay ahead in improving their country's human rights record, among broader regional concerns. We discussed our work on Saudi Arabia, which exhaustively documents the country's appalling human rights record, and includes coverage of women's rights, severe problems with the criminal justice system, the juvenile death penalty, domestic workers, and discrimination against religious minorities. No other human rights group has produced a more comprehensive, detailed, and thorough body of work on Saudi human rights issues in recent years than has Human Rights Watch.

"Accepting Saudi Government Funding"

The head of the Israeli group NGO Monitor wrote in the National Post that "HRW has become a subsidiary of Saudi Arabia." In fact, Human Rights Watch takes no government money of any kind and has published numerous reports highly critical of Saudi Arabia, with two more due to be released over the coming weeks.

"Failure to Recognize Israel's Right to Self-Defense"

In a Wall Street Journal op-ed accusing Human Rights Watch of anti-Israel bias, the author says Human Rights Watch refuses "to distinguish between aggression and self-defense" and does not recognize "that Hamas's refusal to stop its attacks makes it culpable for both Israeli and Palestinian casualties."

Human Rights Watch has never criticized Israel (or any country) for defending its civilians, or disputed its right - and responsibility - to do so. Once a government or armed group engages in armed conflict, the sole question we ask is whether its military operations are conducted in accordance with its obligations under international humanitarian law. Human Rights Watch maintains a position of strict neutrality on the legitimacy of resorting to military action because we find it the best way to promote our primary goal of encouraging all sides in the course of the conflict to respect international humanitarian law.

This law applies to all parties to a conflict, and is primarily designed to spare noncombatants the hazards of warfare and abuse. Neither the justice of the cause nor the trigger for the conflict affects the analysis of the legality of the military actions taken under international humanitarian law. Human Rights Watch criticizes Israeli forces (see "Precisely Wrong" and "Rain of Fire"), Hamas (see "Rockets from Gaza" and "Indiscriminate Fire") and other armed groups (see "Civilians under Assault"), when we find evidence that their actions violated international humanitarian law, regardless of their reasons for engaging in armed conflict.

On the second point, violations of international humanitarian law by one party to the conflict do not justify violations by the other party. Each side has a legal obligation to abide by the laws of war.

VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 'BIAS'

"Human Rights Watch linked to terrorism"

The head of NGO Monitor told the Jerusalem Post that: "To deny that there is a campaign, closely linked to the terrorist campaign, to demonize and delegitimize Israel, is to ignore fact, and HRW is central to this." Human Rights Watch has extensively documented and condemned terrorism in the region, including in Israel and Iraq, and for four years has pursued an initiative to promote condemnation by key regional actors of attacks against civilians by armed groups as well as states. We firmly believe that civilians anywhere warrant protection. We have written reports about the targeting of civilians by armed groups in Afghanistan, Colombia, Israel, and the Philippines, among others.

Building Networks for Human Rights

Our visit to Saudi Arabia was organized to help build a human rights-supporting constituency there, and as part of a larger campaign to diversify our funding base beyond our traditional donors. In 2009, we opened a development office in Tokyo to go beyond our fundraising presence in North America and Western Europe. On July 10, Human Rights Watch made public plans to set up a development office in Beirut to seek support for our global work from potential donors in the Middle East.

Over the past few years, Human Rights Watch has held several similar receptions in Israel. These were private events, hosted by supporters of Human Rights Watch who invited friends and colleagues to hear presentations about our work. We hold many such events across the United States and Western Europe, and we hope to hold many more in countries as diverse as Australia, Brazil, India, Kenya, and South Africa.

There is a significant community of Saudis and others in the Middle East who believe in human rights and would like to help enhance respect for rights in their own countries and their region. The building of such a constituency is in the interest of all people of the Middle East.

Some critics claim that Human Rights Watch's Saudi visit has somehow compromised the organization's political neutrality by making it dependent on funds from people who live in a repressive society. Of our \$44US million annual budget, which is raised entirely from private individuals and foundations, almost 75 percent comes from North America and about 25 percent from Western Europe, with less than 1 percent from all other regions of the world combined. As an organization with a global mandate, we have appropriately begun to explore funding from Australia, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. To suggest that by doing so we undermine our independence is baseless. We never allow our funding base to affect the independence of our work.

Our Donors

The NGO Monitor head further suggested that: "HRW's embrace of the Saudis makes sense, because it can compensate for the group's loss of support from liberal Jews." There is no basis for the claim that Human Rights Watch has lost donors as a result of our work on Israel. Human Rights Watch does not profile our supporters based on religion or ethnic background, but many tell us they have deep ties to Israel, and they support our work because they believe that respect for human rights should be universal. Many also recognize that when Israel disregards human rights it undermines rather than enhances the country's security.

Human Rights Watch Methodology

When Human Rights Watch reports on abuses, including in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, we conduct extensive field investigations and document facts before reaching conclusions about violations of international human rights or humanitarian law. We seek to apply our rigorous methodology in an even-handed way to serious human rights abuses wherever they occur. A key source of our credibility in raising concerns with governments is that we are not singling them out for criticism, but rather looking at similar issues in more than 80 countries. Nevertheless, governments and their supporters frequently criticize Human Rights Watch and the messages we deliver. We have been accused of bias against numerous governments and armed groups, including China, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Israel, Hezbollah, Morocco, Palestinian groups, Russia, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, the **Tamil Tigers**, Vietnam, Venezuela, and Zimbabwe.

VISIT TO SAUDI ARABIA AND FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH 'BIAS'

We try to avoid making errors through painstaking, on-the-ground research, and careful vetting. When we make a mistake, we issue a correction.

NGO Monitor, by contrast, conducts no field investigations and condemns anyone who criticizes Israel. It appears never to have found any criticism of Israel to be valid, nor conceded that Israel has committed a human rights violation.

Supporting the Human Rights Ideal

Human Rights Watch rejects the idea that nationality, ethnicity, or religion determine people's political or ideological beliefs, and that the backgrounds of our supporters influence our coverage.

By the same token, no assumption should ever be made that a private citizen's support for human rights reflects his or her government's policy. Human Rights Watch is eager and delighted to find supporters of the human rights ideal - financial or otherwise - in any and all countries of the world. To draw such communities into an active, international network is an important part of our mission and does not impair our political neutrality. It threatens no one but the human rights violators we seek to expose.

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End of Document

Resettling and improving health of IDPs

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

October 1, 2009 Thursday

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Body

Sri Lanka, Oct. 1 -- Statement by Disaster Management and Human Rights MP, at the 60th Session of the Executive Committee of the UNHCR in Geneva, Switzerland on Monday. The first part appeared yesterday

While de-mining in three divisions in Batticaloa and one division in Trincomalee has been completed, clearance activities are ongoing in another two divisions each in Anuradhapura, Batticaloa and Trincomalee Districts. As at the end of August, a total of 445,370,401 square meters have been cleared of mines and UXOs. US\$ 64 million has been allocated for the Sri Lankan Mine Action Program through the respective de-mining . Of the area cleared, 335,927,614 square meters have been cleared by the Army at the cost of only \$10US million. The rest of the area has been cleared by other de-mining .

Apart from de-mining, resettlement can only be sustainable if livelihoods and other early recovery measures are put in place. The smooth transition from early recovery to medium and longer-term economic development is also being planned for.

This long-term development strategy is being developed and implemented under a program known as the "Northern Spring" which will usher in a period of renewal for the people of the North.

Let me briefly outline the conditions in the welfare centres and relief villages - especially in light of the recent measures we have taken to improve services and to minimize the potential hazard of inundation due to the impending rainy season. The Disaster Management Centre, which functions under the purview of the Ministry, has led coordination efforts to construct and de-silt stormwater and other surface drains.

Many international and national stakeholders have been coopted into this effort. As at September 21, the drainage work is nearing completion in most of the zones. Evaluation of the machinery and manpower needed for maintenance of the drainage system during the next three months and the conduct of awareness raising among IDPs on drainage and safety is our next priority. In Zone 00 - De-silting of side drains and surface drains within blocks are being completed. Regional authorities are being tasked with maintenance of drainage systems. Zone 01 shows a completion rate of 95 percent with de-silting of side drains and drainage maintenance to be done by regional authorities. Drainage in Zone 02 is 100 percent completed and Zones 03, 04 and 05 show progress of 80 percent, 75 percent and 80 percent, respectively. The drainage plan is finalized in respect of Zone 06A and 06B and work has just started. Work has just commenced in Zone 07 and 08 and also in Weerapuram.

The areas known as Dharmapuram and Sumathipuram shows approximately 50 percent work done. Plans are being discussed to recruit IDPs to assist in the construction of surface drains. UNDP and UNOCHA in particular have supported our efforts in this regard.

Resettling and improving health of IDPs

Health is another key focus area. This priority sector has been serviced by a special unit - the Disaster Preparedness and Response Division (DPRD) of the Health Ministry since March 2009.

A total of 81 doctors are working in camps in Vavuniya and 18 doctors are working in the Cheddikulam hospital close to the main relief village site known as Menik Farm. The Healthcare and Nutrition Ministry has ensured that, permanent appointments have been made for around 100 doctors to serve in camps and 28 doctors to serve at the Cheddikulam hospital.

A health camp which included psychosocial services was facilitated by the Air Force in Zones 02 and 03. A new psychosocial Centre has been opened in Zone 04. Mobile clinic facilities are operational in the newly opened Zone 06. Seven health facilities in Kilinochchi, three in Mannar and two in Vavuniya are to be completed by mid-October 2009. 10 days ago, the Healthcare and Nutrition Ministry in partnership with UNFPA and the Family Planning Association of Sri Lanka opened several family health clinics in Menik Farm that will provide antenatal and postnatal exams, voluntary family planning, emergency deliveries by skilled birth attendants and psychosocial counselling, among other services.

The family health clinics will play a critical role in safeguarding the health of pregnant women in the camps. The Ministry reports that mortality rates have been gradually brought down.

Mortality rates at the welfare villages are estimated at an average of two to three percent which is compatible with mortality rates in any other part of the country and infectious diseases including diarrhoea, dysentery, chickenpox, measles, typhoid and hepatitis B which had increased during the rains experienced some weeks after the mass IDP influx have been brought under control with the prompt healthcare, water and sanitation facilities provided by the Ministry in cooperation with national and international partners.

Education is another priority for Sri Lankans, whether they are displaced or not. In recognition of the importance placed on education, the Examinations Department established 10 special examination centres in Vavuniya for 1,236 displaced candidates to enable them to sit the G.C.E Advanced Level examination which enables them to qualify for entry to University. It is significant that 166 ex-child combatants also sat for the examination held last month.

Temporary learning spaces have been demarcated in the IDP sites and educational services are being provided with the complementary assistance of UNICEF and others.

UNHCR has been providing excellent support to the Government as head of the shelter and protection clusters and as a partner of key Government focal points including my Ministry. We have sought to establish a closer dialogue on protection issues and the provision of information to IDPs on the services available to them.

My Ministry has worked with UNHCR to develop a structured program of Confidence Building and Stabilization Measures (CBSM). The important role CBSM has played in the return process in the East has been widely acknowledged through identifying ways and means to address concerns of returning communities and contributing to the sustainability of return.

I wish to emphasize the significant roles the Civil Military Liaison arrangements and the District Level Steering Committees have played in providing a forum for returnees to raise their concerns with local authorities and identify solutions.

It is our expectation that CBSM will play a similarly important role in the resettlement process in the North. Compensation and restitution are also key issues in the context of IDPs and also forms a component of CBSM.

UNHCR has also helped the Government to focus attention on a longstanding issue of protracted IDPs. Professor Kalin gave of his expertise in successfully conducting a National Consultation on protracted cases of displacement last year.

Resettling and improving health of IDPs

These IDPs, including Muslims who were expelled from the Northern Province by the LTTE 20 years ago, pose a challenge due to the complexity of their situation having been in a situation of displacement, in some cases for 15 to 20 years.

We will take a fresh look at these persons and seek to bring them within the Government's program of resettlement, reconciliation, reconstruction and reintegration.

All our efforts will be put at risk, if we do not look to a process of national healing and reconciliation and political accommodation of all Sri Lankans within a unified democratic framework. A multi-party Committee on Development and Reconciliation has been convened by President Rajapaksa to address these issues.

The forum reflects the Government's commitment to a pluralistic and inclusive approach in addressing post-conflict challenges.

With the gradual restoration of democracy and the resuscitation of institutions of representative democracy as we have seen in the East and now in the North, our deliberations will set in motion a home-grown process aimed at ensuring long-term stability.

Internal conflict, such as that experienced by Sri Lanka for nearly three decades, has an inevitable corrosive effect on the institutions and mechanisms that ensure peace, order and good governance.

We have to rebuild our institutional foundations to foster and preserve the new multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, multi-cultural and multi-religious Sri Lanka that we wish to create. Our vision is the creation of a new Sri Lankan identity which acknowledges and cherishes the wonderful diversity that characterizes our society.

To enable this, the promotion and protection of human rights - economic, social and cultural as well as civil and political rights and the right to development - is of prime importance. While our immediate focus is the care and protection of those immediately affected by the conflict - IDPs, the war wounded and the families of casualties, we are working towards the achievement of this long-term goal of creating a new nation in which all persons can live free, equal and with realistic hope for a better tomorrow. I am certain that all our friends and partners will join us and support us in this endeavour. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: October 1, 2009

A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Taranaki Daily News (New Zealand)

September 12, 2009 Saturday

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Section: FEATURES; GENERAL; Pg. 9

Length: 2029 words

Byline: PALMER Harriet

Body

A man responsible for the safety of Taranaki residents in a disaster is better equipped to do that after seeing a real one up close. Harriet Palmer reports.

Mike Langford works in what looks like Taranaki's Pentagon. It's an eerie eight-sided building perched on Marsland Hill, just to the side of New Plymouth's city centre. Step inside and it seems no one's there. Walk down a narrow corridor and there's the back of a lone person sitting at one of maybe a dozen chairs in a cafeteria, midday TV rattling. Somewhere else there's the pronounced sound of a door closing, a person walking away. Then there are just rooms with lines of computers ready to be flicked on, radio transmitters waiting to come to life and chart upon chart of a volcanic mountain ringed in disaster red.

Langford is the region's emergency management officer. His job is to make sure Taranaki is ready for anything. There are plans for flood, tornado, volcanic eruption and war. He has meticulously plotted each response, all to be managed from a large room visible through an internal window in his office. Right now that space is absent of life, which is the way it looks 99 per cent of the time.

Poised, waiting, like Langford, for disaster.

The room may never fulfil its function; Langford, however, has. And not on the relatively small-scale emergencies that hit these shores. The 42-year-old has just returned from providing emergency relief in Sri Lanka. He flew to the Asian nation in June to help organise the chaos left in the wake of a bloody 26-year civil war.

Langford worked for four weeks with aid and development organisation Adra (Adventist Development and Relief Agency) creating a plan to distribute more than \$60,000 in New Zealand aid money. In travelling to Sri Lanka, Langford also provided a vital service to Taranaki. Each of New Zealand's 16 emergency management officers are attached to clusters of district and regional councils. Like Langford, they work full time planning and preparing for disaster. However, some of them may never put this to any real use, a situation Adra has hopes to benefit from. The organisation wants to send Kiwi disaster experts like Langford into nations needing our help. The idea is both will profit. When we really do need Langford, he'll have the experience of managing a full-blown disaster.

Langford arrived in Colombo, the capital of Sri Lanka, at midnight on June 9. It was a city of guns. On the drive from the airport, military and armed police stopped his driver what seemed like every 500m. A variety of weapons were pointed into the car while IDs were checked and vehicle searched. The armed men were hunting **Tamil Tigers**. The

A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

Tigers, or Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam, had announced they had "decided to silence" their weapons through a post by spokesman Selvarasa Pathmanathan on the pro-rebel website TamilNet a month before Langford arrived.

Pathmanathan wrote that the ethnic separatist rebels of Sri Lanka, one of the world's most feared and enduring guerrilla movements, acknowledged their war for a homeland had "reached its bitter end".

Asia's longest-running civil war, which the UN believes killed 7000 civilians in the four months leading up to the ceasefire, was over.

The clean-up began.

By the time Langford reached the country, 280,000 homeless Sri Lankans had made their way to the northern district of Vavuniya, the area of Adra's focus. There they were held as internally displaced people ("the modern name for refugee") in camps built on cricket grounds, school playgrounds and the lawns of government buildings. The Adra office in New Zealand started looking for a way to help these IDPs as they're known, who lived in "unhygienic conditions with the camps stretched to their limits".

The Sri Lankan government estimated the families of up to 15 would be living in tents designed for five for the next three-years. Langford says the international standard for refugees was rarely met and the government started locking out aid agencies for fear their movements in and out of camps would mean Tigers - rebels they meant to punish - would use any distraction to escape.

Langford says all the aid organisations were hanging around Colombo trying to get the hundreds of thousands of displaced people to at least a minimum standard of living.

"They profiled an average displaced person. They had basically been away from home for 480-odd days. they had what they arrived with, they quite often came in family groups, but not all. It depended what camp they were in, but some were getting insufficient water and some insufficient food. There were outbreaks of gastrointestinal disease - that's diarrhoea to you or me."

Adra is a multinational agency with bases in 125 countries. The New Zealand office had \$62,500 in funding to send with Langford to help their Sri Lankan counterparts. The thought was that sending a bulk of money straight to the country would just add to the work, so Langford went as part of the package.

"I just went to help them and they just gave me a few things to do," he says.

"It was basically similar things to what we would do here in an emergency, what we call planning and intelligence . . . making plans about how you deal with the consequence of war."

When he left, Adra was delivering 90,000 litres of water a day to two camps, Sumathipuram and Tharmapuram. Langford says it wasn't enough for everybody.

With more money, a work visa allowing him to stay for more than four weeks (these are unobtainable) and access to the people, he could have done a lot more.

"While it's a scratch on the surface, you have to keep reminding yourself you can't do everything for everybody. You're just there to make some kind of difference."

The position of aid agencies and non-governmental organisations in Sri Lanka was different to what Langford had expected. The United Nations was meant to be coordinating, making sure there wasn't overlap and the right aid was going to the right places, but "there seemed to be agencies they talked to and agencies they didn't talk to".

The New Plymouth man was stumped. The most important part of his job at home is communicating with different groups, delegating tasks and ensuring there are no headless chickens.

A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

In Sri Lanka, even the agencies with access to camps often appeared rudderless. He describes one with piles of cash who decided methane-collecting toilets were an imperative.

"The latrines were fine, but what do you do with the methane? What do you do if it breaks down? There's no one to fix it and even if there was somebody with the skills to fix it, there are no tools."

Shut out of the camps, sleeping in a guarded compound and unable to venture out past nightfall, Langford spent his time driving to meetings, avoiding kidnapping and schmoozing with military commanders.

"We were trying to get into the system that was there and just do what we could with the money we had, wanting to use it for the best."

Building relationships with military personnel was crucial. It has been reported they are under government instructions to make it look as if caring for the IDPs is a national aid effort, as opposed to an international one.

The UN announced the Sri Lankan government was "facing great challenges in providing assistance to the internally displaced population". The camps were essentially off-limits to journalists, human rights investigators and political leaders.

As Langford left the country, he had networked enough for Adra to gain access to the camps and distribute what they termed "non-food item kits".

"They (IDPs) had been moved a number of times around northern Sri Lanka and the government then put them in these camps. They basically had what they could carry, so they didn't have spare clothes or anything," Langford says.

Adra provided several types of kits: household kits contained buckets, pans, sleeping mats, mosquito nets and household basics; hygiene kits had toothbrushes, soap, shampoo and sanitary items for women; and personal kits provided clothing.

"We were giving people who had nothing the bare minimum so they were able to live something like a reasonable sort of living. It wasn't flash. I mean, we gave them a couple of sets of clothes so they had one set to wear and one set to wash. There wasn't an entire wardrobe of stuff".

The experience was hectic, but Langford had done his job. He says the city of Colombo made him think of India. There was wealth but there was a lot of poverty. People were eking out a subsistence living. When Langford left, his driver lost his job.

The city was also under high alert. Langford took no photos on his trip. Cameras were not looked upon kindly by the men with guns. Of the few pictures he has scavenged, some are murky, the subjects wonky, no one looks at the camera. These were taken secretly from car windows, behind the backs of military by Adra staff. Others are bright: they show smiling faces in gleaming tents; these have been taken by Sri Lankan government officials for PR purposes. The last lot are frightening: bloated bodies, screaming faces, chanting crowds holding the beloved Sri Lankan flag high; these are from gung-ho photojournalists and we've seen them plastered across the international press.

Langford says he got used to the scene "remarkably quickly". Ask him if he was scared and he looks almost confused: it didn't seem to occur to him he was entering a country fresh from war. When he talks about his experience, it's about the lack of coordination between aid organisations, the UN's inability to hold everything together, about the idea of turning information gathered at numerous meetings into something real.

He is a professional. Originally from England, he and his wife, Julie, moved to Taranaki with the idea of finding an easier lifestyle. There are no formal qualifications that lead into emergency management. Langford jokes you don't leave school with this career in mind.

A CIVIL PARTNERSHIP

He started with coordinating checks at Heathrow Airport during the foot and mouth crisis in 2001, when it was first thought the outbreak came from overseas. On arrival in New Zealand, he was working in public health for the Taranaki District Health Board when the Waitotara floods hit in 2004. He then coordinated the relief effort of the 2007 Oakura tornadoes after moving to his current role in 2006.

Langford has an emergency kit at home much larger than what's required. In New Zealand, he says, we are often of the opinion that when the mountain blows or a tornado storms in, there will be others there to help. What happens, he asks, if these people who were to help have been trapped in their homes, too? It takes around six fire officers to help one household after a disaster and there aren't that many to go around.

"Small events are good for civil defence in that it makes people think about things. The amount of interest we get after small events . . . then it dwindles off and off and off. People are motivated to do something when they experience something, but people in Taranaki live under a bloody great volcano".

Langford says with the experience he gained in Sri Lanka, he has now felt the effects of something really big. Instead of practising and practising and practising for an all- out disaster, he has been in the middle of one.

"I've learnt some stuff to apply to this job. One of the most important things civil defence does these days is coordinate everyone else. We may think we coordinate with everyone, but I know now we probably don't."

He thinks the idea of others in his role travelling to Asian and Pacific nations to offer their expertise is a good one. I'd definitely be into doing it again. Me going from New Zealand was the first time Adra sent someone overseas for real and they have realised there are advantages for sending in people. The emergency management system is well recognised overseas. It's a good model. We would use it to help and there really is no substitute for doing this for real."

CAPTION:

Mike Langford in the Marsland Hill facilities.

Picture: ROBERT CHARLES

Displaced: Many of the Sri Lankan refugees have nothing, not even a change of clothes.

Picture: REUTERS

Load-Date: September 16, 2009

Sri Lankan army massacred 20,000 civilians, UN claims; World at a glance

London Lite

May 29, 2009 Friday

Edition 1

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 147 words

Body

MORE than 20,000 Tamil civilians may have been killed by the Sri Lankan army - more than three times the official figure, United Nations documents claim. Aerial photographs, witness accounts, expert testimony and official papers have contradicted government casualty figures.

The Sri Lankan authorities claimed the use of heavy weapons was suspended and a no-fire zone established in an area where 100,000 Tamil men, women and children were sheltering from the crossfire between the army and Tamil Tiger rebels.

But aerial photographs have shown devastated refugee camps with bodies of victims clearly visible alongside makeshift graves.

A spokesman for the Sri Lankan High Commission in London said: "We reject all these allegations.

Civilians have not been killed by government shelling at all. If civilians have been killed, then that it because of the actions of the LTTE (Tigers)." ..

Graphic

Fury: Tamil protesters in India wear masks of the Tigers' dead leader

Load-Date: May 29, 2009

Party of one; Everyone from Esther Rantzen to the bloke next door thinks that they can do a better job of being an MP than the present crop. Philip Collins dons the Martin Bell white suit to discover what running as an independent really entails

The Times (London)

May 21, 2009 Thursday

Edition 1

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THE TIMES

Section: T2;FEATURES; Pg. 2,3

Length: 1881 words

Byline: Philip Collins

Body

You've had the thought many times as politicians talked nonsense on the telly: I could do that. And all of a sudden people are saying we need independent Members of Parliament. And so you think: why not? But what do you do next? First, you need to sit yourself down and answer some very tough personal questions. You remember that time, back at college, back in the day, that someone took a picture of you in women's clothing? It wasn't entirely an erotic thing but the pictures don't look great. How do you feel about yourself, dressed as Diana Dors, splashed on the front of the local paper? Not good? Forget it then.

Second, is your spouse ready? Perhaps your wife will be quite happy to see the back of you Monday to Thursday. Perhaps she won't mind being dragged around the Rotary Club Fayre on Saturday as you cut the ribbon on the tombola in return for Alderman Whisker's support on the bypass application. Perhaps your husband has always wanted to be accosted in a pub by a stranger who tells you that he wrote to you once about putting a roof on the market and why haven't you done it? Third, where are you going to live? That reckless promise, that your heart and soul will be forever here in Homegate, now haunts you. The job is in London but you can't afford a house there and, now that expenses have been slashed, you have to lug your furniture up and down the motorway every week in a white van anyway. While you are in London, your wife will be sitting on crates at home.

Fourth, are you ready to give up your evenings and your weekends? There'll be no more evening squash games or watching TV. None of that reading-the-kids-a-bedtime-story nonsense. You'll be at work, walking through the voting lobby for the Marine Services Regulation Co-ordinating Body Amendment Act. As you have no party whip to tell you what to do, you'll have to go to the trouble of understanding what it is all about. Knowledge, unfortunately, is the price of independence. Is there room in your head for all this rubbish? And are you ready for constituency surgeries? Do you have the steel required to say "I'll write to the council" a hundred times to people you ought to turn in to the police? Fifth, do you have strong views on car-parking charges at hospitals, the future now for the Tamil Tigers and special areas for dogs in parks? If not, why not? Somebody you meet will have and he will expect

Party of one Everyone from Esther Rantzen to the bloke next door thinks that they can do a better job of being an MP than the present crop. Philip Collins dons

you not only to understand his view - which is hard because he is bonkers - but to share it, which is harder, for the same reason. Do you agree that the Middle East will never settle with a two-state solution, it needs a 23-state solution? Er, not sure. No, the pre-1967 borders is not a gardening term.

Right, you've passed the five tests. You are now sure that you are ready to become an independent Member of Parliament. So what do you do next? Well, you need to define your campaign issues. We know you are independent, but independent of whom? And independent about what? Now you come to think of it, independence doesn't mean a lot does it? If you were Labour or Tory someone else would tell you the correct answer on the future of the General Teaching Council. So gather your campaign team together - that's you and your wife and I think Fred and Gladys are coming - and pick out some themes. The campaign to put a roof on the market, that's a must. It's been on the front page of the Homegate Bugle three weeks in a row. Nationally, education, I think. That has to be the biggest priority. But what about education? You're in favour of it, definitely. In fact, you think there should be more of it. And it should be better, not worse. You begin to wonder whether this will stand up to the intense scrutiny of an election campaign.

Next, we need some communications advice. It's all very well declaring an intention to stand as an MP but how do you let anyone know? Mentioning it in the pub just doesn't have the circulation. You could put it on the internet but who reads the internet round here? And, anyway, when you put it on the internet, where does it go? You could call a public meeting but how do you get across that you're not inviting people to come and see a random member of the public madly shouting in a room? So, the obvious thing is to produce a leaflet. Even the deal you cut with the local printer - I'll look after you when I'm Prime Minister - will be ruinously expensive and he will assault you with objectionable questions such as: "What do you want to put on it?" They don't help you with that bit. A picture of yourself, obviously. Alone or with the family? You want to convey the idea that you are a family man, but isn't it exploitation? Won't the newspapers use it later as justification for camping outside your son's school? Never mind, let's have the whole family.

Then you need a slogan. Local boy made good. No, that implies everyone else here is bad, which is true but you can't say that. And are you really local? Sure, you live here now. But weren't you born 15 miles away, on the other side of the county boundary? That makes you a foreigner and a liar, to boot. You have been telling people, on their own doorsteps, that you are local. But you are not local. You are foreign. So you settle for Independent Voice for Homegate.

With your election leaflet printed, out you go on to the streets with your team. Only Fred's got a bit bored with politics. He's not that sure how to reform the health service, really. So, you're not so much independent as alone.

You knock on the first door and launch into your spiel. "Hello sir, I'm standing as an independent candidate and unlike the other politicians I'm just an ordinary man ..." "Yes, I rather think you are," says the idiot (I mean voter). The next person asks if you have private health insurance, which you do. But why did he ask, you wonder? Will you lose his vote if you admit it? Shouldn't you, of all people, a proud independent, be telling the truth? So you split the difference: "Well, I do but I don't use it."

"Why don't you cancel it then?" Damn you, Jeremy Paxman. After two hours, three crazy dogs, four accusations of culpability for the Iraq War and five demands to put fluoride in the water, it starts to rain. Suddenly, you having no campaign team, no infrastructure and no funding starts to count.

You've got to grips with the issues by now. You've worked out what people are concerned about - street crime, schools, care for the kids and parents - and you've developed a good line in what needs to be done and how you might help. You realise that your first thought - that I could do this - is right. You could. But it's bloody hard work. And so you start to wonder whether it wouldn't have been better to have joined one of the two main parties after all. The whole point was meant to be that you were independent. But you can be independently minded without being an independent MP. Can't you? Not so fast, maverick loony.

Party of one Everyone from Esther Rantzen to the bloke next door thinks that they can do a better job of being an MP than the present crop. Philip Collins dons

Remember that the faction that controls the selection of the local MP does not want anyone with independent ideas. It doesn't want an independent MP, it wants a Labour MP who does what it says and spends most of his life drinking in its bar. Independence is not something you can wear on your sleeve. It has to be hidden up it.

You'll first have to find a local councillor who will help you. This will be all but impossible. They all have their candidates, all forged in blood feuds of a thousand years standing. But imagine you strike it lucky and you get insider guidance on how to secure the seat. Now listen carefully because this is what you need to know.

You need to get hold of a membership list. If you do, don't tell anyone, ever. The fact that you have a membership list will be used against you as a category of crime equivalent to murder. The rules are that local activists are allowed membership lists and you are not. Then you need to secure nominations from branches, trade unions and affiliated organisations. Each branch can nominate three people to go forward to the shortlist but one must be a woman, one must be an ethnic minority, who might also be a woman, and one can be anything, including a woman? Got that? Put it this way - if you are a white man, you qualify only in one category.

Twenty-two of the 23 candidates are white men who will all be competing for the same vote while Mrs Gurumurthy, who became a councillor by accident after walking into the wrong town hall meeting, is assured of a place at the hustings. After two months of leg-shattering street stomping, the branches vote. Four people, all blood relatives of the favoured son, turn up and he wins 4-0. The nominations are in, they are passed to the Executive Committee of the General Committee, which "has mind" to the process and pulls out a piece of paper on which it had written the names of the winners six months ago.

No, it's never going to work. You've given up independence, applied to join an asylum and they won't let you in. And they think that you are the mad one.

So, you're back on your own. Your campaign takes shape, you get your picture in the paper, an interview slot on the local radio, which you come through unscathed. You get four seconds on regional TV and an old lady in the market says she's definitely seen you before somewhere.

The day dawns and you awake with the dream that, although your campaign has been a little on the low-key side, the public will, all the same, troop in their droves in silent acclaim to applaud you at the ballot box. The Tory candidate has no chance, neither do any of the others and the Labour candidate will surely be revealed as a crazy. He is. He wins a landslide. You win a moral victory with a swing to the independent candidate of 4.7 per cent, which makes a visible but insignificant dent in the Labour majority of 18,000.

As the officer returns the Labour member to Parliament and your political career ends you wish him well and thank your stars that you didn't win.

How to become an MP...

... in eight easy steps 1. Be at least 18 years old on the last day of nominations, but do not be a bishop, a peer, or a member of the Armed Forces. You must not be a convicted prisoner serving a sentence of more than 12 months. Being "unlawfully at large" is not an exemption.

2. Resign your membership of any disqualifying organisations or offices. There are hundreds, including: Scottish Natural Heritage, the Parole Board, the Meat and Livestock Commission, Channel 4 and Citybus Ltd.

3. Find a constituency where ten residents, registered to vote, will back your candidacy.

4. Identify your Returning Officer and request nomination papers. These must be signed by your ten backers and returned two weeks before polling day. Enclose a £500 deposit. If you fail to win 5 per cent of the vote, you will lose your deposit.

5. If you also wish to register as a new political party, send £150 and a copy of your constitution to the Electoral Commission.

Party of one Everyone from Esther Rantzen to the bloke next door thinks that they can do a better job of being an MP than the present crop. Philip Collins dons

6. Make sure all campaign literature contains your full name and address. You are permitted one free mailing to all electors per election - but may not include unrelated material, such as pizza delivery adverts, on it.

7. Do not stand in two constituencies at once.

8. Win a majority.

Tom Whipple

It's not going to " work. You've given up independence and applied to join an asylum "

Graphic

COVER AND BELOW: JON ENOCH (WHITE SUIT COURTESY OF GIEVES AND HAWKES)

Load-Date: May 21, 2009

End of Document

Help trace suicide bomber

Daily News (Sri Lanka)
August 10, 2009 Monday

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Length: 150 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, Aug. 10 -- The Defence Ministry seeks public assistance to arrest this **female LTTE** cadre who has come in the guise of a Muslim to launch a suicide bomb attack in the Colombo area.

This woman posing as Abdul Salaam Fathima Yasmin from Old Moor Street, Colombo 12. She is also in possession of an identity card bearing the number 857835641 V with date of birth as 1985.10.09.

Any information leading to her arrest can be passed onto the following telephone numbers or the Director of Terrorism Investigation Unit, Second Floor, Police Headquarters, Colombo 1. 011-2421111 - Police headquarters; 2321839 - Terrorism Investigation Unit, 2451638, 2384401, 2320141 - Crime Investigation Department, or 2243333 - Colombo Emergency Unit. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Surit Das at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: August 10, 2009

Help trace suicide bomber- 1

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

August 11, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 148 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

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Load-Date: August 11, 2009

Sri Lankan army massacred 20,000 civilians, UN claims; World at a glance

London Lite

May 29, 2009 Friday

Edition 2

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Section: NEWS; Pg. 4

Length: 147 words

Body

MORE than 20,000 Tamil civilians may have been killed by the Sri Lankan army - more than three times the official figure, United Nations documents claim. Aerial photographs, witness accounts, expert testimony and official papers have contradicted government casualty figures.

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But aerial photographs have shown devastated refugee camps with bodies of victims clearly visible alongside makeshift graves.

A spokesman for the Sri Lankan High Commission in London said: "We reject all these allegations.

Civilians have not been killed by government shelling at all. If civilians have been killed, then that it because of the actions of the LTTE (Tigers)." ...

Graphic

Fury: Tamil protesters in India wear masks of the Tigers' dead leader

Load-Date: May 29, 2009

Suspected LTTEers cadres caught posing as IDPs

Daily Mirror (Sri Lanka)

November 27, 2009 Friday

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Length: 162 words

Dateline: Sri Lanka

Body

Sri Lanka, Nov. 27 -- A Senior Police Officer said that around 350 **LTTE** cadres, who had taken refuge among ordinary IDPs in camps, have been nabbed by the Police, among which were around fifty (50) **female** cadres. He said that among those apprehended were those who had been trained in handling explosives, guerilla warfare and in handling heavy weapons.

For ordinary citizens who were once in IDP Camps however, the restrictions have been lifted since 1st December and they are now free to move around.

With that, teams of Police and Military Intelligence Units have been deployed as a special programme to secure the city has been implemented.

In order to detain terror suspects, a special camp has been set up at Pampemadu in Vavuniya to accommodate the increased numbers, the security sources said. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Mirror Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: November 27, 2009

Sri Lanka Government recruiting Tamil police in Jaffna

Asian News International (ANI)

September 29, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 178 words

Byline: ANI

Body

Colombo, Sep.29 (ANI): Almost four months after eliminating the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam (**LTTE**), the Government of Sri Lanka has commenced recruiting Tamil police officers from the northern city of Jaffna.

The BBC quoted Defence Ministry officials as saying that this is the first time in 30 years that a recruitment of Tamil police personnel is taking place.

Over 6,500 people applied for 500 police constable jobs in Jaffna, a statement on the defence ministry website said.

Police said the advertisement for male and **female** police constables and drivers placed a few days ago had received an enthusiastic response.

A police spokesman said that applicants were being vetted more strictly than recruits elsewhere in the island.

Although Jaffna has been under army control since 1995, the city bordered the rebel-held areas of Sri Lanka. Between 1992 and 1995 it was under rebel control.

Police spokesman Nimal Mediwake said: Young male and **female** candidates were being thoroughly vetted. We have to go through their details about their family background." (ANI)

Load-Date: September 29, 2009

Child soldiers to be rehabilitated

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

May 23, 2009 Saturday

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Length: 168 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, May 23 -- Around 800 children suspected of being child soldiers have been brought to four rehabilitation camps with Justice Ministry assistance, Child Development and **Women** Empowerment Minister Sumedha G. Jayasena said. Identified Tiger child soldiers were sent to temporary shelters in Vavuniya.

These children had been fighting after being forcibly conscripted by the **LTTE**, Minister Jayasena said. She said several pre-schools in Manik farm have already started functioning for children under the age of five with pre-school teachers chosen from the displaced people who had experience with children. IDP camps in Kadiragamarpura will also be equipped with pre-schools in the coming months. The Ministry has also taken measures to sew blue uniforms for children in camps instead of white, the Minister said. The Ministry has also taken care of **women** and elderly by providing resource centres in IDP camps for recreation activities. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka.

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Load-Date: May 23, 2009

82,000 civilians flee Sri Lanka war zone: minister

Agence France Presse -- English

April 22, 2009 Wednesday 7:25 AM GMT

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Length: 189 words

Dateline: COLOMBO, April 22 2009

Body

Nearly 82,000 civilians have escaped from the shrinking patch of territory still controlled by the Tamil Tiger rebels, defence spokesman Keheliya Rambukwella said Wednesday.

He said 81,420 men, women and children were counted as they registered with security forces since fleeing the remaining rebel-held coastal jungle area Monday and Tuesday. He did not give an estimate for the number still trapped.

"Our priority is to get the civilians out," said Rambukwella.

The exodus began Monday when the military punctured Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) defences at Puttumatalan, inside the government-designated "no-fire" zone where the last rebels are holed up.

The United Nations had estimated that there were 150,000 civilians in the rebel-held territory before Monday's exodus, but the government had insisted that it was less than half.

The defence ministry gave Tiger leader Velupillai Prabhakaran and his fighters until Tuesday to surrender, but the rebels ignored the deadline and have continued to fight government forces.

Military officials said security forces exchanged fire with the rebels Tuesday and killed at least eight.

Load-Date: April 23, 2009

Programs on combating child labour

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

May 28, 2009 Thursday

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Length: 183 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, May 28 -- The Labour Relations and Manpower Ministry has drawn up an elaborate program to commemorate 'International Day against Child Labour' which falls on June 12 on a countrywide scale.

The program drawn up under the guidance of Minister Athauda Seneviratne will include 56 events to create awareness among parents on the urgency of combating child labour, said a spokesman for the ***Women's*** and Children's Unit of the Labour Department which is handling the program. Meanwhile Minister Athauda Seneviratne in a message to mark the program said engaging children who are future inheritors of the nation as domestics or in any other employment was illegal. Therefore everyone of us should work together to combat child labour considering it as a national duty. Strict punishment should be meted out to people who engage children as domestic servants. Ministry Secretary Mahinda Madihahewa said this year's program would specially focus on children of the North who had been under the jackboot of ***LTTE*** terrorists earlier. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka.

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Load-Date: May 28, 2009

Indian MPs to visit Sri Lanka Saturday

Indo-Asian News Service

October 9, 2009 Friday

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Length: 180 words

Dateline: Chennai

Body

Chennai, Oct. 9 -- Ten MPs belonging to India's ruling alliance will visit Sri Lanka for five days from Saturday to see the condition in camps where thousands of Tamils displaced by the war are housed.

Nearly 300,000 men, women and children are housed in the fortified camps set up in the island's north after the military crushed the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in May.

The delegation will be headed by DMK's T.R. Baalu, a former central minister. It will include DMK MPs Kanimozhi, daughter of Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, T.K.S. Elangovan, Helen Davidson and A.K.S. Vijayan.

Senior leader N.S.V. Chittan, Sudharasana Natchiappan, J.M. Haroon and K.S. Azhagiri will represent the Congress while Thol Thirumavalavan of the smaller VCK party will be the other members.

The delegation will also meet Sri Lankan and Tamil leaders.

--Indo Asian News Servicevj/mr

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Load-Date: October 9, 2009

U.N. official expelled from Sri Lanka

UPI

September 7, 2009 Monday 6:35 AM EST

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Length: 187 words

Dateline: COLOMBO, Sri Lanka, Sept. 7

Body

A U.N. official was told to leave Sri Lanka for his comments on the plight of children during the government's war with Tamil rebels, an official said.

The visa of James Elder, a spokesman for the U.N. children's agency, UNICEF, was canceled because of his "propaganda in support of the Tigers," an immigration official told the BBC.

Elder had been concerned about the suffering of children during the conflict that ended in May after the government claimed victory over the Tamil rebels.

Among his comments, Elder said in February that injuries to children included babies with shrapnel wounds and gun shot injuries. He had also condemned the Tiger rebels for recruiting young children, the report said.

Palitha Kohona with the Sri Lankan Foreign Affairs Ministry told the BBC Elder's statements were not based on facts.

"He was doing propaganda, in our view, in support of the **LTTE** (the rebel group)," he said.

"We strongly feel that James Elder should be allowed to continue to act as an impartial advocate on behalf of Sri Lanka's **women** and children," Sarah Crowe, the U.N. agency's region head of communications, told the BBC.

Load-Date: September 8, 2009

Collaborative efforts for peace and development

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

July 15, 2009 Wednesday

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Length: 1702 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, July 15 -- Speech delivered by Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama at the Preparatory Ministerial Meeting of XV NAM Summit in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, from July 13 and 14 at the Interactive Debate on "International Solidarity for Peace and Development".

Egypt, has traditionally been a friend of the developing world. It has given leadership to a number of regional and global processes contributing to the strengthening of international peace and development. As Egypt takes over the chairmanship of the Non-Aligned Movement now, let me reaffirm Sri Lanka's solidarity and support for your efforts at taking forward the agenda of the Non-Aligned Movement for the next three years. Both as a longstanding member of the Non-Aligned Movement as well as one of its former chairs, we take pride in being present in this City of Peace, Sharm El Sheikh, at this defining moment in the history of the Movement. I take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Srimavo Bandaranaike, the former Sri Lankan Prime Minister - and the world's first woman Prime Minister- who entrenched the principle of Non-Alignment in Sri Lanka's Foreign Policy.

Her role and contribution in the world of non-alignment not only brought nations and peoples closer to Sri Lanka, but also brought glory and fame to my country worldwide. This policy, today, continues to be upheld by President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who has given it a practical scope and depth in his engagement with the outside world. Currently, the Chair of the South Asian Regional Cooperation (SAARC), which is committed to advancing solidarity and cooperation for the benefit of peoples Sri Lanka seeks fruitful deliberations on the future agenda of our Movement in the promotion of South-South Cooperation. Sri Lanka will soon be taking over the Chair of ACD (Asian Cooperation Dialogue) which it hopes will be strengthened further to help achieve practical and meaningful cooperation on potential areas of mutual benefit. This first decade of the 21st Century has seen many challenges. The world has confronted a number of environmental hazards with increased frequency, in addition to food crisis, energy crisis and now the economic and financial crisis. These crises have affected the developing countries and their populations severely. Armed conflicts and terrorism also pose greater threat to peace and stability of States. Global challenges require collective responses. It is time therefore that we strove hard together to find solutions to these problems. Such collaborative efforts on the part of all States could effectively contribute to international solidarity for peace and development. As was witnessed in several regions recently, terrorism continues to remain a major threat to the security of our nations and peoples. In the modern civilized world, there is absolutely no room for expression of dissent through terrorism. Our Movement should reiterate this message in unequivocal terms. It is important that we also demand of the international community to shed double standards in fighting terrorism. The focus should now be on concerted action to combat terrorism wherever it occurs. One of the oldest democracies in Asia, Sri Lanka had long been tested by terrorism. For over 30 years the terrorists had sought to destroy our multicultural and multi-religious heritage and our co-existence in the spirit of one nation. However, the Government of President Mahinda Rajapaksa steadfastly confronted this scourge. Under his leadership, our heroic Security

Collaborative efforts for peace and development

Forces were able to rout one of the world's deadliest terrorist groups, LTTE, and rescue civilians and secure fully the North and East of Sri Lanka. Through his single-minded commitment, vision and perseverance, President Rajapaksa helped to unify the country, further strengthening its territorial integrity, independence and sovereignty, and the liberties of the people. Sri Lanka's democracy is both vibrant and resilient. It has the potential and the capacity to overcome all challenges with the support of the people. Now that we have successfully accomplished our campaign against terrorism in the North, the Government has already arranged to hold elections to the Municipal Council of Jaffna and the Urban Council of Vavuniya in August 2009. The people in those areas will exercise the right to elect their own representatives in a peaceful manner. As with several other countries within NAM, which are on the forefront of a concerted global campaign against terrorism, Sri Lanka too believes that "no entity postulating or practising terrorism can or should be allowed to claim to represent any community, ethnic or religious interests". No country is better able to eliminate terrorism effectively on its own. Efforts at combating terrorism therefore require the active collaboration of all States if they were to achieve success. Today, the economic and financial crisis appears to be engulfing all the regions, pushing more than one billion people below the poverty line. The G - 20 addressed this crisis only recently and agreed on a package to tide over this problem in the short to medium term. However, the initiative lacked a comprehensive approach, which took account of the specific challenges faced by developing countries. In June 2009, the UN General Assembly convened a High Level Meeting in New York to address this challenge in a more holistic manner. A wide-ranging "Outcome Document" containing recommendations to fight the global recession and follow-up processes that may open the doors to promoting deeper reforms of the global financial and economic architecture, has resulted. Sri Lanka supports the Outcome Document and calls for its expeditious implementation. The reforming of international financial institutions is necessary to render them more effective in providing timely assistance to countries in need. International institutions should be proactive in providing necessary assistance to ensure that development aid and financial aid flow into developing countries, for development projects to continue unhindered, and for the economies to withstand external macroeconomic shocks. It is important that the Non-Aligned Movement and the developing countries should continue to emphasize the need to modernize the global financial institutions in such a way that it would enhance the perspective, voice and participation of developing countries. Inclusive consultations on further reforms to improve the responsiveness of the World Bank, as called for in the Outcome Document, should follow without further delay. The food crisis was historic in its size and in the scope of its challenges. A practical solution to this crisis calls for a multi-faceted approach. On the one hand, the industrialized countries need to be prevailed upon to scale down their dependence on bio-fuel and also to review some of their agricultural policies including on subsidies. On the other, measures need also to be taken to improve agricultural productivity through increased access to education, agricultural training, pre-harvest and post-harvest techniques, and sharing of advanced technology. Smart solutions to this problem require the creation of a virtuous cycle of enhanced child health, improved food production, higher incomes and better quality of life for women and their entire families. The Non-Aligned Movement needs to ensure that the international processes designed to address this challenge yield an acceptable outcome for the affected populations. Migration of workers across international boundaries in search of economic opportunity has enormous implications for growth and welfare in both origin and destination countries. The effects of migration on individuals, societies and countries are profound and multi-faceted. Many of these effects are directly or indirectly linked to development processes. It is common concern that restrictive policies and practices adopted by most industrialized countries have a negative impact on international migration. Such policies seek to deny developing countries an opportunity of deriving development benefits for economic advancement. A greater focus on the complexity of the relationship between migration and development is therefore warranted. The interest today is, most significantly, on how migration can be a positive force for development. As with other countries in the Non-Aligned Movement, Sri Lanka prefers a development approach to international migration. It has become established that the current outline for a Palestinian-Israeli peace agreement has been a two-state solution. It is important that countries in the region show flexibility and maturity in striving for a solution, which could usher in lasting peace for all the people in the Middle East, a secure state for the Palestinians, and security and greater acceptance for Israel within the Middle East and beyond. Sri Lanka supports all efforts for achieving a comprehensive peace in the region. It is time that Palestinians were afforded the long-awaited opportunity to enjoy peace and harmony, which has eluded them for so long. I wish to thank you for your leadership of this important meeting. As your country takes over the chairmanship of the Movement from Cuba, it is our fervent expectation that you would build on the momentum and exemplary leadership provided by Cuba and chart the future of this Movement in the years ahead. On behalf of Sri Lanka, let me take this occasion to thank Cuba and its leader Raoul

Collaborative efforts for peace and development

Castro for their effective stewardship, strengthening a sense of solidarity and consensus within its membership. It is our collective hope that under the chairmanship of President Hosny Mubarak, the Movement will receive further impetus and continue to march forward. As I conclude, let me reaffirm my belief that, with you in the chair, this meeting will be able to accomplish its agenda effectively, for the leaders of our Movement to take decisions on important regional and global concerns when the 15th Summit convenes shortly in this City of Peace. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Surit Das at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: July 15, 2009

End of Document

A sad ending

Gulf Daily News

May 21, 2009

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Length: 196 words

Body

IT is unfortunate that the long struggle by ethnic Tamils in northern parts of Sri Lanka has come to an end.

All miseries and suffering by Tamils to get their basic rights have been shattered by LTTE by adopting the wrong means by killing their own political leaders in both Sri Lanka and India. Because of one person the entire community has suffered without achieving what they want to achieve.

All the sacrifices by young boys and girls did not yield any result. May God bless those innocent Tamils. It is a shame that India didn't do much to stop the killing of innocent women and children by the Sri Lankan army.

Since government forces captured Jaffna and freed the hostages, this is time to think how it is going to handle these people. Will they apply the policy of Lord Buddha on the Tamil community? Being a Buddhist country and the followers of Lord Buddha, the government should forget the step-motherly policy and ensure that all enjoy equal rights and do not start a civil war again.

They should find a permanent political solution to the ethnic strife and confer equal rights to Lankan Tamils on par with the Sinhalese.

Nageshwar Rao Yendamuri

(Former Resident of Bahrain)

Load-Date: May 21, 2009

Indonesian navy intercepts boat carrying Sri Lankans

Right Vision News

September 13, 2009 Sunday

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Length: 197 words

Dateline: Pakistan

Body

Pakistan, Oct. 13 -- The Indonesian navy over the weekend thwarted a major human smuggling operation. Indonesian authorities detained about 260 Sri Lankan migrants in the Sunda Strait while attempting to make their way by wooden boat to Australia, according to agency reports. The police and the Indonesian Navy had intercepted the boat in the waters off Krakatoa Island, agencies quoted Banten Sea Police director Alex Fauzi Rasad as saying. "The migrants, including women and children, had set off from (the West Kalimantan province of) Pontianak on October 6 and were heading to Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean off the Australian mainland," he said. "We're now taking the boat to port and will investigate the case." Indonesia is a key staging point for people smugglers bringing Afghans and other nationals for a perilous onward sea journey to Australia. Sources said that the Sri Lankan embassy in Indonesia was in touch with authorities. Sources added that there could be some LTTE cadres among the detainees. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Right Vision News. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Load-Date: October 22, 2009

End of Document

Menon, Narayanan in Colombo for talks with Rajapaksa

Hindustan Times

April 24, 2009 Friday

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Length: 190 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, April. 24 -- India's Foreign Secretary Shivshankar Menon and National Security Advisor M.K. Narayanan landed here Friday and flew straight to President Mahinda Rajapaksa's residence Temple Trees by helicopter for a discussion on the situation in Sri Lanka.

The two officials will be flying back to the Indian capital New Delhi later in the day.

An official from the president's office said there could be a statement at the end of the visit.

India sent its top officials to Colombo as the exodus of Tamil civilians from the war zone escalated into a grave humanitarian crisis even as the Sri Lankan government claimed that the Tamil Tiger rebels were about to be crushed.

The Sri Lankan military estimates that 106,000 Tamil civilians - men, women and children - have so far fled the LTTE zone and taken shelter in military-held areas.

"We are very unhappy at the continued killings in Sri Lanka. All killings must stop. There must be an immediate cessation of all hostilities," Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee had said in a statement in New Delhi. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Indo-Asian News Service.

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Load-Date: August 4, 2009

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF MAY 18

US State News

May 19, 2009 Tuesday 9:37 AM EST

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Length: 3598 words

Body

UNITED NATIONS, May 18 -- The United Nations Office of the Secretary General issued the text of the following statement:

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Marie Okabe, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Good afternoon. **Press Conferences Today Our guest will be John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. He is scheduled to come at 12:20 p.m. So when he comes, I will ask him to take the floor first, because apparently he has another engagement immediately after this briefing. Then at 1:30 p.m., members of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues will be here to brief on the today's opening of the eighth session of the Forum.

**Secretary-General Travels - Switzerland The Secretary-General arrives in Geneva shortly. And his schedule tomorrow includes a meeting with representatives of flu vaccine companies, a visit to the World Health Organization's (WHO) Centre for Strategic Health Operations, and a press conference. He will also address the World Health Assembly. **World Health Assembly The World Health Assembly is the supreme decision-making body for the World Health Organization (WHO), and it started its sixty-second session today in Geneva. The Assembly plans to discuss a number of public health issues, such as pandemic influenza preparedness. In that regard, participants expect to discuss the sharing of influenza viruses and access to vaccines. Also on the Assembly's agenda are implementation of the International Health Regulations; primary health care, including health system strengthening; social determinants of health; and monitoring the achievement of the health-related Millennium Development Goals. The Assembly will also discuss WHO's programme budget, administration and management matters. **H1N1 And while on the topic of health, today in Geneva, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), addressed a high-level consultation on pandemic Influenza A (H1N1). She told participants: "We are all under pressure to make urgent and far-reaching decisions in an atmosphere of considerable scientific uncertainty." She also said the following to those gathered: "The job of managing public perceptions and behaviours also falls on our shoulders. We need to warn the public when necessary, but reassure them whenever possible. This is a difficult balancing act." In additional remarks to the opening of the World Health Assembly today, Dr. Chan said: "Influenza viruses have the great advantage of surprise on their side. But viruses are not smart. We are." Meanwhile, according to WHO's latest tally, 40 countries have now officially reported 8,829 cases of influenza A (H1N1) infection. That figure includes 74 deaths. There is more on this upstairs. **Secretary-General Travels -- Bahrain This morning, before heading to Geneva, the Secretary-General wrapped up a two-day visit to Bahrain, where he had gone to attend the launch of the Global Assessment Report on Disaster Risk Reduction. In his remarks at the launch on Sunday, the Secretary-General urged world leaders to invest more in disaster risk reduction. We cannot prevent events such as earthquakes or cyclones, he said. But we can limit their potential for disaster. While in Bahrain, the Secretary-General met on Sunday with the Foreign Minister of Sudan. The two discussed Sudan's Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Darfur,

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and Sudan-Chad-related issues. The Secretary-General also met with Bahrain's King and Prime Minister, as well as the Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council. Those discussions focused on disaster risk reduction, climate change and the Middle East, including Gaza. Also in Bahrain, the Secretary-General visited the country's Supreme Council for Women. **Disaster Risk Report And concerning the report on disaster risk reduction launched yesterday by the Secretary-General in Bahrain -- the document stresses that hundreds of millions of people face an increasing disaster risk worldwide. It adds that this is due to unsafe cities and the combined impact of environmental destruction and climate change. According to the report, recurrent disasters are destroying livelihoods, driven by a lack of Government attention, unplanned urbanization and deplorable economic conditions. The report brings together data from a cross-section of UN, governmental, scientific and academic sources over a 32 year period -- from 1975 to 2007. It reviews and analyses disaster frequency, geography and impact, and recommends priorities for reducing risks. The document will be considered during the second session of the Global Platform on Disaster Risk Reduction, to be held in Geneva from 16 to 19 June. **Security Council in Africa Also travelling now is the Security Council. The Security Council delegation that is visiting Africa arrived early today in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The members should, at this moment, be in the Kiwanja camp for internally displaced persons, near Goma in North Kivu province in the eastern part of that country. The delegation is meeting with representatives of some 13,000 internally displaced persons to assess ways to improve the protection of civilians in the region. The delegation is assessing latest efforts by the Government of the DRC and the United Nations to consolidate peace and security in North Kivu. The Council members will also examine the promotion of economic recovery and development in the DRC. Upon arrival in Goma from the Rwandan capital, Kigali, the delegation was briefed by the military leadership of the UN Mission in the DRC (MONUC) about the current UN-backed operations that are being conducted by the Congolese Army to address the problems of foreign and local illegal armed groups. They also met with the governor of North Kivu, the humanitarian community and with senior Congolese military and police commanders. The delegation then visited the HEAL AFRICA clinic, which has been taking care of victims of sexual violence. Tomorrow, members of the Security Council delegation will be in Kinshasa for senior-level meetings with government officials, including President Joseph Kabila. We have more details upstairs on the Security Council delegation's activities over the weekend in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia as well as in Kigali. **International Criminal Court The International Criminal Court, meeting in The Hague today, held an initial appearance hearing for the Darfur rebel leader, who is suspected of having committed war crimes in Darfur, Sudan. Abu Garda, who commands a splinter group of the Justice and Equality Movement, JEM, is charged with three war crimes allegedly committed during an attack on 29 September 2007 against the Haskanita military site of the African Union Peacekeeping Mission, AMIS, in North Darfur. During this attack twelve AMIS soldiers were allegedly killed and eight others were severely wounded. In the first of its kind before the ICC, the suspect presented himself voluntarily to the court, following a summons issued by The Prosecutor. At the suspect's initial appearance, Judge Cuno Tarfusser of Italy, acting as single judge, informed him of the crimes which he is alleged to have committed and of his rights. After today's initial hearing, Abu Garda is free to leave the country but will be required to return to the Netherlands to attend a confirmation of charges hearing before trial. This will be held within a reasonable time to determine whether or not there are substantial grounds to believe that he committed the crimes charged. There is a press release with more details on this upstairs. ** Somalia On Somalia, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that humanitarian needs continue to increase in the country due to the continuing violence in Somalia, as well as drought conditions. However, it says that the funding received for the Consolidated Appeal Process so far covers only 35 per cent of the \$984 million requested. According to OCHA, at least 3.2 million people - or 40 per cent of the country's population - will continue to require humanitarian assistance and livelihood support through September 2009. **Central and Eastern Africa OCHA also reports that the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees in 16 countries in Central and East Africa has risen to 11 million - up from 10.9 million in December 2008. The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Somalia and Sudan continue to be the countries with the largest IDP populations. Sudan has over 4 million IDPs, the DRC and Somalia have over 1.3 million IDPs each. OCHA also says that Chad, Kenya, Sudan and Tanzania continue to host the largest number of refugees in the region. Each country hosted more than 250,000 refugees at the end of March 2009. ** Afghanistan On Afghanistan, the UN Assistance Mission there has joined the International Organisation for Migration, IOM, to call for safe humanitarian access for a convoy of IOM trucks that has been trying to reach the area of Farah province in the southwest, where a number of civilians were killed and others displaced two weeks ago as a result of air strikes. IOM trucks loaded with food, shelter and clothing supplies meant for about 500 families have been stopped en route because of security concerns. UNAMA has stressed that safe passage is

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needed for these supplies to reach people in desperate need. The Mission calls on all parties to respect the neutrality and impartiality of this critical humanitarian effort. And you can read more about this in the briefing notes from Kabul, which are available upstairs. **Deputy Secretary-General And this morning at UN Headquarters, the Deputy Secretary-General addressed the opening of the eighth session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. She said the meeting came at a crucial time when the world was coping with a swarm of crises. These crises, she added, are especially devastating to indigenous communities. The Deputy Secretary-General also said that indigenous peoples continued to suffer from prejudice and marginalization. She called for living up to the words of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples - adopted in 2007. We have to do more than just raise living standards for indigenous peoples, she stressed; we must listen to their voices, heed their warnings and seek their contributions to achieving our shared objectives. She also said that indigenous communities and their wealth of wisdom must be protected, not only to enhance their lives but to serve the interests of all concerned about a healthy future for our planet. **Homophobia On the International Day against Homophobia that was observed worldwide yesterday, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe released a statement to mark that occasion. Sidibe urged all Governments to take steps to eliminate stigma and discrimination faced by men who have sex with men, lesbians and transgender populations. He added that Governments must also create social and legal environments that ensure respect for human rights and enable universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. Also in observance of the occasion, UNAIDS and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) are launching a plan to encourage new and better approaches to HIV, specifically focusing on men who have sex with men and on transgender populations. We have more on that in my office. **UNCTAD And then today and tomorrow, in Geneva, The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is holding a public symposium entitled "The global economic crisis and development - the way forward." Addressing the event will be the Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang and his remarks are available upstairs. **ITU We also have one more item about a ceremony in Geneva today. The International Telecommunications Union (ITU) presented the 2009 World Telecommunication and Information Society Award to three recipients, including President Luiz Inacio Lula Da Silva of Brazil. The theme for 2009 was "Protecting Children in Cyberspace". There is more information on this upstairs. **Secretary-General Trip As I mentioned, we will have John Holmes today on the subject of Sri Lanka, and also on humanitarian efforts in Pakistan, I understand. I have one more announcement of the Secretary-General's upcoming visit to Denmark and to Finland. The Secretary-General is set to travel to Denmark to attend the opening of the World Business Summit on Climate Change. While in the Nordic region, he will also make his first official visit to Finland. Arriving on Sunday for a two-day visit in Copenhagen, the Secretary-General will deliver his opening statement at the business summit, meet with Mr. Al Gore, former Vice-President of the United States and Chairman of the Generation Investment Management, and will hold a joint press conference with the Danish Minister for Climate and Energy. On the occasion of his visit to Copenhagen, the Secretary-General will meet with the Queen, the Prime Minister, and the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, for Development Cooperation, and for Defence. He will also attend a lunch meeting on "Global Compact and Climate". His visit in Denmark will be capped off with a Public Dialogue meeting on "Relaying the World - Global Crisis/Global Answers: The Role of the United Nations" together with Foreign Minister. And while in Copenhagen, the Secretary-General will also officially open the UNOPS Headquarters based in this city. The Secretary-General will then head on to Helsinki, Finland, on Monday for a two-day visit, where he is expected to meet with the President, as well as the Prime Minister, and Minister for Foreign Trade and Development. While in Helsinki, he will address the Finnish Parliament and have a bilateral. And he will meet with the former President and Nobel laureate, Mr. Martti Ahtisaari and pay a visit to the UN University - World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER). You can have more details on this. This is for next weekend, obviously. **Press Conferences Tomorrow And then finally, tomorrow at 10 a.m., there will be a press conference by the UN Global Alliance for ICT and Development, and the University of the People on an online initiative aimed at bridging the gap between unprecedented access to the Internet, dropping technology costs and rising tuitions worldwide. That's what I have for you. Yes, let's start in the back. **Questions and Answers Question: Sri Lanka's Foreign Minister said that Ban Ki-moon is expected to visit the country on Friday for 24 hours; I was wondering if you could confirm this, and if so what he expects to accomplish now that the fighting is over. Deputy Spokesperson: Well, let me answer the last question first. The Government of Sri Lanka has declared that its military operation against the LTE in the north-east of the country has come to a conclusion and that all the civilians in the last pocket of active conflict had come out of the area. It is too early for the United Nations to give an assessment of the situation in the area. The UN is watching the situation very closely. The Secretary-General's Chef de Cabinet, Vijay Nambiar, remains in Sri Lanka and is engaged in close consultation with government

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF MAY 18

officials and others on how best to respond to the humanitarian situation of the large number of internally displaced persons and initiate a process for early recovery and longer-term reconciliation, rehabilitation and reconstruction. The situation calls for maximum care and restraint in dealing with the large number of civilians and their humanitarian and security needs, as well as with surrendering LTTE cadres. Now, in terms of the Secretary-General, at this point I do not have anything official to tell you. But I can tell you that the Secretary-General is considering a visit there, and as he has repeatedly said, his primary focus is on the conditions of the civilians and the IDP camps and reception centres under the Government's control, and in the medium term their reintegration and, above all, on deliberate and appropriate measures to put in place a process and a solution for a long-term resolution of the conflict.

Question: A follow-up on Mr. Nambiar. Can you say whether while he is there the issue...there are some saying that there are many people that are now injured in the (inaudible) care in what had been called the no fire zone; and that the ICRC has no access. Is this something that...is this in the case there some doctors who used to report on the casualty figures who have gone missing as reported in the Guardian and the Independent. Are these issues, I mean you mentioned he's talking about the IDPs instead of post-conflict; what about people that are actually at this moment sort of dying without medical care...(interrupted)?

Deputy Spokesperson: Well, that's the subject that I think John Holmes is going to come and talk to you about right now.

Question: Burt can you say whether Mr. Nambiar, I guess I am just wondering... - John Holmes is not there, Mr. Nambiar is - is this an issue that the UN is urgently raising with the Government or not?

Deputy Spokesperson: The Chef de Cabinet's visit, as we mentioned to you, focuses exactly on the same issues that I just mentioned; which are the United Nations' and the Secretary-General's concern. Now, obviously the immediate humanitarian needs on the ground are the utmost priority for all of us.

Question: On those doctors, is the UN involved in any way in checking on their status or fighting for their release?

Deputy Spokesperson: Again, I would like to refer the humanitarian questions to John Holmes. Why don't we wait? He will be here in a few minutes. Yes, James?

Question: The statement you just read about Ban Ki-moon's trip; you said something about putting in place a process for a long-term solution. What does that mean, exactly? Does that mean that he's going to have some kind of UN mediator for Sri Lanka? What does it mean, actually?

Deputy Spokesperson: I think right now we can't go beyond this. This is just to draw for you the purpose under which the Secretary-General is considering a trip. We've been asked a lot of questions about this, so I am telling you this just in broad strokes. As of today, the statement here mentions that Vijay Nambiar, the Chef de Cabinet, is still on the ground and I think his talks...(interrupted)

Question: Could you just repeat what you said about a long term, putting in place a process for a long term...; can you repeat what that was exactly?

Deputy Spokesperson: It's that we're looking at the short term, and we're looking at the medium term. The short term is, obviously the conditions of the civilians; it's the immediate humanitarian crisis on the ground, the need for the protection of these civilians in these camps and reception centres. And the medium term is the reintegration, and then the long term obviously is the resolution of the conflict. And that's in a very broad stroke. But, in the meantime, we have Vijay Nambiar on the ground looking at these issues for the longer term, which is reconciliation, rehabilitation, reconstruction - all of these issues included, and you know...(interrupted)

Question: What is it you said exactly about putting in place for the longer term?

Deputy Spokesperson: All I said was measures to put in place a solution for a long term resolution to the conflict.

Question: (inaudible)...of Human Resources Management decided to delay this year's National Competitive Recruitment Examinations. So could you give us the reason why?

Deputy Spokesperson: I believe that that would be a Member States' decision, but let me find out more about it. I don't have any guidance on that.

Question: Just a follow up on that. They posted on i-Seek this decision that it would happen later in 2010. Previously, it was said that that it was going to be cancelled for the year. So I don't think it was the Member States. I think that probably management ... (interrupted).

Deputy Spokesperson: I said that I don't have any guidance on this, so I'll look into that for you. [The Deputy Spokesperson later informed the reporter that the Department of Management's Office of Human Resources Management (DM/OHRM) informed staff that the National Competitive Recruitment Examination (NCRE) and the Competitive Examination for Recruitment to the Professional Category of Staff Members from Other Categories (G to P Examination) in 2010 will be delayed until the summer of 2010, due to the review of the current processes of these examinations and the management of the roster requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 63/250.]

Question: Since Mr. Vijay Nambiar is in Sri Lanka and there is such a shortage of authenticated information, might it not be a good idea to consider having him come in via video conference with people here, so that the questions don't go through you; they could go directly to him?

Deputy Spokesperson: I think John Holmes is here today precisely to take your questions and he will be here shortly... and there he is. Right on cue.

Question: Well, let me put that as a request then. Will it be possible to facilitate that?

Deputy Spokesperson:

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(To John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) I think there are no more questions for me. I think they're all waiting for you. Thank you very much. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Body

UNITED NATIONS, June 4 -- The United Nations Office of the Secretary General issued the text of the following statement:

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Michele Montas, Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Good afternoon, all. **Secretary-General's Statement on Obama Speech We have a statement attributable to the Spokesperson for the Secretary-General on the US President Obama's speech in Cairo. The Secretary-General is strongly encouraged by the speech delivered today in Cairo by President Barack Obama of the United States of America. He strongly welcomes its message of peace, understanding and reconciliation.

The Secretary-General believes that President Obama's speech is a crucial step in bridging divides and promoting intercultural understanding, which is a major objective of the United Nations. His message reaffirms our shared commitment "to practise tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours", as enshrined in the Preamble of the United Nations Charter. The Secretary-General hopes that President Obama's message will herald the opening of a new chapter in relations between the United States and the Islamic world. He hopes that this will have a positive impact on the peace process in the Middle East and the resolution of a number of conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. **Secretary-General's Travels to Washington, D.C. The Secretary-General is on his way to Washington, D.C., for an overnight visit. He is scheduled to meet with US Vice-President Joseph Biden this afternoon. Then, this evening, he plans to take part in a dialogue on international affairs at the Brookings Institution. The Secretary-General has a meeting with US Secretary of Energy Steven Chu scheduled tomorrow morning, before returning to New York. He plans to be back at UN Headquarters that afternoon. **Security Council The Security Council is holding a debate today on the work of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). Two dozen speakers are addressing the Council, including the Prime Minister of Croatia. Speaking for the ICTY earlier, Prosecutor Serge Brammertz said that 2009 is the last year of full trial activity before the Tribunal starts downsizing in 2010. As part of the ICTY's completion strategy, there will be a 60 per cent reduction in personnel in the next two years. Brammertz said significant progress has been made overall, including in the Tribunal's transfer of outstanding cases to jurisdictions in the region. Brammertz also reported increased cooperation from concerned countries. Serbia, for example, has been notably more responsive to Tribunal requests, including in granting access to national documents and archives. However, Brammertz warned that "the search for and arrest of Ratko Mladic and Goran Hadzic" remained "the central issue in relation to Serbia's cooperation". In his address to the Council, the ICTY President, Judge Patrick Robinson, also warned that, if these two men remained fugitives by the time of the Tribunal's closure, it would leave a stain on the Security Council's historic contribution to peacebuilding in the former Yugoslavia. For his part, Prosecutor Hassan Jallow of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda pressed for greater Security Council assistance in obtaining the cooperation of countries in the region to deliver fugitives to the Tribunal. Jallow pointed to Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where he said most of the dozen remaining fugitives

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are known to be residing. He also outlined the Tribunal's completion strategy with regards to its judicial work, saying that the transfer of outstanding cases to Rwandan jurisdiction was proceeding smoothly, with Rwanda abolishing the death penalty to comply with international standards. We have full copies of all these remarks upstairs. **

Pakistan On Pakistan, the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mr. John Holmes, designated today Martin Mogwanja as Humanitarian Coordinator for Pakistan. Prior to his appointment as UNICEF Representative in Pakistan in January 2007, Mr. Mogwanja was the UNICEF Representative in Uganda for six years, as well as the Humanitarian Coordinator in the country between 2005 and 2007. Fikret Akcura, the Resident Coordinator for Pakistan, will continue to be the Head of the UN country team. While some 2 million people displaced from Pakistan's north-western areas urgently need assistance with food, clean water, shelter and emergency health care, the humanitarian response plan remains only 22 per cent funded. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) says that some sectors have already indicated that supplies such as food and essential medicines may not be sustainable beyond early July, unless the international community rapidly and generously responds to these acute needs. Meanwhile, two new camps have been established for internally displaced persons (IDPs) arriving from Swat in the last few days, bringing the total to 21 camps. The World Food Programme (WFP) said today that it has begun moving 97 metric tons of a highly nutritious food supplement called Plumpy Doz that is to be distributed to children under the age of 5. Even before the recent crisis WFP had been feeding 6.2 million people in Pakistan. And the International Labour Organization (ILO) has appealed to all relief and development agencies to engage IDPs in different productive activities and pay them for short-term employment. It has been helping to employ displaced persons to perform development activities, from digging trenches and fixing tents to nursing injured and pregnant women, in two camps in Pakistan. **

Sudan The Secretary-General's Special Representative in Sudan, Ashraf Qazi, has confirmed that the United Nations is working to facilitate a United States initiative to host a review conference on the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) later this month in Washington. Qazi also noted that the CPA signatories were facing many challenges in completing the implementation of that peace deal by 2011. He was speaking in Juba, the capital of Southern Sudan, where he was for meetings with Southern Sudanese President Salva Kiir Mayardit and other senior Government officials. They discussed the security situation in the south, national elections, disarmament and the preparations for an upcoming referendum to decide the status of south Sudan in relation to the rest of the country. **

Human Rights Council In Geneva today, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay underlined the condition of civilians in armed conflicts and urged the Human Rights Council to do its utmost to protect them. Addressing the eleventh regular session of the Human Rights Council - which opened Tuesday - she highlighted situations in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Colombia, Somalia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and Chad. Concerning the Occupied Palestinian Territory, she urged full cooperation with the independent fact-finding mission, mandated by the Human Rights Council and which is in the region now. Pillay also cited two countries, Sri Lanka and Nepal, where post-conflict situations "warrant close scrutiny". Regarding the Durban Review Conference last April, the High Commissioner said that the Conference's outcome document had provided a platform for a renewed beginning. The few States that chose to stay away should now evaluate this platform on its own merit and substance, she added. She also said she was hopeful that these States would rejoin international efforts to combat racism and intolerance, as laid out in this important document. We have her address upstairs. **

Palestinian People In a report to the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, which is out as a document today, the Secretary-General says that the Palestinian Government under Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has made progress in recent months on fiscal, monetary and social reforms. At the same time, as a result of the situation in Gaza, the economic situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory deteriorated further than envisaged in the Palestinian Reform and Development Plan. By April, real gross domestic product was estimated to have declined by 13 per cent from a year before, while per capita income dipped to almost 34 per cent below its level in the year 2000. **

Sri Lanka In response to questions I received yesterday, as he had confirmed while in Sri Lanka, Mr. Vijay Nambiar had indeed communicated to the Sri Lankan Government the conditions for the surrender of a specific group of LTTE members. This had been passed onto him, first through a Western journalist, Marie Colvin, and subsequently through an LTTE interlocutor, before he arrived in Sri Lanka. He, in turn, relayed the insistence of the Sri Lankan Government that any surrender would have to be to the Sri Lankan Armed Forces and not through or to a third party. In response to a subsequent request received during the last hours of the fighting for the surrender of two individuals, Nadesan and Puleedeevan, in the presence of parties other than the Sri Lanka Armed Forces, he relayed the Government's earlier response, and the assurance given to him, that this group need only display a white flag to the Armed Forces to safely effect their surrender. This last request conveyed to him through Ms. Colvin

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was also apparently transmitted directly to several other persons, including Colombo-based diplomats and politicians. These were, in turn, we understand, communicated to high governmental levels and were responded to with similar assurances. **Global Food Supply The world food supply looks less vulnerable to shocks than it was during last year's food crisis. That's according to a new report by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO). Although food prices remained high in many developing countries, prices for most agricultural commodities have fallen in 2009, says the FAO. The improvement concerned mostly cereals, which is considered a critical sector for food security. The press release is available upstairs. **UN-Habitat/UNIFEM The United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) has joined forces with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) to tackle the issue of violence against women and girls in developing cities. They signed a global pact that addresses violence against women in both public and private spheres. The programme implemented under this pact concentrates on violence prevention. There is more on the website. **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees With the growing number of teenagers seeking asylum in Central Europe, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is calling for a new asylum system that will address their specific needs. UNHCR reports that this is the largest project that it has ever carried out and that their recommendations are being implemented swiftly. There is more on the website. **World Environment Day - Climate Heroes Tomorrow, 5 June, is World Environment Day, and the theme this year is: "Your Planet Needs YOU - Unite to Combat Climate Change!" As part of activities marking the day, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) will be launching a special programme called "Climate Heroes". This initiative aims to recognize and support the efforts of people who are doing innovative and unusual things to raise awareness of the simple fact that: Your planet needs you! According to the Executive Director of UNEP, Achim Steiner, these Climate Heroes show the kind of commitment, enthusiasm and understanding that's crucial for addressing the problems of climate change. Among some of the Climate Heroes being recognized this year is Roz Savage, who plans to row across the Pacific to draw attention to the need to take action on CO2 levels. She hopes to achieve this by inspiring people to walk more and drive less. We have more details in a UNEP press release upstairs, also about other Climate Heroes. And this is all I have for you today. Yes, Masood. **Questions and Answers Question: Michele, on Pakistan, I just want to clarify something, maybe you will be able to tell me. One thing that you said that the World Food Programme has said that it is going to supply, is getting aid to supply food for 6 million people. And presently the IDPs which are displaced are about, over 2 million people. This 6 million figure, does it include the refugees from Afghanistan? Am I right? Spokesperson: Yes. As I suggested, you know they have details upstairs in their own press release, and I am sure you can get all the details there. Question: Okay. And the other thing I wanted to clarify is this... Spokesperson: Yes, sure. Question: ...you said presently the appeal is 22 per cent funded? Spokesperson: Yes. Question: Earlier on Friday when he talked about it, John Holmes, he said 18 per cent, and that was around \$18 million? Spokesperson: Yes. Which means that now there is more, more has come in. Question: It has gone up? Spokesperson: Yes. Question: And now, is there also going to be another appeal to the international community to make up the shortfall? Spokesperson: You know that whenever we have a humanitarian appeal, we try to encourage, I mean it's not just launching the appeal, it's also convincing the Governments to actually contribute the money that is needed. So there is, of course, an effort being made for that money to increase in the next few weeks. Question: And just one more last thing, I just want to... Spokesperson: Yes, sure. Question: ...because he, Mr. Holmes, said it was around 3 million. You just said 2 million. Is it closer to 3 million or more than 2 million...? Spokesperson: I think you have better figures, as I said, in the press release where they have more accurate numbers. As you know this is an ongoing process. As I said yesterday [about Sri Lanka], sometimes people are counted twice and that screws up the numbers and we have to go through them again to make sure that they reflect the actual reality on the ground. Yes, Mr. Abbadi. Question: Thank you, Michele. As you said, the Secretary-General praised President Obama's speech in Cairo, indicating that it contains ideas that coincide with the objectives and principles of the United Nations Charter regarding reconciliation, tolerance, peace, mutual understanding, et cetera. Has the Secretary-General communicated his congratulations to the President or in any way communicated with him today? Spokesperson: No, he has not. Question: Does he intend to do so? Spokesperson: I don't know. Yes. Question: Sure, Michele. I have two questions. One is, in Sri Lanka, the Media Minister has been quoted that the Government is now preparing to bring charges against journalists it considered to have either been supportive of the LTE or not sufficiently supportive of the Government's charge. Human Rights Watch has spoken out against this. Does the UN have anything to say about that? Spokesperson: Well, it was an intention stated. We are following the situation. The same thing for the doctors, who are, as you know, accused also of collaboration. We're following the situation closely. That's all really I can say at this point. Question: Okay. And then, I mean, I am compelled to ask this question. I saw yesterday - this

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL OF JUNE 4

has to do with something that you raised on Tuesday - it came up in the briefing on Tuesday. Yesterday I saw an article on, I guess, Fox News that you're quoted as saying: "Montas also denied Inner City Press report that the minutes indicate UN officials, quote, should consider complaining to Google News." So I am wondering like, are you saying that the document that I have is not a UN document? Spokesperson: What I am saying is... First, I am saying they are not minutes, okay. And I think this subject should be dealt with... You know, we have gone over this over and over again... Question: But if you give a quote saying that it's false, and I have the UN document saying with regard to Inner City Press we should also... Spokesperson: Those are not minutes, okay? Question: But then why would you...? Okay, I understand... Spokesperson: This is a memo. Question: ...so this was a memo to Mr. Ban? Spokesperson: Yes. Question: Did Mr. Ban receive it and what does he think about a memo that says...? Spokesperson: Well, Mr. Ban receives memos concerning everything that concerns every single department. He has absolutely no specific reaction on this. Question: Well, why did you deny that it says Google... complained to Google News in it? Had you not seen the document when you said that? Spokesperson: No, I haven't seen the document. You're the first person who brings it to me, to my attention. Correspondent: But I asked about it Tuesday. Spokesperson: Yes, because this was discussed as one of the alternatives. There was no decision to send cease and desist letters, and there was no decision to address Google News. And I said that the UN has not spoken to Google News, something that your colleague at Foxnews.com confirmed with Google, that there has been absolutely no approach by the UN to try to get Inner City... Correspondent: But you were in the meeting. You know that it was discussed. Does this summary prepared by Angela Kane sufficiently summarize the meeting which you attended? Which is why I e-mailed you, I didn't want to do it here, but... Spokesperson: Essentially, this meeting, and this would have been in minutes if there were minutes, if there had been, it was about, as I said, a complaint from the Medical Service. That was what the meeting was about. Question: But one thing I don't understand is, if there is a story that the UN doesn't like, isn't it the right... I mean if you write, I put it on the website, but to have the UN's response to a story that they don't like to try to take the publication from being distributed worldwide through Google News... Spokesperson: We didn't do that! We did not do that! Question: [inaudible] was considered. It said we should consider it? Spokesperson: No, we should consider addressing our... the first thing that was considered is to address letters to editors of your, of the publications. In your case, I don't know if there is an editor to your blog. Question: [inaudible] you sent letters. But why is the Wall Street Journal on the list when they never wrote about the Medical Service? Spokesperson: Well, the Wall Street Journal, I don't even know why it's there. Also it was barely mentioned. I don't remember discussing at all the Wall Street Journal. Question: Are you comfortable with the document? Spokesperson: Pardon me? Question: This is a personal debate, it is not... Spokesperson: Yes, it is a personal debate, you're right, Pat, and it shouldn't be part of this [briefing]. Yes, quite true. Thank you, Pat. Yes. Question: The Palestinian situation, which you just mentioned about that. Since the situation continues to be dire, has the Secretary-General spoken to anybody in the Israeli authorities now to loosen up the border crossings and things like that? Spokesperson: Well, you know that he has been doing so extensively, actually. He met Israeli officials twice during the week. And as we mentioned in the readouts, every time it was [discussed]. Question: [inaudible] has not responded at all because has it manifested itself in the Occupied Territory? Any decision of the Israelis, that's what...? Spokesperson: No, it hasn't. We don't have... you know, nothing has changed in terms of the actual access. As you know, we talked about construction material, we talked about the fact that there was no way we could help reconstruct Gaza if none of the material was allowed in. Yes, Talat. Question: Michele, the [inaudible] spoke with us last week from the region and said that there were 630 blockades and that they were primarily being set up to protect Israeli settlements. Was there any statement or follow-up from the Secretary-General on that comment? He also had said that senior advisers on behalf of the Israeli side were speaking with UN officials about bringing down some of those blockades. Is that...? Spokesperson: We have been talking about this for a long time now. Those blockades are not new, as you know, and they have been hampering the free circulation of people, and we have been talking about them since the Secretary-General has been Secretary-General. He has been talking about those restrictions to free movement. Question: Has there been any follow-up in terms of the comment made by the individual last week? Spokesperson: No, he was stating a fact, you know. I don't think there was any specific thing to follow up. We have been following up, as I said, on a regular basis on this. Question: So there is cohesive agreement that the blockades are being set up primarily to protect Israeli settlements? Spokesperson: Well, this is something for the Israeli Government to say. They're the ones setting up the blockades. It's not for us to say. What we are saying, what we have been protesting, is the fact that there are so many of them and it makes the life of Palestinians increasingly difficult. That we have been saying over and over again. Question: Michele, just a follow-up on that topic? Spokesperson: Yes. Question: In the readout from the Secretary-General's meeting with the

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Deputy Prime Minister earlier this week, it says in among urging the Israelis to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid, it speaks about socio, it said that they discussed socio-economic projects in the West Bank. Is he referring to settlements in, by socio-economic projects, the Israeli socio-economic projects in the West Bank? I mean... Spokesperson: I can try to get more details on what they mean. Question: Okay, because it seems like there is a moment of opportunity here with President Obama calling today in a speech for the settlements to stop, there seems to be some momentum... Spokesperson: Well, we have been coming out very strongly against the settlements ourselves. As you know, the UN has been very vocal about that, saying that these go against previous agreements and that they should not build any new settlements. Question: Sure, but I mean, the Secretary-General has been urging the Israelis for over a year now to alleviate the blockade of Gazans and there has been nothing in response. Is he looking that this is a moment of opportunity to kind of elevate his pressure to try and...? Spokesperson: Well, his pressure continues, you know. It was the case when he met two high Israeli officials this week and all these were expressed during those meetings. Question: Well, it's kind of, just the meetings, it's kind of hard to determine which way the pressure was going. And just from reports, the Israeli media reports, it indicates that those Israeli Government officials were pressuring him, and the UN seems to be indicating that the Secretary-General was trying to pressure the Israelis. So, there is a disconnect here of who is... Spokesperson: I don't think there's any disconnect. Each group or each side just flagged their own concerns and that's the way it went. That doesn't mean that one accepted the point of view of the other one. Question: I wanted to ask you about the situation in Nigeria's Niger Delta. For about two weeks now the Nigerian military has been bombarding the people. We're hearing figures of about 20,000 people displaced. Is the UN going to remain silent on this? Spokesperson: I know you've asked the question several times, and let me try to find out whether we have more on what is happening there from the UN side and find out whether we know more. [If it is happening where] the UN has no real presence, it's very difficult for us to assess the facts. So, I'll try to find out for you what we know and what we have been able to confirm. Question: And there are two sides to it. There is the political component. But there is also the humanitarian [inaudible] that is going on in the Delta? Spokesperson: Sure, sure. We'll try to find out first what we know and what we can confirm. Yes, Ali. Question: First of all, it's remarkable that you're taking the question of the journalists as personal issues. It is not. We have always got questions to ask. Maybe you have answers or you don't, this is fair. We don't have problems... Spokesperson: But you know, Ali, may I say something to you? Mr. Lee just brought it up in a meeting which is supposed to be a briefing about issues. And Pat is quite right, it's not the place to discuss this. You can come to me, Mr. Lee and we can discuss it. Correspondent: You gave a quote to Fox News, it went all over the world. So I asked to explain your quote that's why its... Question: One question is, the high-ranking Israeli officials are visiting the UN and President [Shimon] Peres was here, two ministers, and next week maybe the Foreign Minister is coming and they are talking about projects with the United Nations for the Palestinians. What kind of... Can you be specific on the kind of projects that they're going to be in, with the United Nations? Spokesperson: I think we can get for you additional information from the ground about what is being done, but there are always a number of projects which, of course, involve the Israeli authorities and that concern the Palestinians. Question: What is your understanding to these frequent [inaudible] to the Israeli officials visiting...? Spokesperson: Well, those were requested by the Israeli officials and they were granted a meeting with the Secretary-General. Yes, Mr. Abbadi. Question: Also on the Middle East, Michele. The United Nations is a part and parcel of the Quartet. Are there any preparations towards holding a meeting of the Quartet on the Middle East at this stage? Spokesperson: Well, I think there are discussions about the next meeting and I'll let you know when it happens. Yes. Question: Thank you. I am sorry if I missed that, but you know tomorrow the Security Council has a meeting on the ICC [International Criminal Court] and the indictment of the Sudanese President. Where does Mr. Ban Ki-moon stand now on this issue? Is he calling for...? Spokesperson: On the issue of? I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. Question: The indictment of President [Omer Hassan Al-Bashir] and the ICC. Where does he stand? Spokesperson: Well, his point of view has been expressed several times, it hasn't changed. I have nothing new to add, really, to what he has been saying. Question: The Secretary-General, I'm just following up. He was supposed to hold a monthly press conference. Last month, he didn't hold it, this month he... Spokesperson: Yes, that's what I said yesterday or the day before, it is going to be the 11th, because he had to travel, as you know. Question: Yesterday it became clear that the Secretary-General was closing down the office in Kampala with [Joaquin Alberto] Chissano, who is done six months earlier. Does that mean that the UN has resigned itself to believing that the arrest of [Joseph] Kony is the only way to move forward? Spokesperson: Well, I think it's a fact that, you know, what is happening on the ground... Mr. Kony has never shown up to sign the agreement, I think is definitely a factor. Mr. Chissano really cannot do much more than he has already done. We're not resigning ourselves to the fact, but

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we're just saying that there is no point in trying to keep the office open if nothing is happening. Question: Can't the UN arrest him, or what...? Spokesperson: The UN does not have the power to arrest anyone. Question: On North Korea, the spokesman there of the UN system in Pyongyang says that there are some indications that access to the provinces in the north-east may be restricted to UN agencies by the DPRK. Is that something that other agencies beyond UNICEF have suffered? What's the UN's read of, given the statement by the Government, of its humanitarian access? Does it have access to the whole country or not? Spokesperson: As far as I know, we have not been informed of a blanket decision concerning the movement of UN personnel. If there is more, I'll let you know. Question: And on the trial that began today of American journalists there, has the Secretary-General have anything to say and now trial? Spokesperson: No, he is just watching developments there. Question: And what you read about Mr. Nambiar, I mean, thanks for getting an answer. What left me unclear is that it said he passed on the assurances. Is it the UN's understanding that the individuals to whom he passed on the assurances are now dead, and, if so, has the UN conducted any inquiry to find out who killed them? Spokesperson: Well, there is nothing we can do. As you know, there was no way for Mr. Nambiar [to go to the conflict area]. And it was a decision by the Sri Lankan Government [to give access or not to that area]. Question: Has the UN continued to ask for access to what was called conflict zones, given reports that there are still bodies being buried or otherwise being concealed? Spokesperson: We have been [asking] over and over again. As you know, we cannot ourselves decide to go there. Question: Okay. Yesterday, I had asked if Mr. [Ibrahim] Gambari had any, either anything to say or had done anything regarding the trial of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. Were you able to get a response on that? Spokesperson: The Secretary-General's position has not changed. There was a statement on 14 May, and he indicated his grave concern about the situation. He clearly urged the authorities to refrain from any actions that could undermine the national reconciliation process in Myanmar. And again from his last statement, he reiterated his conviction that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and all other political prisoners in Myanmar should be released without delay and allowed to participate freely in the political process. That is really what I can say. Correspondent: I just want to say the reason I asked, I was asking about your quote, I wasn't trying to get anything personal, but I think that if there is a quote that, to me, is not factual, I am going to ask you what [inaudible]. Spokesperson: Yes, but it should... there are places to do that, Matthew. Correspondent: That's why I sent to you an e-mail with a... about the minutes on Monday, just respond to me in that forum rather than here. But for some reason it was never done... Spokesperson: I didn't get that e-mail. Correspondent: And I also wrote to Ms. Kane, I wrote to Mr. Akasaka... Spokesperson: As I said, this is something that we can discuss if you want to. Thank you. Yes. Question: Yesterday, just out of curiosity, I was wondering, in Ban's commemorative speech to U Thant, why didn't he bring up Daw Aung San Suu Kyi? Spokesperson: He brought up Myanmar, he brought up the democratic process and it was a speech about U Thant. It was not a policy speech about Myanmar. And he has already said over, and as I said, I quoted what he said about Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in his last statement, which was a pretty strong statement about where we stood. Thank you all so very much. Question: I am afraid I don't have, or I don't feel quite clear about the position of Mr. Ban Ki-moon towards the indictment of President Bashir. I know he expressed over and over that Sudan should cooperate fully with the ICC. But does it mean that he favours suspension of Article 16 or delivering the Sudanese President to the ICC to stand trial? Spokesperson: Well, he said [inaudible] that he is not going to interfere with what is a decision by an international court. He feels that the decision by the International Court has to be carried. Question: Right, but he said that he wants to fully cooperate with the ICC. So what does this mean? To surrender the Sudanese President or...? Spokesperson: Well the details of what this means, I think, are something to be determined by the courts. Thank you. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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WEEKENDER; Making a difference

BusinessWorld

June 19, 2009 Friday

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Body

A nurse works at a feeding center in Sierra Leone to treat malnourished children and educate their mothers about breastfeeding and nutrition. Meanwhile, a teacher enters a devastated Cambodia to set up child-friendly classrooms and encourage participatory learning in the schools. In Sri Lanka, an advocacy adviser and trainer steps in to help organize women leaders working for the promotion of awareness on the rights of women with disabilities. And in Laos, a journalist signs on as documenter of the state of the country's natural environment.

These are but a few of the stories of Filipinos volunteers taking their skills where needed outside of the country - never mind if they are briefly, or sometimes permanently, leaving behind a job with hefty paycheck, an impatient fiancée or a fairly puzzled family.

Agent of change vs. cog in the machine

International volunteerism started out as a way for individuals in developed countries to travel and experience other cultures and do outreach activities during their gap year, like in the Peace Corps. Until now, there are "vacation with a mission" activities in Websites such as www.volunteerworkabroad.net and www.workingabroad.com, which allow interested individuals to volunteer for projects (e.g. conservation, teaching assistance, construction, medical help and the like) in countries they'd like to visit. One may look for paid work, or one may pay for the privilege of working in another country. Local volunteer organizations like Hands On Manila's Hands on Volunteer Vacations (HOVV) or Habitat for Humanity have the same aim of mobilizing manpower for community-building projects.

But if inexperienced individuals can make a difference in the lives of other people, professionals with a wealth of experience to draw upon could do better. The sort of hippie existence that volunteerism encourages appeals not just to soul-searching teenagers, but also professionals who are perhaps tired of the routine, are starting to question their clinging to the corporate ladder, and are curious as to whether developmental work could fit them. Volunteer work could be used as an entry-point to hardcore developmental work; or it could simply be a way to break the boredom, rekindle love for the work they do, and improve.

"These are people who really do want to make something of their lives and also make a difference. They feel compelled to develop themselves professionally, and personally, because if you volunteer overseas, you're not going there as a tourist, you're going there to do actual, real work in a very different setting, something totally new and unfamiliar to you," observed Rachel Nalus-Quintos, marketing and communications officer of Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Bahaginan, a development organization based in the Philippines affiliated with the 51-year-old VSO International which originated in the UK.

WEEKENDER Making a difference

"Imagine what that does to a professional - it challenges him, it takes him out of his comfort zone, suddenly he has to rely on his basic skills set, on his expertise, and, at the same time, there may be need for him to gain new skills in order to better support his organization. Plus, he learns confidence, leadership, he learns to train people, facilitate in workshops. These are things that you would do as a volunteer that ordinarily you wouldn't do sitting behind a desk, crunching numbers or just typing away on your computer," she added.

From comfort zone to battle zone

Filipinos who want sustainable developmental work abroad can be matched skill to need or objective to goal via program-based international volunteer organizations such as United Nations Volunteers or VSO International, represented here by VSO Philippines and VSO Bahaginan - the former is one of 40 program offices that manage foreign volunteers who come to work in the Philippines, whereas the latter is one of seven VSO Federation offices serving as a resource base recruiting locals to work abroad, among other functions. (Within the year, however, it is expected that VSO Philippines and VSO Bahaginan will be consolidated.)

Volunteer organizations like VSO also get creative with their programs. VSO-Bahaginan Executive Director Marilou Pantua-Juanito shared that a pilot program in the UK and Ireland engages politicians, senators and members of parliament to volunteer for a month when not in session. VSO Bahaginan has business partnerships with companies like Accenture (and soon, Randstad) to provide a steady supply of short-term volunteers with specialty skills; a CSR fun trek with the company also netted P500,000 for the budget. Meanwhile, the Kabahagi volunteer management training program managed to inspire a trainee from Zimbabwe, which has no VSO program office, to mobilize 10 (now 50) volunteers to reach out to 5,000 families affected by HIV/AIDS. Soon, there will be a Community exchange tapping the 18-25 sector and bringing together two individuals, one from the Philippines, the other from the UK, to work together for three months in each country.

For most volunteers, it does seem as though they're moving from their comfort zone to a battle zone, whether it means engaging in a struggle to secure livelihoods, protect the environment or forward an advocacy, or literally being caught in the crossfire as in the case of VSO Bahaginan two-time volunteer Riza Horcasitas, who was based in Sri Lanka when hostilities broke out anew between the Tamil Tigers and the military in 2005. As soon as the then 27-year-old got wind of a bomb explosion near her place of residence, she calmly called in her absence at work that day, and waited out the fracas, with the windows closed and her emergency knapsack - containing her laptop, wallet, two pairs of jeans, two T-shirts, underwear, flashlight with battery - by her side.

While volunteers are never deployed to a known danger zone, the unexpected can happen (hence the ever-ready survival kit), and the usual response would be for the volunteer to be pulled out and brought in to safety. Because street altercations, Ms. Horcasitas was cut off from the nearest source of help, the VSO program office 10 kilometers away, and felt it was more prudent to stay put rather than venture out into the streets. When the smoke cleared, the consulate learned of her proximity to the fray, and she was told in no uncertain terms not to be so stoic and close-lipped in the future, and to call for help at the first sign of trouble.

It's safe to say that volunteers like her tend to have more gumption than your average worker bee.

Army of volunteers

Since 2000, VSO Bahaginan has deployed over 500 volunteers. They started with five volunteers and have since gone up to an average of 100 volunteers annually for the past three years; this year's target is 110 placements. Applications per year reach 400-600. Desired applicants are highly skilled, highly technical professionals, aged 25-65, who have worked for a minimum of three years in a particular field. Anyone with kids to send to school, health issues, and financial obligations will be cut; those short-listed will be invited to either of two assessment days each month, in Manila, Cebu, Davao, Cagayan de Oro.

In the 2007-2008 annual report, volunteer distribution by goal fell to secure livelihoods (29%), participation and governance (21%), education (21%), HIV/AIDS (10%), health and social well being (10%) and disability (9%). Volunteer distribution by skill, meanwhile, pegged business and management (38%), health (21%), education (14%), social development (11%), natural resources (10%), IT (4%) and technical and media (2%).

WEEKENDER Making a difference

Volunteers receive a benefits package including a roundtrip ticket and visa, pre-departure allowance, pre-departure training (five days for orientation and three days for practical survival skills and first aid) , medical insurance, medical exams and required immunizations, basic living allowance, simple accommodations, in-country orientation and language training, and resettlement allowance for when they return. Re-application for another volunteer post will be allowed after a year.

Based on a recent audit, there appear to be more ***female*** VSO volunteers, most of them in the prime of their careers, about 30-45 in age, resourceful and practical, open to learning, who can work with others, and are looking for bigger challenges and an international perspective. More than half of the volunteers usually go to Africa to work on HIV/AIDS, health and social well-being projects. Once Filipinos start being sent to Latin America, they'll be working to secure livelihoods at the grassroots level.

"There is a rich pool of experience here in the Philippines of community development and community projects; that's the strength of having a recruitment area here in the Philippines because we have a long NGO tradition, we've been doing grassroots mobilization for such a long time... It gives them something to aspire towards. Here is a Filipino, from another developing country, who is able to relate to me because we probably have the same challenges in technology and policy, we go through the same corrupt government, the same mechanisms that actually don't work, [yet] he is able to do something of himself, be a professional and actually come out here to try and help me in my situation. That is a very powerful message," said Ms. Nalus-Quintos.

"There is such power in two cultures interacting with each other, and the perspective of an outsider bringing in fresh ideas to provide solutions to problems they've probably had for such a long time already... Volunteers work in a participatory kind of approach - we don't come in and say, 'I've got the answers for you, your problems are solved, so here is Superman' di ba? The volunteers come in, they're equals with the local people, they live and work where they live and work... You engage them on a daily basis, and try to look for solutions to their problems because you know that you have a return ticket after two years.

Why do it?

The motivations behind volunteering, said Ms. Pantua-Juanito, range from altruism to a calculation that a record of developmental work will provide the leg up to working in an international organization or getting on the shortlist for a scholarship grant. The opportunity to travel is also a common motivation of volunteer workers, as in the case of one return volunteer from Kenya (now part of the staff) who in her entrance interview admitted to harboring a dream of visiting Africa but lacking the funds (around \$5,000) to do so.

In the case of freelance writer Vicky Mendoza, wanderlust was partly the reason she participated in the 2005 environmental journalist exchange program under Fredskorpset Norway, which she considered an opportunity to experience another culture.

True to its Peace Corps origins, FK Norway was allowing for the mutual exchange of knowledge, experience and skills, by having two professionals, one from Laos sponsored by the Vientiane Times and another from the Philippines sponsored by the Environmental Broadcast Circle (EBC), swap places.

"I was 36, working for the Center for Environmental Awareness and Education at the time, and Elizabeth Roxas of the EBC asked me if I wanted to join the environmental journalist exchange program. I've been interested in the environment since the early 1990s... and I wanted to go to Laos. I met people from different backgrounds, I met a Muslim who was really very nice, but who would defend any one of us in a fight... It was really about understanding other people, other cultures, and your mind will expand," said Ms. Mendoza.

She was among the 16 volunteers from eight countries (all handpicked by FK Norway partner organizations) who underwent two weeks of training, mostly lectures by speakers from the Asian Institute of Technology, on how to overcome the language barrier, combat culture shock, and act with gender- and cultural-sensitivity. After that she had to accustom herself to the slow pace of life at Vientiane, a monthly living allowance of \$400 minus the guesthouse fee, and a bicycle which she learned how to ride. She wrote her column, explored where she could and

WEEKENDER Making a difference

tried everything she could, including riding an elephant. She liked the lifestyle so much that she entertained the notion of looking for more permanent work in the area and staying beyond the eight months.

For her part, Ms. Horcasitas admitted that she had to give up a job here to accept her VSO placements, the first in Guyana for a Ministry of Water project and then Sri Lanka for the Association of **Women** with Disabilities (AKASA), a project supported by Healthlink called "Creating Spaces to Communicate and Advocate Equal Rights for **Women** with Disabilities." But she confessed that she was always looking forward to hearing from her Volunteer Placement Advisor while working those jobs.

"It's not a case of when an opportunity comes then you grab it, it's also looking at what that opportunity is and how you would fit in it... When I accepted the Guyana placement, I got excited with the challenge of implementing a community development participatory approach in the country for the first time ever. That was my motivation, it was a pioneer approach... the project will be implemented nationwide, starting in two major regions in the country, and... the government was looking at whether they will continue it... I was there three years and at the end of my placement, we successfully organized 30 communities, 15 for each region, and set up two regional offices that are still operational," she shared.

Nevertheless, it didn't occur to Ms. Horcasitas to extend her stay.

"It's enough that I have gained experience or been a help in using my skills for another culture. There are still lots of opportunities here, it's just a question of tapping them and making them available... When you go into other countries, it's more of looking at issues and concerns in a different perspective. You work here again, applying skills that you've learned there... it's taking a break, so that when you come back here, you are more effective, you know different approaches than what you used to know here," she said.

For more information on the programs mentioned in this story, contact VSO Bahaginan, 505 Pacific Corporate Center, 131 West Ave., QC (www.vsobahaginan.org.ph; 374-6450 to 52); Fredskorpset (www.fredskorpset.no/en/Fredskorpset/); Environmental Broadcast Circle, 81 C. Raymundo Ave., Caniogan, Pasig City (641-4416, 642-2128, <http://www.ebc.org.ph/>).

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

May 1, 2009 Friday

1 - All-round Country Edition

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Section: FEATURES; Pg. 13

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Body

Praise for a philanthropist, criticism for a cheat

MOST TALKED ABOUT

RICHARD PRATT

ON behalf of the Australian recycling industry, the Australian Council of Recyclers wishes to pay tribute to the contribution of Richard Pratt to environmental awareness in Australia in general and to recycling in particular.

Richard was a pioneer in recognising that reduction of waste, conservation of resources and improved environmental performance made good business sense.

He will always be regarded by the recycling industry as a visionary who applied the principles of sustainability to his business long before it was a popular word -- relentlessly pursuing cost efficiencies, but at the same time developing the closed-loop recycled materials concept, implementing water-saving and environmental protection measures and preaching and practising extraordinary philanthropy.

We mourn his passing and applaud the example and legacy he has left us all.

Anne Prince

CEO, ACOR

Terrey Hills, NSW

DANIEL Lewis (Letters 30/4) alleges that there are plenty of Australians keen to jail Richard Pratt without a trial but who would exonerate David Hicks. I'm not aware of any Australians who think that way.

I am, however, acutely aware of Australians who demonised David Hicks simply because of his Muslim faith, and wanted him imprisoned indefinitely in spite of a lack of compelling evidence, a legal system that was dismantled before it achieved a proper conviction because it was incapable of impartial judgment and a prosecutor who later resigned in disgust at the system that he at one time represented.

I am also aware of Australians who apparently want Pratt not only exonerated but praised. This seems in contradiction of a conviction in a multi-million-dollar fraud.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

In using the case of Richard Pratt to push a questionable agenda with clear links to bigotry, Daniel Lewis dishonours the type of decency exhibited by Richard Pratt.

He fought for better relations between Palestinians and Israelis, and was disgusted by extremists whose anti-Islamic rhetoric made such reconciliation more difficult.

Stephen Morgan

Runcorn, Qld

As a recent immigrant I thought things would be different here.

After the charges against Richard Pratt were dropped, don't ever again raise your Australian eyebrows at South African authorities for timorously cancelling the prosecution of president elect, Jacob Zuma.

I'm beginning to feel at home here.

Mellory Bisschoff

Belair, SA

THE next entrepreneurial self-starter we see like Richard Pratt may well hit Australian shores in a rickety Indonesian fishing boat.

Sandra K. Eckersley

Marrickville, NSW

SOMALI pirates earned about \$50 million last year. The West is preparing to blast them out of the water.

Richard Pratt's cartel fixed prices and ripped \$700 million off us as part of building his \$5billion empire.

In death, the ruling class lauds him.

The Somalis are in the wrong business.

John Passant

Kambah, ACT

WITHOUT doubt we should applaud the philanthropy of the late Richard Pratt but it should be evaluated within the context of his huge annual income and astronomical accumulated wealth -- noblesse oblige.

It is possible that on a relative basis, humbler Australians have excelled even more in donating of their time, income and savings to charitable causes without comparable recognition or awards.

Max Dickens

Blackheath, NSW

NOTWITHSTANDING Mr Pratt's notable achievements, his admirable philanthropy was probably funded by the hundreds of millions of dollars stolen from Australian consumers by price-fixing.

It should be noted that the \$36 million fine was paid to avoid prosecution in which the whole mess would have been made public.

The ACCC claim that he lied under oath needed to be finalised, otherwise lying becomes a normal part of business.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Furthermore, the conga line of acolytes would indicate that politicians regard lying as a normal component of operations.

The ordinary man in the street probably does not understand the enormity of the breaches of the law that occurred, and like the followers of Robin Hood, judge him on his munificence rather than breaches of the law.

Greg Angelo

Balwyn North, Vic

I WAS not an admirer of Pratt when he was alive, but I am absolutely disgusted by Nicholson's cartoon (30/4).

It is not even funny, and I hope some member of the Pratt family will go and spit on Nicholson's tomb when his time has come.

Peter Archer

Gorokan, Vic

JEFF Kennett thinks most Australians would agree that it was unfair that Mr Pratt was being pursued by the ACCC over price-fixing ("Samuel smeared by Pratt's friends", 30/4).

I think it most unfair that most Australians were forced to pay more for products because of price-fixing.

Price-fixing robs us all and any attempt by the ACCC to pursue any company that sanctions this behaviour will have my support.

Pat Meadows

Ballan, Vic

Moderate the madrassas to tone down pernicious Islam

GREG Sheridan refers to the Herculean task of combating pernicious Islamism in Pakistan and Afghanistan ("Pakistan must be saved from total collapse", 30/4).

The main source of this extremism is the madrassas where youth are often indoctrinated with hate-suffused bigotry.

Pakistan should enforce a more tolerant curriculum. That would probably be more effective than war.

Tom Drake-Brockman

Berrilee, NSW

THE most logical, painless and economical way of solving the Afghanistan opium problem is for the UN to buy the entire crop each year.

There would be a steady income for the farmers, the warlords would lose their power, there would be a dramatic reduction in heroin on the streets of Europe, the US and Australia and the West could end its program of mutual self-destruction with Afghanistan.

Robert Eastman

Port Adelaide, SA

GREG Sheridan sees the significant shift in public justification for Australia's additional commitment to Afghanistan ("Plan shies away from sharp end", 30/4).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Prime Minister chooses now to put the emphasis on defeating al-Qa'ida rather than the Taliban.

This is odd when it will be Taliban forces who Australians will continue to be shooting at, not those of al-Qa'ida.

Why? Because the al-Qa'ida terrorists are comfortably at home across the border in Pakistan where they have been (so far as Western surveillance can determine) since they were forced from Afghanistan after the initial allied attacks in the wake of 9/11.

Rudd's justification for having Australian troops in Afghanistan is no stronger than it was prior to his latest announcement.

David Williams

Frewville, SA

AFGHANISTAN is unwinnable. It needs at least nearly a million troops.

It is surrounded by Islamic states to which the Taliban can retire to regroup and rearm.

The US and Pakistan failed to heed the warning when helping the Taliban: When you sup with the devil, use a long spoon.

Derek Dutton

Lesmurdie, WA

Soft Left, hard centre

I READ the articles on Robert Manne's role in the dismissal of The Monthly's editor, Sally Warhaft, and then read your editorial ("Recycled platitudes make poor debate", 29/4).

There is a puritanical moral rectitude about Manne and his ilk that smacks of totalitarianism. They abhor debate and will do anything to shut down those who do not acquiesce to their particular political penchants.

Soft Lefties have hard centres.

Jim Wilson

Beaumont, SA

TRADITIONALLY, public intellectuals have valued knowledge and truth, and have had a healthy scepticism of power.

This is not criteria Manne has been meeting.

Indeed, Manne is behaving like somebody who desperately wants to audition as Kevin Rudd's press secretary.

Simon Werner

North Williamstown, Vic

IT'S odd that a supposedly respectable intellectual journal such as Quadrant has chosen to attack Sally Warhaft in an immature and callous way.

Currently on its website (30/4) it has posted a video titled "Dumb blonde", depicting a dense American game show contestant, underneath the heading "We've found a new editor for The Monthly".

Todd Joregensen

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Healesville, Vic

THE Monthly? Oh, you mean the Manne-thly.

Dario Mujkic

Collingwood, Vic

Terror can be defeated

SRI Lanka has taught the world a lesson.

With perseverance and determination and a resolve to ignore the bleeding hearts of world public opinion, Sri Lanka has shown that it is possible to defeat a terrorist army.

The crushing of the **Tamil Tigers**, a group whose contribution to the world includes pioneering the use of the suicide bomber and the child soldier and whose cadres have killed and injured thousands of civilians over the past 26 years, is to be welcomed.

It is a victory for peace and reconciliation, because a resolution of the conflict was never possible while the Tigers took it upon themselves to represent Sri Lanka's Tamils.

Arthur Hurwitz

Randwick, NSW

Is that where our rain went?

IF Antarctic Sea ice has been growing since the 1970s (I have no reason to doubt the evidence) I am surprised that climatologists have not linked the decades-long dry in the south of Australia and the volume of atmospheric water now trapped as ice ("Ministers divided over ice shelf claims", 29/4).

I am only a dumb pilot but I am aware that atmospheric moisture does not traverse readily between the northern and southern hemispheres and that the atmospheric water cycle is essentially stable.

It would therefore be reasonable to consider that the mass of water now locked up as ice in Antarctica is no longer available as rain in the rest of the southern hemisphere.

Ron Haack

Corlette, NSW

FEW if any in the climate debate have alluded to the fact that Ian Plimer, a mining geologist, is on the board of two mining companies (Ivanhoe Australia Ltd and KEFI Minerals). He also has been a critic of carbon trading's impact on the mining industry.

No matter what your view of the science may be, the professor has a vested interest that casts a shadow over his impartiality.

Marco Fante

Katoomba, NSW

COMPLIANCE costs for a carbon pollution reduction scheme are not all this nation has to worry about.

If we do not meet our Kyoto targets, fines will be imposed by a non-elected UN body.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Japan, Spain and Italy face fines of \$33billion for failing to reach their Kyoto carbon targets. These will be passed on as higher costs and taxes.

Alan Barron

Grovedale, Vic

Balkan camps were hellholes

I HAVE followed with interest your reports on the Captain Dragan Vasiljkovic case ("Dragan ordered I be shot: witness", 28/4 and "Captain Dragan raped me: Muslim woman", 30/4).

My experiences in the Balkans are strikingly similar to the claims made.

Beatings at Sremska Mitrovica prison and at other prisons and military camp transit POW sites were systematic.

The taking of prisoners blind-folded outside of prisons by night into nearby forests by Serb paramilitaries and state secret police for mock executions (cocking of weapons accompanied by sneering death threats and beatings) was a regular occurrence to "ginger up" prisoners to write false confessions.

The removal of women from villages by paramilitary "red berets", including later in Kosovo by Arkan's Tigers, was regularly witnessed and widely known by everybody working through the Balkans in the 1990s as "standard procedure".

Reconciliation in the Balkans and between Balkan communities abroad is dependent on all communities admitting their responsibilities, not continuing the fight.

Name and address supplied and withheld

No nod yet for LNG plant

WESTERN Australia's Environmental Protection Authority has not yet approved a liquefied natural gas processing plant at James Price Point on the Kimberley coast ("Opponents of developing the Kimberley should get a grip", 29/4).

As yet, there is only an in-principle agreement signed by traditional owners represented by the Kimberley Land Council and the WA Government to develop a location for the hub.

This agreement is conditional on environmental and heritage assessments and the signing of an indigenous land use agreement.

Traditional owners were forced to make their decision on this one site as a result of the WA Government and Labor's Federal Minister for Resources forcing negotiations in order to get the site they wanted.

Senator Rachel Siewert

Australian Greens

Northbridge, WA

FIRST BYTE

Are the kids bingeing on lolly water in drinking games along the lines of "every time Kevin Rudd says 'um' in a speech, skoll"? Even as an adult it would floor me.

Dan Avey

Paddington, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

US officials are desperately seeking a new name for the swine flu because other countries are banning their pork exports. So why not re-name the Hog Wog the Suidae Calamitous Acute Respiratory flu, or SCARE flu?

Thos Puckett

Ashgrove, Qld

I notice that Mexican policeman still wear sombreros while on duty ("We can't halt spread, WHO admits, as more nations hit", 29/4). Despite proximity to the US, the Mexicans have withstood the global pandemic of baseball caps. Good on 'em!

Simon Bartlett

Carbrook, Qld

The only upside to the swine flu pandemic is that we haven't heard a word about the global financial crisis for at least two days.

Debbie Holland

Gunn, NT

SARS, bird flu, the millennium bug (named so by those who could not count), and now swine flu -- yet another panicdemic!

Chris Curtis

Hurstbridge, Vic

The only function of climate modelling is to make economic forecasting look responsible.

Michael Wiseman

Brisbane, Qld

THANKS for your attempt to differentiate between unlawful and illegal (Cut and Paste, 29/4). It is easy to remember if you keep in mind that unlawful means outside the law, whereas illegal is a sick bird.

Paul Hunt

Engadine, NSW

letters@theaustralian.com.au

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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For information on buying prints of any

Bill Leak cartoon go to

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**DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR
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UNITED NATIONS, April 14 -- The United Nations Office of the Secretary General issued the text of the following statement:

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Farhan Haq, Associate Spokesperson for the Secretary-General. Good afternoon. ****Visiting Students** We are very pleased to have with us today a group of students from the Globalization and International Affairs Programme at Bard College, who are attending the briefing. Welcome. I know that some of you may have had some questions about the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). So we do expect to have with us, just here to answer questions that you may have had, Stephane Dujarric, the Director for Communications.

He will be here in a little while. ****Secretary-General in Washington** The Secretary-General today addressed the Haiti donor conference in Washington, D.C., and he stressed the need to support the plan presented by Haiti's Government. This plan, he said, would create thousands of new jobs in agriculture and manufacturing over the next two years, improve basic services and reduce Haiti's vulnerability to natural disasters. By acting now to translate this plan into action, he added, we will lock in the gains we have made in terms of political stability, and we will forge a renewed partnership built on a mutual commitment to place Haiti on a more sustainable social and economic footing. The Secretary-General urged the donors to commit themselves to bring a measure of potential prosperity to the country, with the promise of a better life for millions of Haitians. The Secretary-General also held a number of bilateral meetings in the margins of the conference, including with United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, with the Canadian Minister of International Cooperation, Beverly Oda, and with Japanese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Shintaro Ito. And we'll see whether we can get further details later today about those meetings. ****Security Council** The Security Council held a formal meeting yesterday afternoon and adopted a presidential statement on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). In that statement, the Council condemned the recent launch by the DPRK, which is in contravention of Security Council resolution 1718 (2006). The Council reiterated that the DPRK must comply fully with its obligations under resolution 1718 and demanded that the DPRK not conduct any further launch. In a statement we issued afterwards, the Secretary-General welcomed the adoption of the presidential statement, which sends a unified message of the international community on the recent launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He further hopes that the Council's unified response will pave the way for renewed efforts towards the peaceful resolution of all outstanding issues in the region, including through the early resumption of the six-party talks and the inter-Korean dialogue. The Secretary-General stands ready to lend his full support to these efforts. **** Western Sahara** The Secretary-General's latest report on the situation concerning Western Sahara is now available. In it, the Secretary-General notes that his Personal Envoy, Christopher Ross, has suggested to the parties that one or more small, informal preparatory meetings be held to facilitate a next round of negotiations. The Secretary-General recommends that the Security Council reiterate its call upon the parties to negotiate in good faith, without preconditions, and to show political will to enter into substantive discussions and

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ensure the success of the negotiations. He also recommends that the Security Council extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) for another year, until 30 April 2010.

****Iraq-Kuwait** In another report, the Secretary-General, notes with satisfaction the ongoing improvement in bilateral relations between Iraq and Kuwait, but again stresses the need to translate political statements of goodwill into concrete actions. He suggests that a confidence- and cooperation-building period, lasting until July 2010, should be introduced to further encourage the parties to achieve visible and significant progress and to strengthen the patterns of their practical cooperation. At the end of that period, he writes, the Security Council may wish to consider the matter and determine the future course of action.

**** Sudan** On Sudan, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) reports that the security situation in Darfur has been relatively calm over the past 24 hours. However, a UNAMID vehicle was carjacked by unidentified armed men in Zalingei, West Darfur, yesterday. The incident was reported to Sudanese Government officials, and the vehicle was later recovered 30 kilometres north of Zalingei. Meanwhile, UNAMID conducted 25 confidence-building patrols, 27 escort patrols and 6 night patrols covering 53 villages and camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNAMID police conducted 93 patrols as escorts for women and girls to travel outside IDP camps to collect firewood.

**** Somalia** On Somalia, according to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), some 60,000 Somalis have returned to Mogadishu since the start of 2009. But although such returns are usually a positive sign, UNHCR is not encouraging them right now, given Mogadishu's volatile security situation and lack of basic services. The agency is currently working to re-establish its presence in Mogadishu. It is also leading UN assessment efforts, which will guide humanitarian aid and protection policies for the returnee communities. And we have more on that upstairs.

**** Durban Review Conference** As you know, the Durban Anti-Racism Review Conference starts next week in Geneva. And the final session of the Conference's Preparatory Committee starts in Geneva tomorrow. The Chair of the working group established to negotiate the Conference's outcome document has continued to consult informally on the significantly shorter "rolling" draft that was tabled last month. A new, slightly revised version of that draft is expected to be submitted before tomorrow. Once ready, that latest version will be posted immediately on the Conference's official website: www.un.org/durbanreview2009. Spokespeople have also been designated for the Conference - both here and in Geneva. And we will be happy to provide you with their contact information after the briefing.

****Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees** The company that operates most of Geneva's public transportation system has joined up with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to help raise funds for Congolese refugees. Through the initiative, known as the "Gimme Shelter" campaign, a short film will be displayed on more than 200 buses, trams and trolleybuses in Geneva. The film was shot in North Kivu Province and made by Academy Award winners Ben Affleck and John Toll. The campaign's goal is to raise funds that will allow UNHCR to get clean water and emergency humanitarian aid kits to Congolese refugees. And we have more on that upstairs.

****Guest at the Noon Briefing Tomorrow** Our guest at the noon briefing tomorrow, John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, will be here promptly at noon to brief on the humanitarian situation in Sri Lanka. And like I said before, we have in the room right now Stephane Dujarric, the Communications Director of UNDP who is available to answer any questions you might have about UNDP's work. Do we have anything further for me? Yes, please?

Questions and Answers

Question: Farhan, does the Secretary-General have any reaction or comments on the ratification of an agreement by the President of Pakistan with the Taliban? **Associate Spokesperson:** The Secretary-General has already made his concerns known about the situation in Swat valley, which is I believe the area that this agreement covers. He had mentioned just a few weeks ago in his last press briefing in this room that he had some concerns about the video that had been shown of a woman being flogged in Swat valley, and he had mentioned that such violence against women is unacceptable, and he has discussed his concerns about violence against women in general.

Question: But what about reaction to the agreement? **Associate Spokesperson:** That's all we have to say for now. He has been concerned in general about any agreements, including the one, by the way, recently in the neighbouring country of Afghanistan that might be discriminatory to women. So he has mentioned that in the past.

Question: Yes, Farhan, just to follow up on the report on Western Sahara. I was wondering whether basically the quote, the main points in the report, that the situation is at a standstill, that we're not seeing any resumption of the Manhasset talks any time soon. And I was wondering whether we can have Mr. [Christopher] Ross for a briefing after his report or some time he thinks is reasonable. **Associate Spokesperson:** Okay, we'll be in touch with the Department of Political Affairs and see whether we can get a briefing by Mr. Ross at some point. At this stage, as we mentioned, the idea is to have some preparatory meeting. So it may have to wait until after that. But we'll put in the request.

Question: Is there any contact between the Secretary-General and the new Israeli Government with regard to the sticking issues

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in the Middle East, such as the blockade on Gaza and the withdrawal from the occupied territories in Lebanon? Associate Spokesperson: The Secretary-General did have a phone call with Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu in the last couple of weeks since Prime Minister Netanyahu's inauguration. So he did talk about some of the issues in the Middle East at the time. I don't have any specific details to give. Question: Did they discuss Gaza? Associate Spokesperson: Yes, the situation in Gaza is one of the topics that came up. Question: First, on the Western Sahara report, is the Secretary-General, what's his position on whether there should be dedicated human rights staff for the MINURSO mission? That seems to be one of the issues of contest. I've been reading it, it says that we have no staff and we call on the parties to uphold human rights standards. Does he, therefore, not believe that it would be useful to have human rights staffers for this mission? Associate Spokesperson: I think that position in the report expresses where we stand on that. Yes? Question: Just previous to your briefing, [General Assembly] President [Miguel d'Escoto] Brockmann said that... called the G-20 meeting a failure. Does the Secretary-General share his assessment of that meeting? Associate Spokesperson: The Secretary-General has already given his views on the G-20 meeting, and they were expressed in a statement we issued at the time of the meeting, as well as in his own remarks to the G-20. Those are the Secretary-General's views on the matter, and we wouldn't have any comment on the GA President's own views. Question: What is the Secretary-General's response to North Korea's announcement last night subsequent to the statement you just read out earlier? Associate Spokesperson: In terms of that, of course, we continue to urge all parties to work within the six-party process. And, as he said in his statement yesterday, we hope for a resumption of that process as well as of the inter-Korean dialogue. If I have anything more to say on that later on, I'll let you know. Question: A follow up question, please. You stated that the position of the Secretary-General on the question of MINURSO handling the human rights file in Western Sahara is stated in the report, but basically I read the report, there is no position. It states the position of each side. So I was wondering, what's the SG's position on this request by the Polisario to include the human rights file to the mandate of MINURSO? Associate Spokesperson: I'll see whether I can get anything further, but for now, the latest information we have on where we stand on the human rights issue there is what is written up in the human rights section of the report. Question: I just want to ask this on a follow-up question. Can you actually deflect the speculation that the relationship between the General Assembly President and the Secretary-General is not very cordial? Associate Spokesperson: The Secretary-General has good relations with the General Assembly President, as indeed he does with quite a variety of the officials throughout the system that he deals with. That doesn't preclude them from having different views on matters, and certainly on the G-20, their views differ. Question: I want to ask you, after yesterday's briefing, as you know, OCHA [Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs] has acknowledged that there are UN staff members that are being held in these IDP camps in Sri Lanka and not able to leave. OCHA says that the Government was asked to release them and has not. I wanted to know two things. First of all, why didn't the UN system say anything about this essentially detention of UN staff members for this period of time? And two, what are the legal rights of these staff members? Am I wrong that UN staff members have some type of privileges and immunities not to be detained, particularly in this case, where they're not charged with any crime? Why has nothing been said about this and what will be done starting today to do it? Associate Spokesperson: First of all, the United Nations does not disclose names and location of staff or their dependents. As for contact with the staff, please note that the UN has access to all camps with displaced people in the Vani region, and therefore can contact UN staff as required. We've repeatedly asked the Government of Sri Lanka to allow them freedom of movement so they can eventually resume their role as aid workers. While the Government has repeatedly assured us that this request would be met, the staff still remain in the camps. While the United Nations is relieved that some UN and NGO staff and dependents have been able to leave the "no-fire" zone, we reiterate our extreme concern about the estimated 150,000 people remaining in the zone. We demand that civilians wishing to leave the conflict zone be allowed to do so without any hindrance. And in particular the **LTTE** [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] must allow civilians to choose whether they stay or leave. The Government of Sri Lanka must ensure that internally displaced people are dealt with in line with international standards and principles, including the need for transparent screening and registration processes, guaranteed freedom of movement and commitments to ensure a speedy return to their places of origin. Question: I understand that the **Tamil Tigers** are keeping people in the conflict zone. I am asking two things. Why didn't the UN say anything about the denial of freedom of movement to its own staff? How long has that been going on? And does that comply with international law? What are the rights of the staff members whose freedom of movement... have been detained... has been removed and for how long has that been going on? Associate Spokesperson: Like I've said, we have been pressing the Government to allow them freedom of movement. I started out by saying that we don't disclose the names and locations of staff and their

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dependents. In an insecure environment, it is particularly crucial that we not do that. Question: But if you're arrested in a country, for example, I've seen from this podium, announcements made of UN staff members, and you said: "We demand that they be released." Why wasn't this done in this case? And you just don't keep their location confidential, i.e., say nothing about their detention, like if these people had freedom of movement denied, isn't that detention and does that violate international law? Is that something the UN is now accepting without saying anything? Associate Spokesperson: Like I just said, we are urging the Government to deal with all displaced people, including of course, our people, in line with international standards and principles. And I specified what that entails. Question: Sorry, just from your statement you just read, does the UN not consider them detained if they have the ability to communicate with them? I didn't get that one section of the statement you just read. Associate Spokesperson: The point is that they're not incommunicado, we do have contact with them. At the same time, we have conveyed our own concerns about freedom of movement and yet, despite that, even though we've received assurances that our request would be met, the staff still remain in the camps. Question: What is the comment of the Secretary-General on mortar fire that was... the congressman who was... his plane was shot at yesterday at the Mogadishu airport? Associate Spokesperson: No, we don't have any specific comment on that. Obviously we continue to be concerned about all of the level of violence in Somalia as a whole. Question: Farhan, is there any update on the activities of the technical commission for Benazir Bhutto's assassination? Associate Spokesperson: The [technical team] has returned to New York and they're in discussions with officials here at the UN. I don't have anything specific to say. Question: do you have a date for the publishing of the report? Associate Spokesperson: Not yet. Question: Do you have, for the commission that's looking into things like Gaza, the report to the SG? Associate Spokesperson: It's not done yet. As we indicated last week, it might be about another week or so from now before it's done. So it's not done yet. Question: Michele said last week that it would be this week, she can't tell us what day this week... Associate Spokesperson: No, no. We had a statement last week, I believe last Wednesday or Thursday, that said it would be possibly another two weeks. I can show you the statement. But two weeks from then would be about a week from now. Question: This may be a transition to the UNDP presentation, but I know that Kemal Dervis, the former Administrator, is a special adviser or a special envoy of the Secretary-General? It's just been announced that he is now also working for (inaudible) Bank in Turkey. I'm wondering whether you view this as any potential conflict and whether his role with the Secretary-General is an ongoing one. Associate Spokesperson: No. He was a special adviser dealing with specifically one issue, the G-20 Summit, which has come and gone. So that role has ended. Question: Okay. I'm sorry, there was one thing. Weren't there announced under Kofi Annan, right at the end, these anti-revolving door... I just want to know whether, for example, if the UN has any business dealings with (inaudible) Bank, does this in any way implicate the "revolving door" provisions if you go to work for an institution...? Associate Spokesperson: I don't know enough of the details about that. That would be an issue I believe that if there were any conflicts he would need to report on. That's part of the bulletin that was issued, I believe, two years back. Question: Okay, thank you. Associate Spokesperson: And that's it for me. Briefing by Stephane Dujarric, Director of Communications, UNDP Good afternoon. I think a number of you may have seen the article which appeared today in a newspaper here in the States regarding a report from the USAID - the US Agency for International Development - from their Inspector-General on UN reconstruction projects in Afghanistan. While we at UNDP have yet to receive an official copy of the report, I thought it would be useful to come here today. I have a few words to say and then answer any questions you might have. Just a short word on the background of the project. In 2003, USAID in Afghanistan approached the UN Development Programme and asked UNDP to take over their Provincial Reconstruction Team Quick Impact Programme, otherwise known as QIPS, which had experienced certain difficulties. USAID also asked UNDP to use UNOPS, the UN Office Project Services agency, as the implementing agency in the QIPS project. QIPS was intended as an urgent initiative to provide jobs for Afghans mainly in rural, remote and often inaccessible and insecure areas. The emphasis was on the rapid creation of employment opportunities as much as on the completion and repair of infrastructure and provision of much-needed services to improve the well-being of the local communities in Taliban strongholds. Much of the work involved repairs of roads, bridges, wells and clinics and not new construction, as such. The vast majority of these projects were successfully completed. Now, as mentioned, we've just now, just this morning, seen a copy of the Inspector-General's report because it was published in the press. We have not yet been given an official copy by USAID, it was never shared with us by USAID. That being said, we are just now reviewing it and studying it carefully, and we're clearly very disturbed by the issues that it raises. But I do want to make few points very clear. Regarding the monies that USAID has issued a bill of collection for, there have already been a number of meetings, including at the highest level of UNDP and USAID, to work through this matter. We will be going through the vouchers with

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USAID to ensure that they are satisfied as to the validity of the expenses. Again, any money that remains in dispute at the end of this process will be refunded by UNDP to USAID. Our expectations are that this will not amount to more than \$1.5 million. No one is hiding behind any legal immunity as it has been implied. Our relationships with our donors is our lifeblood. If there are disputes, they are resolved amicably to the donor's satisfaction. After a quick read of the Inspector-General's report, we recognize the lapses in the timing and quality of certain reports back to USAID, but we have been working for months to resolve any disputes with UNOPS and USAID and we expect to fully resolve these matters very soon. On oversight, while this project was monitored regularly, UNDP's Acting Administrator has begun an internal audit of this project to ensure we explore all of the allegations and, just as important, to make sure that any reporting or communications procedures with donors are strengthened where they can be strengthened. UNDP is as angry as anyone about the reported misbehaviour of UNOPS or other employees in Afghanistan during the period of 2003-2006, and we fully support UN action against any individuals involved. UNDP is committed to improving the lives of people in Afghanistan and has a good and close working relationship with the US Government and agencies such as USAID. We've been implementing significant programmes in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban, including, often under very difficult circumstances, preparations for the Loya Jirga, the elections that took place in 2004, and preparations for the elections that are going on now. To this day, USAID and the State Department have supported UNDP programmes in Afghanistan with contributions of close to \$336 million over the past seven years, with no major disputes or difficulties. And as Afghanistan moves closer to another landmark election this August, where UNDP is providing support to voter registration - I think we've already registered close to 5 million voters as of last month - and other electoral systems support we're providing, it is important that the US Government and all of our donors receives the level of accountability and transparency they expect and deserve from UNDP. That's it for what I was going to have to say. If there are any questions I will take them. Yes, sir. Questions and Answers

Question: [inaudible]...report in USA Today said that some of the money that was earmarked for Afghanistan projects was used to fund projects in Dubai, among other places. Do you know if this is true? Is it being investigated? Do you know what project this might have been? Mr. Dujarric: As far as UNDP is concerned, when money is given by a donor for a specific project, it is used for that project in the country which it was intended for. I think if others in the UN system, or if there has been malfeasance, these things have been investigated. But UNDP policy is extremely strict and when money is given for a certain project it is used for that project. Question: So, if the money was used in Dubai that was fraudulent use of it? Mr. Dujarric: That would be a fraudulent use. But I have no information that any UNDP monies were used in that case. Yes, Matthew. Question: Sure, Stephane. The report, the actual Inspector-General report goes through... doesn't limit it to 2006. I mean, they're talking about March 2008 requests made to UNDP for information, no information provided, and the inability to go forward because none was provided. So, are the people named in this report, how many of them and which of them are still employed by UNDP and what's their excuse for... You just said that UNDP works with its donors... Mr. Dujarric: I have to say from... Question: Why didn't [inaudible]... for these others? Why didn't they answer the question? Mr. Dujarric: ...from March, I think for the whole period following closure of the programme, there have been numerous exchanges between USAID, UNDP and UNOPS on the ground, in Kabul and lately at Headquarters. So, you know, we take these allegations very seriously. We do feel that there was a lot of back and forth between UNDP and USAID, including with the Inspector-General. We recognize that there were some lapses, perhaps in responding to those requests. We're closely looking at the time line. We have been and will continue to cooperate with USAID to get the matter settled. And as I mentioned, one of the initiatives taken by the Acting Administrator is to review all the lines of communication in reporting to see what can be strengthened. But we're clearly now looking back at the lines of communications. But we do feel that there was quite a lot of exchanges between the Inspector-General and between USAID on the ground. Clearly, you know, as I said, we have not fully seen the report. We saw it like you did this morning. We do need to study it carefully. But we value the relationship and we want to get it resolved as quickly as possible. Question: What was UNDP's role, I guess, in overseeing, like, this guy Mr. Orvia (?), the UNOPS guy there? There was a previous discussion here of him using UN funds to build a guest house for himself, other things. What was, when UNDP takes a fee for a project, what is its role in overseeing the work that's done and how much of fees were charged in this case? Mr. Dujarric: I think each programme is a little different. This particular project, as I mentioned, USAID asked us to use UNOPS, which we did. The money is passed through us. That clearly invokes a high level of responsibility, of fiduciary responsibility, on our part, which we take seriously and we're looking into this matter now. The projects, as the project document states, the projects were to be, the completion were to be certified by USAID, as well as by UNOPS. So the implementation of the project was done by UNOPS, again at the request of USAID. Question:

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What's the standard fee, though, that the UNDP takes for the pass-through, and why didn't USAID just pay UNOPS directly...? Mr. Dujarric: Well, I think that's a question that you're welcome to ask the USAID; I don't speak for them. The fee, I believe, is around 7 per cent. Yes, sir. Question: If you find fraudulent activity, what is the process? Who's got jurisdiction in these types of cases, and what would you pursue if you do find... [inaudible]? Mr. Dujarric: As always with the UN system, should fraudulent behaviour be found, the case can then be brought to court in either the jurisdiction where it took place, which could be Afghanistan, or it could be brought in the jurisdiction of the Headquarters of the UN office, which is New York. I think a number of, you know, cases in the past, procurement-related cases have gone to court in New York. So we would have to then file papers with a national jurisdiction. Clearly there have been cases of UNOPS employees raised in the press, being accused of behaving in a fraudulent manner. We would very much hope that anyone that is found to have worked in that manner is brought to justice by the UN system. But the issue of immunity is one that can be lifted by the Secretary-General alone. Great. Thank you very much. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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CHALLENGES BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE POST TERROR ERA

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Colombo, April 9 -- Many dignitaries articulate on development as the priority of the "post terror era". Development at any stage is a function of many factors like policy environment, political stability, security status, human resources, free labor movement etc. Therefore, placing development challenges only in one basket of 'security status' consequence is inappropriate.

In the Sri Lankan context the conflict that has ended is not only a military provocation. Military interventions were reactions to many other root causes that were the reasons for survival for thirty years of cancerous perpetuation. The public service -the District / Provincial Administrations in particular- was generally facilitating relief supplies and a bit of rehabilitation and reconstruction during this period. Some reason out the conflict as consequential of terrorism and unreasonable demands made by Tamil minority groups. Tiger literature explains their stands differently, based on discrimination, lack of respect to Tamils, iniquitous treatment to Tamils, failures to address their grievances etc. Countering these some argue what rights are not enjoyed by the minorities in comparison to the majority. Then, Tigers point out the unachieved "Tamil aspirations." Simply, both parties play ping-pong! There are more insidious, complex and deep rooted reasons for the conflict; not necessarily militaristic. Military acts are only a portion of the problem to be solved and hence military has a limited role-play, which they have completed efficiently. During the conflict there had been displacements, devastation of assets and life, deep trauma, widowing, orphaning etc. Plundering of lives by conscriptions and killing of civilians by Tigers and abductions, disappearances, indiscriminate shelling and killing civilians by Government forces are cross allegations made by the Government and Tigers respectively. With the end of military conflicts these could be erased or kept under control but the old scars will be on them for some time. The heartburn due to losses and calamity is not limited to North and East and therefore seeing the conflict on a military canvass alone is unreasonable. "Making terrorism history" will depend on answering these and other issues too. It cannot be only by boast of military victories or development rhetoric. Hence, to live with a heavenly feel at the end of war and sensationalizing development projections alone will be only cosmetic. And the cosmetics too are for the victors at war and politicians; and, not to the affected or vanquished. In this background it is necessary to ponder on how normalcy, development and peace could be sustained in an integrated manner in a fractured society to benefit the affected and the society as a whole. At the outset, normalization should give confidence to the public and the investors regarding regional security. Disarmament, freezing constraints on movement etc will be more difficult in the North without public and Tiger cooperation, but essential to otivate investors. The public service in addition to changing the psyche of the public and investors will have responsibilities for the investors. It will be in assisting businesses by allocating land, supplying utilities like water, electricity, roads, and communications that are handled by government departments and corporations. Some believe that engagement of military in the recaptured areas is the best for such facilitation. This may be allured by the private investors due to sheer military efficacy shown lately. Will the public, especially in the North with ghostly humiliating experiences at the hands of the military and Tigers appreciate such military units in lieu of Tiger units?

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE POST TERROR ERA

Will it be tolerated by the ordinary public administrators who are more conventional and rule / regulation oriented than the military personnel? Contrarily, are conventional systems the best for a totally different scenario and demands? Another point is whether the Government wielding security authority in the region permits Tiger regrouping by largely withdrawing from the North/ East? I do not think so and need not be so either. Where and how does the public administrator draw the demarcating line is the challenge. The issue is that not only the military and public service that have to readjust to situations. It has to happen in the public, investors and more importantly in the weakened Tiger organization. Many politicians and spokespersons seem to believe that normalization could be brought about by infrastructure development or reintroduction of public services deliveries alone. While appreciating the need for reconstructing infrastructure and its importance, winning hearts and minds as a precursor to normalization should be counted. It could be by offering the affected population enjoyment of lost constitutional rights and democratic governance to elect their representatives unhindered (unlike in the East), maximum power sharing and even improving the quantum of shared power (No separate State.), re-establishing lost respect as communities (inclusive of the Muslims who suffer from 1990 onwards), re-introduction of freedom of expression, revamping the lost human and fundamental rights, reintroducing free movement that had been curtailed by both parties, ceasing ethnic profiling by the Police etc. These are the ingredients of a political solution that is been repeatedly offered by southern political authorities. The public service can play a subsidiary and supportive role in some of these. In addition to these there are opportunities for healing psychological aberrations and filling psychological vacuum. How can one erase the traumatic experiences caused by both parties? Let us accept that there are unavoidable events that happen in conflict situations. But, those responsible should accept them openly. Magnanimity and courage to own up sins and wrongs and excusing has to be introduced. During conflict the civil society loses strength. This includes the participation of civil organizations, women and clergy. This has happened in the Sri Lankan conflict too. How these groups could be revitalized is another issue to be recognized. Even the Ministries that deal with Women's Affairs or Children or Religious Affairs or NGOs do not seem to be bothered on their respective roles within a normalization process. Displaced persons demand return to their original habitats but this is problematic due to the existence of High Security Zones, especially in the North. While this status will continue until the Tiger threats are neutralized, the swiftness of return could be a yardstick with the communities long debarred from returning to their habitats. Hence, eternal postponement of returning the displaced and keeping them in temporary camps may not be a wise move to win the hearts and minds. If no possibility exists at all to return, sufficient compensation in lieu should be paid by the District Administration and provided with relocation facility. Awareness creation in the public on government's security concerns will be the responsibility of the public service and civil society. There will be practical problems for early return, such as establishing ownership, shortage of documentation, unavailability of boundaries on ground, shortages of materials, finances and manpower to undertake vast development concurrently. It will be important for the District Administration and Land Administration to soothe these rough corners. The "missing links" delaying return due to such constraints have to be "restored" by the public service. Another area of concern is physical normalization or human factorization which commences with the return of the displaced to their original home areas, engagement in vocations, reconstruction of houses, easing movement, marketing, revamping of service organizations such as cooperatives, banks, facilitation of education, health, extension services etc. Without these in place normalization will be a dream and the public service's role play will be extensive in these spheres. One has to be mindful of the fact that most youth especially from the undeveloped North and East who were Tiger cadres have lost educational opportunities, thus making them disqualified on educational grounds under current recruitment specifications and also without any vocational training. There is the need to train them in vocations. How far the public administrators are prepared for such challenge is important as idling criminal minded youth could be regrouped easily if other rehabilitation methods are not in vogue. This will entail establishing new departments, their roles and new recruitment systems to integrate these cadres in State organizations. It may be necessary to even reduce qualifications for entry of these cadres in to public services as special cases for a limited period. Ministries of Public Administration, Education, Labor, Vocational and Technical Training etc have large roles to play in dealing with these. Even the military establishment may have to consider integration of cadres to new organizations as permissible, for which there are previous positive experiences. Some times due to these constraints the option to "import" personnel from outside areas could be suggested by investors and government authorities. This has to be avoided and be the last resort only. If done, it would mean "outsiders" gaining from peace efforts and pushing the cadres to their "specialty", because they lack required occupational specialties. The social problems caused by deserter military personnel in the South joining the underworld should be avoided in the North and East. Similarly, as agreed at the Tokyo Aid Conference in

CHALLENGES BEFORE THE PUBLIC SERVICE IN THE POST TERROR ERA

2003 international assistance may reach the country due to ending of the conflict. Tokyo Conference pledged assistance for the whole country. This has to be renegotiated by the Government. On a priority basis the affected "border communities" also should gain from assistance reaching the North and East, as they too suffered immensely due to conflict. These sensitive areas have to be managed by public administrators without creating secondary damage to the social fabric. The public service will have to change their focus from immediate disaster management to reconstruction and development administration. Having a Minister with excellent understanding and experience in public service is a plus point for revitalizing public service delivery. If the public service fails it will be tattooed on all governmental professionals like engineers, architects, town planners, agriculturists, sociologists etc. If it happens, the country will hold all of them accountable for another regrouping of the frustrated Tiger cadres. The terminologies like "Post **LTTE**", "Post terrorists" "Post war" will be redundant in that case. The challenge ahead of the whole family of professionals and others in the public service is to succeed in the "post terror era" by constructively facing the demands of the day. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily Mirror Sri Lanka.

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Sri Lanka: Tensions Mount as Camp Conditions Deteriorate

Targeted News Service

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Body

Human Rights Watch issued the following news release:

The Sri Lankan government should immediately release the 250,000 displaced Tamils still held in detention camps, Human Rights Watch said today. Deteriorating conditions, including a shortage of water since October 5, 2009, combined with the prospect of flooding during the imminent monsoon season, have led to rising tensions among camp residents and clashes with the military.

Human Rights Watch called on international donors such as Japan, the United States and European Union member states to send a clear message to the Government of Sri Lanka that continued detention of the displaced will have serious consequences for Sri Lanka's relationship with the international community.

"With all these people penned up unnecessarily in terrible conditions, the situation in these camps is getting tense and ugly," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "If they aren't out of there before the monsoons hit, their lives and health will be in serious danger."

The Sri Lankan government has confined virtually everyone displaced by the recent conflict to detention camps, unlawfully depriving them of their liberty and freedom of movement. According to the UN, by the end of September - more than four months after the end of the armed conflict - the government continued to hold 255,551 displaced persons in camps and hospitals, the majority in a large complex of camps called "Manik Farm" in Vavuniya district.

The government has come under increasing criticism for its refusal to release the displaced Tamils. On September 29, Walter Kolin, the representative of the UN secretary-general on the human rights of internally displaced persons, criticized the slow pace of release, saying that "immediate and substantial progress in restoring freedom of movement for the displaced is an imperative if Sri Lanka is to respect the rights of its citizens and comply with its commitments and obligations under international law."

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has warned that Sri Lanka risks creating "bitterness" if it fails to resettle Tamil refugees quickly, and on October 6, the British development minister, Mike Foster, said after a visit to the camps that, "freedom of movement is critical if a humanitarian crisis is to be averted."

Human Rights Watch said that the government's screening of camp residents for **LTTE** supporters has been non-transparent and protracted and that even people who have apparently been screened and cleared have not been released. In September, the Sri Lankan foreign minister announced that 162,000 camp residents had been screened. According to the UN, however, the government had released fewer than 15,000 as of September 28.

Sri Lanka : Tensions Mount as Camp Conditions Deteriorate

On several occasions the government has falsely claimed that it has allowed thousands detained in Manik Farm to return home. On September 24, for example, it announced that 40,000 people had returned to their districts. In reality, many of the people that the government claims to have released have been transferred from Manik Farm to other detention camps, while others are still held at a "way station," a temporary holding facility, in Vavuniya. According to the UN, more than 1,500 people who were transferred from Manik Farm to the way station on September 13 and were due to be released, are still held there, surviving in rapidly deteriorating conditions.

"While the government has the right to screen the displaced persons for security reasons, the process has turned into a ruse to hold as many Tamils for as long as possible in the camps," Adams said. "The government's untruthful statements and promises should not fool anybody anymore."

The international community should demand that the Sri Lankan government release the people in the camps and ensure their well-being, Human Rights Watch said.

Deteriorating conditions in the camps

Several displaced persons told Human Rights Watch that camp conditions have recently deteriorated, creating tension and unrest.

Residents in several sections, called "zones," of Manik Farm have had only limited access to water since a main pipeline pumping water from a nearby river was turned off on October 5 because of low water levels in the river. Camp administration officials have restricted the amount of water per family to 30 liters. The UN refugee agency recommends a minimum of 15 liters of water per person per day.

Thirty-eight-year-old "Jeevitha," a camp resident in Zone 2, told Human Rights Watch:

"This morning I managed to get only 20 liters for our family of five. I won't be able to get more until tomorrow and this water is all we have for drinking, cooking, washing and bathing. For the last three days we have not been able to take a bath or clean properly. It is agony, and the camp administration here does not seem to care about us."

"Aanathi," a 30-year-old woman living in Zone 2 with her 1-year-old son, told Human Rights Watch:

"I stood in line for four-and-a-half hours today, but I gave up in the end. I am so tired. Yesterday, I lined up around midnight and I was only able to get water at nine in the morning. I got 30 liters for me and my one-year-old son. We managed with that, but I know of families with 10 or more family members who have to survive on the same amount."

"Maadhavi," a 32-year-old resident in Zone 1, said that people are getting desperate because of the water shortage. On the morning of October 7, when the water suddenly came back for about 30 minutes, people were scrambling to fill their buckets and a fight broke out:

"People were shouting and throwing stones at each other. We went to the camp administration, but they just told us that we have to endure it. If they don't get us water by tomorrow, we will tear down the fences and go to find water ourselves!"

Over the past two weeks, the Manik Farm camps have also been hit by strong winds, causing damage to shelters and exacerbating the already difficult living conditions. Twenty-year-old "Kumaravel," who lives in one of the camps with his family of five, told Human Rights Watch:

"The winds are tearing branches off the trees and tin sheets off the huts, which then fall on the tents. We are forced to cook outside and the wind blows dust and mud into our food, making it practically inedible. It is very difficult to live here."

Because of overcrowding in the Manik Farm camps, Kumaravel's family shares their five-person tent with another family of four. The section in Manik farm where they live, Zone 2, holds more than 52,000 people even though there should be fewer than 29,000 people there under UN standards. At night, the women sleep inside the tent while the

Sri Lanka : Tensions Mount as Camp Conditions Deteriorate

men either sleep outside or in one of the camp's makeshift classrooms. Kumaravel is worried about what they will do during the rainy season, which usually starts in October:

"We had heavy rains about a month ago. It was hell. The ground here cannot absorb water so it just gathers. We couldn't even walk around. The authorities have done some work to improve drainage, but I doubt it will help much."

Rains in mid-August caused serious flooding, as water destroyed tents and other shelter, made cooking impossible for many, and caused roads to collapse, preventing delivery of crucial aid, such as drinking water. Water also flooded latrine pits, causing raw sewage to flow among the tents. Since then, shelter in Manik Farm - most of which was set up during the large influx of displaced persons in April and May -has further deteriorated. The emergency tents or shelter kits in which most people live were designed to last for three to six months.

Clashes between residents and the military

The mounting frustration among the displaced caused by the deteriorating conditions and lack of free movement has led to conflicts with the military guarding the camps. On September 26, soldiers opened fire on a group of camp residents, wounding at least two. A military spokesperson claimed the guards were compelled to fire when the group tried to escape and started throwing stones and a hand-grenade. The authorities also quickly concluded that, "The wounded suspects and the crowd had links with the terrorists."

However, witnesses gave Human Rights Watch a different account, explaining that Manik Farm camp residents are sometimes allowed to cross between two Zone 1 and Zone 2 to visit relatives or to collect firewood (which is unavailable in Zone 1). At around 5:30 p.m. on that day, a long line of people were waiting for permission to cross the road separating the camps when a soldier called on a man carrying firewood to come forward. Four witnesses independently told Human Rights Watch that the soldiers suddenly attacked the man. Kumaravel, who was one of the witnesses, told Human Rights Watch:

"A soldier started beating the man. Then another joined in. The people in the line tried to intervene, but one of the soldiers opened fire and the other took out a hand grenade and threatened to throw it. Soon, other soldiers arrived and started beating people."

Two witnesses told Human Rights Watch that after the soldiers had dispersed the crowd, the first soldier placed a hand grenade among the wood the man had been carrying and photographed it with his cell phone. Witnesses said that the man was taken away and that the wounded were taken to hospitals. The government said 19 displaced men were arrested after the incident. Human Rights Watch has obtained credible information that at least some of the arrested were beaten during their detention. At least some of those detained were later released.

The incident came just days after soldiers clashed with camp residents in another camp in Vavuniya. On September 23, residents at the Poonthotham camp attacked soldiers and police officers and their vehicles after the police took one of the camp's residents away. The riot, which lasted for three hours, ended when the police brought the man back.

"These incidents should serve as a wake-up call for the government and donors," said Adams. "It's time for international donors to send a clear message to Colombo that continued and blatant disregard for international standards will come at a price."

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Hot under the sun, Yala wetlands protect fauna

Daily News (Sri Lanka)
August 1, 2009 Saturday

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Body

Colombo, Aug. 1 -- Sri Lanka's largest and most famous National Park, Yala, renowned for its variety of wildlife is currently attracting hundreds of tourists and local visitors on a daily basis.

One of the world's highly rated and visited biodiversity hot spots to have shut its gates to the world due to terrorist problems, is now open to local and foreign visitors. Now, botanists, journalists, entomologists, mammalogists, naturalists and generologists to name a few, they all visit the park and visitors to Yala national Park are on the increase.

Visits

According to Wildlife Department sources, more than 28,000 people have visited the Park during the period of January up to June 30 this year. The number of visitors to the Park during the same period last year was 15,000. The foreign nationals visiting Yala has also increased from 7532 visitors in the last year 2008 to 10,939 visitors this year, the sources said.

The Zone One of Yala National reserve covering an area of over 1400 hectares of the Park's entire expanse of 100,000 hectares is now accessible without any risk or danger from terrorist attacks.

So is Lunugamveherera National Park which serves as a link between the Yala Protected area complex on the east side and Udawalawe National Park to its west.

Meanwhile, the Environment and Natural Resources Ministry is planning to open Zone two and five of Yala National Park. Environment Minister Champika Ranawaka said, developing National Parks in the country would be their priority now that the problem of **LTTE** terrorism has been decimated and removed out of the Park.

There were ADB funds available to the Environment Ministry to develop the country's National Parks, but the Ministry could not use these funds to achieve its desired goals due to terrorist problems that existed in the country, the minister said and added, "we are now in a position to make use of these funds to restore the pride of our forest reserves."

We were a team of journalists representing various print and electronic media driving through Yala sanctuary on the invitation of Wildlife Department to observe the Park's current disposition and how much development had gone into preserving its fauna and flora and basic infrastructure by the Department of Wildlife.

With us were officials from Wildlife Department, among them Yala Park Warden W.A.A.D.U. Indrajith, and Wildlife Ranger K. Janaka Shanthakumara. For these rangers the Park is pretty much their backyard.

Hot under the sun, Yala wetlands protect fauna

Park Warden Indrajith said that the department had carried out Invasive Species Eradication and Habitat Enrichment Projects in Yala to protect its native plants and wildlife habitat.

Habitat enrichment

"Invasive plants negatively impact on wildlife and ecosystems degrading habitat and recreation opportunities by replacing land and water quality," he explained.

The Department of Wildlife Conservation has taken out invasive alien plant species such as *Lantana camara*, *Opuntia dillenii* and *Chromolaena odorata* covering an area of 50 to 60 hectares from in and around the waterholes, rocky pools and lakes, which are found on the park's main area, Block One. This has favorably impacted on Block one's fauna habitat, he went on.

Poker faces

As we drove steadily but not rapidly on the dusty and gravel road of the park we could observe spotted deer, elephant, wild boar, sambar, wild buffalo, sloth bear, jackal, mongoose, pangolins either side of the road.

There were many crocodiles to be spotted in the Yala Park near its many waterholes and tanks. The opportunistic predators were basking in the sun or submerging their bodies in the water. They rarely bask in groups. Of the 14 crocodile species in the family Crocodylidae, two are found in Sri Lanka, the marsh or mugger crocodile (*Crocodylus palustris*) and estuarine or saltwater crocodile (*Crocodylus porosus*). The other thing about crocodiles is that they are at their best when they play cards for they have thick skins and poker faces.

As two crocodiles lay in the sun on the flat rock, some monkeys were playing gleefully around the crocodiles on it unaware of their dangerous predator. This is wildlife, and you are advised not to get down from your safari jeeps in the Park.

There are about 32 species of mammals 125 species of birds and many reptiles and lagoon fauna species in the Yala sanctuary. There are six Wildlife Bungalows run by Wildlife Department currently under renovation. A new Information Centre is also to be constructed in the Park.

As with rapidly growing enthusiasm to see wild animals and splendor of the forest's beauty, the photographers in our van had started thronging themselves upon the van's open windows to transcribe the panorama to metal plates of their cameras. They occasionally bulged on to those who sat next to them as the van drove through the forest.

The Park's access roads and branching roads have been reconstructed recently. A lot of work had gone into restoring the Park's infrastructure during the time the park was closed to the public, said Park Warden Indrajith.

Every Rose...

We stopped our drive when we saw a giant shadow that slowly moved away in the brushes. We took time to dispel our doubts. It was a huge tusker eating branches from a tree. The Rangers asked our group to refrain from speaking if we wished to see the tusker at close range.

We kept quiet as we watched the majestic presence of the mammal, whose kith and kin are constantly in conflict with those villages bordering the forest.

When it comes to plants, elephants have tasted most of them. An elephant eats more than a hundred species of plants, but they eat only a little from any one plant because they have poisons.

A **female** elephant might tell her mate, "Every Rose Has It's Thorn." and then add on in the same breath, "But the plants that have thorns is less poisonous than other plants." So the elephants eat more of these plants that have thorns..

Hot under the sun, Yala wetlands protect fauna

As put it by Wildlife Department officials , the best time to visit Yala is during the dry season as animals come out in the open and cluster round those waterholes in the Park to get their fill.

The elephant, the bear, the deer, the monkey, they all come to get their share of water to the waterholes. The presence of these mammals stands out as testimony to the splendor of Wildlife in Yala. The population of mammals have become dense because of the availability of water in Park. The need does not arise for the animals to leave their range when the water is around, so they do not migrate to other forest lands or wetlands.

It was evident to us that development activities had gone unabated in Yala despite the closure for the public for sometime. The Wildlife Conservation Department and Irrigation Department have built four artificial tanks in the Park to feed the animals. Two water browsers have been deployed to fill water into them throughout the Day.

We reached Kotigala area in the Park toward the end of the afternoon where the leopards live on the rocky outcrops of the prairie. Leopards generally do not come out in the open until it is dark in the forest. It has been graded as a near endangered specie. And Yala is known as one of the best National Park s in the world to observe and photograph leopards. The population of Leopards in Yala has however incresed from 30 to 40 leopards.

One has got to have some luck to get a glimpse of this nocturnal carnivore even at a distance, the Rangers told us. The van moved slowly as we chatted along , sometimes mocking and other times jesting. Besides we had many things to say about the wildlife and the scenic beauty of the Park, its horizon less terrain with glittering waterholes, shrubs, rocky outcrops and trees.

We have become somewhat noisy and restless by the time. In the meantime, It was about time to leave the park with abdominal gases wanting to digest a well deserved full-scale meal. And a pair of food chain just ran away at full gallop in front of us crossing the road. Two wild boars disappeared into the prairie as Obelix was after their trail.

We were eager to see a leopard. We even complained it to the Park Warden. Do you see....over there ? There goes one ..". The Warden said as he signalled us to survey the flat stretch of land closely.

Showmanship

As we impatiently gazed through the window we could embrace the sight. A leopard indeed. A massive cat with an elongated body with dark spots was moving through the brushes.It was just about 700 or 800 kilometres away from us. It walked slowly with sure steps and it did not show a sign of getting dismayed by the presence of safari jeeps.

The largest of all leopard types in the cat family , the Sri Lankan Leopard, panthera pardus kotiya was gladsomely pacing in the Yala National Park.

Lo ! The versatile hunter was being followed by a deer, one of our perplexed colleagues shouted. "How can leopard and deer walk hand in hand.

"Who is the prey ? Who is the predators?"

And then this happened. The leopard stopped a few paces away from the stag and stared at it briefly. The stag was set aback. And the leopard would not pounce at it. The stag disappeared into a thicket as the leopard continued its walk. I wondered whether the leopard said this to the stag.

" Are you trying to pooh pooh me. You are supposed to run away when you see my kind. You , one lucky son of a stag, I do not hunt today in this territory because I plan to hunt in the open grass land beyond the gravel boarder."

The leopard tiptoed up to the gravel boarder, which is the road we were on and crossed it with few paces displaying its magnificence and strength. He was least concerned of the safari jeeps on the strip of gravel land. What showmanship!Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka.For more information on news feed please contact Surit Das at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

Hot under the sun, Yala wetlands protect fauna

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GOVERNMENT SHOULD IMMEDIATELY RELEASE 250,000 DISPLACED PERSONS FROM ILLEGAL DETENTION

States News Service

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Body

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The government has come under increasing criticism for its refusal to release the displaced Tamils. On September 29, Walter Klin, the representative of the UN secretary-general on the human rights of internally displaced persons, criticized the slow pace of release, saying that "immediate and substantial progress in restoring freedom of movement for the displaced is an imperative if Sri Lanka is to respect the rights of its citizens and comply with its commitments and obligations under international law."

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Deteriorating conditions in the camps

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"People were shouting and throwing stones at each other. We went to the camp administration, but they just told us that we have to endure it. If they don't get us water by tomorrow, we will tear down the fences and go to find water ourselves!"

Over the past two weeks, the Manik Farm camps have also been hit by strong winds, causing damage to shelters and exacerbating the already difficult living conditions. Twenty-year-old "Kumaravel," who lives in one of the camps with his family of five, told Human Rights Watch:

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"We had heavy rains about a month ago. It was hell. The ground here cannot absorb water so it just gathers. We couldn't even walk around. The authorities have done some work to improve drainage, but I doubt it will help much."

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Clashes between residents and the military

The mounting frustration among the displaced caused by the deteriorating conditions and lack of free movement has led to conflicts with the military guarding the camps. On September 26, soldiers opened fire on a group of camp residents, wounding at least two. A military spokesperson claimed the guards were compelled to fire when the group tried to escape and started throwing stones and a hand-grenade. The authorities also quickly concluded that, "The wounded suspects and the crowd had links with the terrorists."

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"A soldier started beating the man. Then another joined in. The people in the line tried to intervene, but one of the soldiers opened fire and the other took out a hand grenade and threatened to throw it. Soon, other soldiers arrived and started beating people."

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The incident came just days after soldiers clashed with camp residents in another camp in Vavuniya. On September 23, residents at the Poonthotham camp attacked soldiers and police officers and their vehicles after the police took one of the camp's residents away. The riot, which lasted for three hours, ended when the police brought the man back.

"These incidents should serve as a wake-up call for the government and donors," said Adams. "It's time for international donors to send a clear message to Colombo that continued and blatant disregard for international standards will come at a price."

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Australian

May 28, 2009 Thursday

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Body

MOST TALKED ABOUT

SOL TRUJILLO

US import failed to understand Australian culture

AS an American who has spent considerable time in Australia, I can state flat out that Sol Trujillo's accusations of racism are wrong. Australians are more tolerant and accepting than their US counterparts ('Trujillo's 'racist, backward' claims dismissed as sour grapes", 27/5).

Rather than using Trujillo's foolish comments to dismiss him completely, it might be better to see him more as an idiot savant rather than just an idiot. Trujillo's market-based management strategy was, and is, brilliant and right for Telstra, and the company is better for it. In that regard, he is a savant.

One of his weaknesses is that he failed to understand Australian culture. It's said that Australians tend towards the tall poppy syndrome -- knocking down to size those seen as arrogant. Rather than being flexible and embracing with good humour the "amigos" label, he took it personally and became inflexible. This approach to dealing with Australian institutions hurt Telstra, its employees and shareholders. In this regard he could rightfully be labelled an idiot.

Sean Gallagher

Brookline, Massachusetts

WHILST I disagreed with Sol Trujillo's confrontational style of running Telstra, I could not help noticing that there was hardly any article about him without some reference to "his amigos", sombreros and the likes. Only in yesterday's edition of The Australian the federal MP Don Randall, whilst attacking Trujillo for his racism comment, refers to "Sol and his amigos" and Nicholson's less-than-amusing cartoon portrays Trujillo as wearing a sombrero, in each case a clear reference to the background of Trujillo's parents. Are we not big enough to admit just a tinge of racism in those references?

Jerry Mayer

Northbridge, NSW

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

SOL Trujillo's outburst provides insight into why the Howard Government should never have sanctioned his appointment. No free-market capitalist North American import was ever going to understand, let alone be able to work effectively, within the partially privatised, former monopoly structure which is Telstra.

Notwithstanding the error, Australia should not take this criticism from someone who essentially failed in his task. Along with his fellow imported American executive cronies, he came equipped with a carpetbag which was full to overflowing when he left.

Graeme Noonan

Phillip Island, Vic

IT would be interesting to see a study formulated on the inputs from Sol Trujillo during his tenure at Telstra. What bankable novel actions did he instigate, apart from those that would have happened were he present or not? That way we can glean some sense of the value he added to the enterprise, and ultimately to a people that he now scorns.

If the outcome of such a study appears wanting in any major way, then those responsible in the first place for the selection of what now resembles a truculent little despot, must bear some responsibility.

Let's try to ensure no such repeats.

Greg Gregory

Lesmurdie, WA

THE response to Sol Trujillo's comments is typical of the delusion that continues to plague this country. Australians are very tolerant and project an image of multiculturalism as long as the boundaries are clear. As long as non-Anglos know their place, stay put in the Western suburbs and don't try to compete for the higher positions, we'll call them mate and even have a beer with them.

It's all very well for Andrew Reitzer, a South African, to emphasise his sensitivity to racism. He may have experienced racism in its extreme, but Australia practises racism of a more insidious, but no less malicious, kind. Subhas Menon's experience, as head of Singapore Airlines in Australia, essentially a non-Australian company, is also atypical.

Telstra, an Australian company, dared to hire Trujillo (an American, no less) for his expertise. And it doesn't matter whether Trujillo screwed up or not, Telstra made that fatal mistake of stepping outside the holy triumvirate of management (Australian, British, South African), and that's a mistake Australia will not let go that easy.

Harrison Luther

Kirribilli, NSW

THE most alarmingly ``backward" aspects of Australia were the Telstra share price and the quality of its customer service while Sol Trujillo was at the helm.

Richard Sallie

Tokyo, Japan

MANY appreciations for the way only The Australian publishes both sides of controversial topics, the latest example being whether we were racist towards Sol Trujillo.

What a breath of fresh air from Clare Werbeloff (Cut&Paste, 27/5), reminding us it's only the precious insecure who can't stand shorthand, ethnic labels (this nation was weaned on test matches against the dastardly Poms). No one

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

should tolerate ugly epithets, especially on the basis of skin colour, but let's keep a sense of proportion (humour?) and not substitute a fear of racism for what our culture once recognised as a proper fear of God.

C. Lendon

O'Connor, ACT

I ASSUME the Telstra board is currently talking to the head-hunting firm which introduced Sol Trujillo in the first place. And they need to be asking for more than just the fees back.

Peter Hallahan

Coorparoo, Qld

Rudd's emissions scheme won't make any difference

SCIENCE-illiterate Penny Wong is the last person I want lecturing me about what I tell and bequeath to my two grandchildren about the future of the planet ("Coalition digs in over bill on ETS", 27/5). I will tell them the sun will rise and set for their lifetime and that of their children, that plants and flowers will grow and prosper, that bubbling mountain streams will still be waterfalls after it rains and that the clear skies of the dry outback will be theirs to view forever.

I will also tell them that the Rudd Government is one of the most collectively stupid and scientifically ignorant group ever to have assembled in Canberra in its pursuit of an emissions trading scheme which will not make any difference whatsoever to the amount of essential and life-giving carbon dioxide in our atmosphere.

And to watch the faces of my grandchildren light up with laughter, I will tell them that the CSIRO, the once-eminent scientific group in Australia, is currently studying the methane emissions of termites.

G.M. Derrick

Sherwood, Qld

I'M currently working on the start-up phase of a renewable energy project in central Australia. Others involved include truck drivers, camp support personnel, drillers, tool pushers, excavation contractors, builders, engineers, geologists, mechanics, fitters, to name but a few and many of whom have come from the mining or gas/petroleum industry to work on this project.

Those who say an ETS would savage employment in regional Australia are ignoring the potential for the renewable energy sector to compensate for losses in the traditional mining sector. The barking-mad can continue to deny the reality of climate change and threaten to reject the ETS legislation in the Senate, but it's regional and remote communities who will miss out on these tremendous opportunities if we decide to bury our heads in the sand -- again.

Steve Fermio

Beechwood, NSW

IT seems clear Mr Jelly (aka Malcolm Turnbull) will vacillate until he settles down to the same hard-line position as Senator Barnaby Joyce on climate change. Do nothing about it. Ever.

S.P. Dean

Greenslopes, Qld

Lacking in self-respect

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

BRAVO to Patrick Smith for his comments regarding the lack of respect that rugby league has for itself these days ("Rugby league finds itself in the pits of the world", 27/5). His John McEnroe analogy regarding the effect of player behaviour, or the lack of it, on a sport is very accurate. The failure of tennis to discipline McEnroe at the time is one of the reasons why tennis suffers as a participatory and spectator sport today.

Rugby league is in the same boat. While a combination of gross off-field and poor on-field behaviour may satisfy some of the promoters and sports voyeurs, it does nothing for the respect of the game and dishonours others who have and do play rugby league.

As one reads and sees the continuing league soap opera, I'm reminded that when sportsmen only play for money the sport becomes meaningless. There must always be something more important at stake -- loyalty and honour for instance.

Robert Kear

Charlestown, NSW

Learning to read

THE Australian Association for the Teaching of English (AATE) is deeply committed to the national goal of providing all young Australians with a solid educational foundation on which further learning and adult life can be built. The idea that the association is somehow out of step with mainstream opinion on the teaching of reading ("Reading syllabus hijacked by fringe", 27/5) is wrong.

The AATE response to the National Curriculum Board's consultation in fact cited research given credence in the report of the National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy in support of its position favouring balanced reading programs. This position is also in accord with what teachers around the country and the results of national literacy testing tell us is working for the very great majority of students. AATE certainly does not, and never has, advocated the position that decoding skills are unnecessary in the process of learning to read.

Mark Howie

President, Australian Association for the

Teaching of English

Kensington Gardens, SA

PHONICS is a much more enjoyable learning experience than the whole-language method because students are given a foundation to build upon. On the other hand, the whole-language approach has students frustratingly stabbing in the dark. There's nothing enjoyable about that.

Jerome Appleby

Fullarton, SA

Building something better

I DO not have any argument with Greg Sheridan's description of Sri Lanka's ***Tamil Tigers*** ("Sri Lanka's best hope a pact with India", Inquirer, 23-24/5). The Tigers became an obsessively terrorist force which was, ultimately, of little value to the future of Sri Lanka's Tamils. In failing to engage sensibly in the peace process, the Tigers' leader, Velupillai Prabhakaran, finally opened the door to a cynically irresponsible level of foreign military support to the Sri Lankan government, the bloody demise of his movement, and great additional suffering of innocents.

But the rest of Sheridan's article, about how President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his government might now go about achieving peace and progress for the country, overlooks what has to be the essential starting point for a lasting rapprochement with the Tamils and the removal of Tamil (if not other) militancy as a political tool in the country.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

It requires that the government face up, publicly, to the sad fact that the emergence of Tamil militancy in the country was in the first instance comprehensively provoked by government-sponsored discrimination against and terrorisation of the country's Tamil (both Hindu and Muslim) minority. Discrimination and terrorisation which clearly continued, more or less, unabated throughout the conflict with the Tigers and which, too, militated against sensible management of the peace process by successive Sri Lankan governments. By conceding this, Rajapaksa would go a long way towards assuring the Tamils that it won't happen again. He may then be able to make a real start with building something better.

Howard Debenham

(Former Australian high commissioner to

Sri Lanka)

Newport, NSW

Properly planned dams

WHAT a depressing state of affairs when the managing director of Melbourne Water (Letters, 27/5) seems unable to distinguish between storage capacity and increased catchment capacity created by the building of a suitably located new dam.

Our old technology of dams works perfectly if you have a catchment area appropriate to community needs and prevailing weather patterns. Properly planned dams are not incompatible with the maintenance of appropriate environmental flows. Desalination plants require vast amounts of power from polluting generators.

John Allsop

Mont Albert, Vic

YOUR editorial ("Dam drippy excuses", 26/5) was spot on. In Queensland, we've had Labor governments for 18 of the past 20 years. We've also had net migration of 1500 people per week. That adds up to an additional one-and-a-half million people moving to southeast Queensland over those 20 years. But we haven't built a dam for 25 years. What did these governments expect these people

to drink?

Rick Beikoff

New Farm, Qld

Culture of dependence

NOT everywhere in the world has a welfare system as comprehensive as ours. But this breeds a culture of dependence on welfare that we can do without.

I believe people are making far too much fuss over the pension age being raised to 67; take some responsibility for your own retirement by saving and/or investing while you're still working. With a little foresight and planning, there is no reason at all for you to suddenly be dealing with poverty. It is up to you; don't blame the government for your own financial situation.

Stacy Irving

Kingston, ACT

FIRST BYTE

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@theaustralian.com.au

Adjusting the age pension entitlement based on life expectancy so that males would be eligible five years before **females** would be a victory for equity over equality.

Greg Angelo

Balwyn North, Vic

It's no surprise that George Pell

would have his doubts about climate change (Cut&Paste, 26/5). After all, scepticism is a perfectly natural state for a Catholic archbishop.

Joel Dignam

Hampstead Gardens, SA

Hard hats and Kevin Rudd's other diverse guises are surely preferable to the baggy green-and-gold tracksuits of the confected daily TV news spectacle of our former prime minister jogging, when he wasn't usurping the role of the governor-general or pushing his latest military adventure.

Garry Bickley

Elizabeth Downs, SA

Much to my surprise I read a statement from Kevin Rudd, on your front page no less, that he has a good working relationship with all public servants ("Rudd denies tensions behind envoy's axing", 27/5). Please! What's next, comic strips on the front page?

Frank Bellet

Petrie, Qld

Do Sol Trujillo and Schapelle Corby have the same, very efficient, PR advisers? Neither is of any interest to us but both continue to feature in the media.

Simon McHugh

Carina, Qld

Shopkeepers can lead the way in the study of English and mathematics outside the classroom, Hendry Wan (First Byte, 27/5) by ensuring that the appropriate supermarket checkouts are indeed labelled 10 items or fewer, not 10 items or less. (Fewer refers to countable items, less to singular non-countable nouns.)

Sue Reid

Fig Tree Pocket, Qld

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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Editorial Roundup

Associated Press Online

May 13, 2009 Wednesday 8:00 PM GMT

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Section: DOMESTIC NEWS

Length: 2867 words

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Body

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May 7

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Did Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke actually say something positive this week about the economy?

Something about it starting to grow again in 2009, after 18 months of a deep recession?

Something about stronger home sales, increased consumer spending and improved lending conditions.

No reason to clean out our ears. Bernanke did say that Tuesday during a meeting of Congress' Joint Economic Committee.

He tempered his optimism by saying that the recovery initially would be weak, and that more jobs would be lost even as the recovery begins.

But after a year-and-a-half of doomsday-like headlines about crumbling financial institutions, free-falling home values, eroding retirement savings and skyrocketing unemployment, we'll take just about any positive news on the economic front. ...

Tough times still are ahead. Many folks likely won't regain what they've lost during this recession whether in home value, retirement savings, income for a while. But the economic news, finally, is encouraging. And we'll take that, no matter how tempered it is.

On the Net:

<http://www.nwherald.com/articles/2009/05/06/rp7orpa3rvi6tyw7zfm8oa/index.xml>

May 11

The Knoxville (Tenn.) News-Sentinel, on President Barack Obama's implementation of tax policy:

Editorial Roundup

The administration of President Barack Obama certainly doesn't shy away from taking on tough challenges. It jumped in last week by announcing a far-reaching program to raise \$210 billion by cracking down on overseas tax avoidance and tax evasion. ...

Perhaps for tactical reasons the president began his drive for larger tax reform by taking on entities for whom the general public has little sympathy, multinational corporations that legally game the system to avoid taxes the White House says that because of various breaks and credits the effective tax rate on U.S.-based multinationals is 2.3 percent and wealthy individuals who evade taxes by hiding their money in offshore tax havens. ...

The biggest single change the president is proposing is to change the laws that allow businesses to take immediate deductions for investments in their overseas operations but defer paying taxes on the profits from those operations until the profits are repatriated to the U.S. An estimated \$700 billion in deferred profits is parked overseas. ...

Obama's overseas crackdown will require legislation, and here, he will learn an even larger lesson: Behind every provision of the U.S. tax code lurks a member of Congress. The lawmakers don't like the public to be reminded of this, but our tax laws are purely their handiwork.

The Internal Revenue Service only enforces them.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/ptuavi>

May 10

South Bend (Ind.) Tribune, on President Barack Obama's appearance at the University of Notre Dame:

Talking to one another, seeking common ground, never will resolve the differences between those who believe **women** should have the right to choose an abortion and those who believe abortion is murder. The gulf is just too wide and the feelings are too strong.

We do think, however, that those who disagree with President Barack Obama on abortion, and those who agree with him, can find common ground regarding his upcoming visit to the University of Notre Dame.

Obama was offered the honor of delivering the May 17 commencement address. He did Notre Dame the honor of accepting. For both these facts, we are pleased and especially so for the graduating class. Its members will be sent forth in life with the eloquent words of the leader of the free world. It will be a wonderful and memorable event for them. ...

All the same, strong feelings on this issue were to be expected. What wasn't expected and what is a very great shame is the conduct of people who have traveled to South Bend from other places with no purpose other than to make trouble and grab headlines. ...

No one can stop anti-abortion activist Randall Terry from vowing to turn the Notre Dame campus into a "political mud pit" and the commencement ceremony into a "circus." But we can, as a community, show our shared disdain for his words. This is a community where not everyone agrees. But it also is a community where people can disagree without threats or expressions of hatred.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/ot7c7y>

May 11

The Tribune-Chronicle, Warren, Ohio, on U.S. policy toward North Korea's nuclear ambitions:

Editorial Roundup

North Korea probably will test another nuclear weapon soon, President Obama's coordinator for policy on weapons of mass destruction predicted Friday. There is no reason to doubt Obama aide Gary Samore's assessment particularly in view of the world community's failure to do anything meaningful to punish North Korea for its recent test firing of a medium-range missile.

At first glance, Samore's policy prescription for the United States does not sound appealing. "We'll just wait," he said in answer to a question about how Obama would respond to a new nuclear weapons test.

But Samore may have a good point. He explained that he believes a nuclear weapons test would convince other nations to support new sanctions against North Korea. He added that Chinese leaders are "very, very angry at the North Koreans."

We hope so. Because unless something is done to stop North Korea's steady march toward nuclear missile capability, that country soon will pose a threat to peace and perhaps to millions of lives.

Obama and his diplomats, in choosing the "just wait" strategy, need to work intensively behind the scenes to mobilize international anger at the threat from North Korean aggressiveness. Enlisting China in a serious campaign to stop Pyongyang's technological mobilization may well be the most promising avenue of action.

Beijing needs to be convinced that it is not in China's interests to allow North Korea to proceed with its weapons buildup.

On the Net:

<http://tiny.cc/2Y2Zh>

May 8

The Dallas Morning News, on a balanced energy policy:

It's been a long time coming, but Congress finally is taking a serious stab at shaping an energy policy for America. Democratic Reps. Henry Waxman of California and Edward Markey of Massachusetts deserve credit for forcing Congress to confront our national addiction to dirty fossil fuels.

Make no mistake, though: The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 isn't the comprehensive energy strategy this editorial board advocates and this nation urgently requires. The bill is long on environmental policy mandates but short on energy. ...

No energy or environmental bill can be complete without a serious and comprehensive strategy to develop nuclear energy, essentially a carbon-free but reliable power source. ...

This bill must streamline the permitting process for nuclear plants, address safety concerns and provide incentives for companies to invest in nuclear power. ...

It's unlikely that this very complicated bill will be ready for the full House to consider by Memorial Day, as Waxman and Markey had hoped, but however long it takes, Congress needs to press forward with a plan to wean the nation from dirty energy.

The time for talk is over, and Congress owes it to our future to pass a better-balanced energy bill this year.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/pbdsqp>

May 8

Los Angeles Times, on the swine flu response:

Editorial Roundup

It looks like health authorities and the public can breathe a sigh of cautious relief (covering their mouths, we hope) as new information indicates that although the flu formerly known as swine spreads easily, its severity appears on par with that of most other flu viruses.

That's not to trivialize the H1N1 strain or any other; influenza kills an average of 36,000 Americans a year. That's all the more reason why the diminished alarm doesn't present government officials with an opportunity to relax. Instead, they should build on lessons learned and work on bridging gaps in the nation's public health network. ...

Where the nation's response most needs improvement is with long-term public policy. Legislation and public education campaigns should foster healthy individual actions having people stay home when they first start feeling sick, for instance, or getting them to wash their hands frequently. ...

The greatest danger would be complacency about the toll taken by flu. Epidemiologists warn that even if this outbreak proves milder than expected, the virus could return in a more dangerous form in the fall. Hopefully, by that time a vaccine will be available. Health authorities, meanwhile, should use the current sense of urgency to call for common-sense policies that will keep us all safer.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/pkinqv>

May 12

The Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times, on Manny Ramirez:

Major League Baseball's 50-game suspension of Manny Ramirez for a drug violation shows that the Steroid Era is very much alive.

One would think that after all the discussions, hearings and disappointments surrounding the use of performance-enhancing drugs, players would get the message.

The fans are sick of it. Much suspicion clouds the game. Some of baseball's most prominent players and retired stars are implicated. ...

Manny Ramirez has helped spark the Los Angeles Dodgers to one of its best starts in recent years. He claims a doctor prescribed the **female** fertility drug HCG for undisclosed health reasons. At the same time, the player took responsibility and acknowledged his mistake.

The steroid problem lingers, raising questions of whether the league is doing enough. If a high-profile star like Mr. Ramirez is using illegal drugs, what about the player who has yet to make the majors?

Steroid use remains a vexing problem for baseball. It continues to undermine the game and set a terrible example for young players. Some have argued that the Ramirez case shows that a testing system is in place and being enforced. We'll see.

On the Net:

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20090512/OPINION01/305129975/-1/OPINION>

May 12

Pensacola (Fla.) News Journal, on how charities and nonprofit organizations are seeing fewer donations during tough economic times:

One of the great ironies of charitable work is that when times are hard and people need help, charities and other nonprofits see donations drop.

Editorial Roundup

It's understandable. Even for people who have not lost a job or faced a home foreclosure, the shaky economy casts a pall over all money matters, and financial uncertainty forces people to hold on to what they may have. ...

Needy people who struggle to provide for themselves depend on help agencies and charitable groups to make ends meet.

Even during this economic downturn, America remains a rich nation, and this community has shown in the past that it is willing and able to take care of our problems at home. Those who can are urged to once again prove they will help to ensure the needs of the needy are met.

All of those who have the ability and the resources to assist local charities in doing their work should do so.

During these tough times, when charities will be called on even more to support those in need, let's not forget to do our part. Be generous with your time, your money, with donations of food or clothing.

Every little bit helps those who give help and those who receive it.

On the Net:

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20090512/OPINION/905120310/1020>

May 13

The Times, London, on the slaughter in Sri Lanka:

The United Nations has spoken of a "bloodbath." Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary-General, was "appalled" at the killing of hundreds of trapped civilians at the weekend, and called for an immediate halt to the Sri Lankan Army's indiscriminate shelling of the tiny coastal strip, the last hold-out on the island of the rebel **Tamil Tigers**. But the shelling goes on. ...

This carnage must stop. Already more than 6,500 civilians have been killed and 14,000 injured in the first four months of the year. ...

The Sri Lankan Government has been deaf to all entreaty. It sees itself on the verge of victory to end Asia's longest-running civil war. It believes that the fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are defeated and wants to finish them off. ...

Of course, the Tigers are at least as guilty (as) Hamas of using terror to achieve their ends, of holding civilians hostage and of blocking their escape. Their tactics are ruthless, their exploitation of human shields inhumane and their moral claims worthless. But that does not justify a campaign of annihilation. If Colombo will not show mercy, it must pay a price. The IMF bailout package of \$2 billion must be suspended. The European Union's trade preference agreement must be reviewed. Western governments should treat Sri Lanka as a pariah until it halts its heavy guns. Slaughter is a barbaric end to war.

On the Net:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading> article/article6276147.ece

May 13

Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, Sweden, on Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the Middle-East:

The Pope is traveling to the Holy Land. Or to the site of one of the longest and harshest conflicts of our time: Israel-Palestine. ...

A trip for peace is his desired headline. ...

Editorial Roundup

The previous Pope, John Paul II, operated politically in a way that popes hadn't done since the Reformation and the Counterreformation in the 1500's. He didn't tear down the Berlin wall on his own, but his contribution to the fall of communism was significant. ...

While John Paul II could see the right time for action, Benedict XVI has so far failed in a sensationally clumsy way.

His speeches have been interpreted as offensive by Muslims, while he has been perceived as being unsuspecting about anti-Semitic expressions. On top of that he has managed to drive members away from the church while his predecessor did the opposite. ...

It is therefore not any new John Paul II who is touring the Middle East. It is an old school Pope, whose voice tough politicians in the region will clearly not listen to. ...

The church leader has, of course, been welcomed, out of pure politeness. And some can even afford to make accommodating statements because they will be forgotten as soon as the Pope's plane leaves for Rome. ...

Benedict XVI is possibly too old to realize how limited his role is.

On the Net:

<http://www.dn.se>

May 11

Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo, on the stress tests done on U.S. banks:

U.S. financial authorities on Thursday announced the results of the "stress tests," or special capital assessments, of 19 major banks.

The officials are trying to cast the results as a cause for optimism about the nation's financial system. But doubts remain about whether things will really work out well as they expect. ...

Asking Congress to consider injecting more public funds into banks would certainly provoke bitter debate over the responsibility of the financial community for the current mess.

Officials at the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama are concerned that such debate could cause the White House plan to restore health in the financial system to fall apart. The centerpiece of the plan is a fund relying on both taxpayer and private money to buy bad assets from banks.

It is hard not to suspect that because of these concerns, the top financial policymakers decided to avoid causing a stir and made sure that the estimate of total capital deficits would be less than the remaining money available for capital injections.

Anyway, the U.S. administration bet on an optimistic scenario. The focus of the policy efforts will be on purchases of bad assets by the public-private fund for the time being.

A serious delay in the efforts to deal with losses in the banking system, however, would cause the recession to last longer, thereby creating more losses.

On the Net:

<http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200905110057.html>

May 11

New Zealand Herald, on Pakistan:

Editorial Roundup

Dire predictions uttered about Pakistan when Gen. Pervez Musharraf stepped down have not been long in coming to fruition. If, as United States special representative Richard Holbrooke insists, the country is not yet a failed state, it is certainly on its knees. ...

More than anything, (President Barack Obama) wanted an indication that (Pakistani President Asif Ali) Zardari's (g)overnment can deliver the strong leadership and effective policies that have eluded previous civilian (a)dministrations. ... For the most part, the U.S. has had cause to be disappointed. Rather than confronting the Taliban, the Pakistani leaders' first impulse has been to seek non-violent solutions. ...

Therein lies the difficulty in trying to pressure Pakistan. Whatever the pledges made in Washington by the civilian (g)overnment, these may not be fully translated on the ground. ...

Another, perhaps more likely, outcome is that yet another tilt at democracy will fail. The Army, despairing of the (g)overnment's incompetence, could reclaim control. This process elevated Gen. Musharraf and several other military figures to power. It could easily recur if the Taliban threat grows and the economy becomes even more sickly. It will never be an acceptable alternative. But the good options for Pakistan's survival as a moderate, democratic nation are rapidly expiring.

On the Net:

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?id466&objectid10571521>

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Editorial Roundup

The Associated Press

May 13, 2009 Wednesday

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May 10

South Bend (Ind.) Tribune, on President Barack Obama's appearance at the University of Notre Dame:

Talking to one another, seeking common ground, never will resolve the differences between those who believe **women** should have the right to choose an abortion and those who believe abortion is murder. The gulf is just too wide and the feelings are too strong.

We do think, however, that those who disagree with President Barack Obama on abortion, and those who agree with him, can find common ground regarding his upcoming visit to the University of Notre Dame.

Obama was offered the honor of delivering the May 17 commencement address. He did Notre Dame the honor of accepting. For both these facts, we are pleased and especially so for the graduating class. Its members will be sent forth in life with the eloquent words of the leader of the free world. It will be a wonderful and memorable event for them. ...

All the same, strong feelings on this issue were to be expected. What wasn't expected and what is a very great shame is the conduct of people who have traveled to South Bend from other places with no purpose other than to make trouble and grab headlines. ...

No one can stop anti-abortion activist Randall Terry from vowing to turn the Notre Dame campus into a "political mud pit" and the commencement ceremony into a "circus." But we can, as a community, show our shared disdain for his words. This is a community where not everyone agrees. But it also is a community where people can disagree without threats or expressions of hatred.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/ot7c7y>

May 11

The Tribune-Chronicle, Warren, Ohio, on U.S. policy toward North Korea's nuclear ambitions:

Editorial Roundup

North Korea probably will test another nuclear weapon soon, President Obama's coordinator for policy on weapons of mass destruction predicted Friday. There is no reason to doubt Obama aide Gary Samore's assessment particularly in view of the world community's failure to do anything meaningful to punish North Korea for its recent test firing of a medium-range missile.

At first glance, Samore's policy prescription for the United States does not sound appealing. "We'll just wait," he said in answer to a question about how Obama would respond to a new nuclear weapons test.

But Samore may have a good point. He explained that he believes a nuclear weapons test would convince other nations to support new sanctions against North Korea. He added that Chinese leaders are "very, very angry at the North Koreans."

We hope so. Because unless something is done to stop North Korea's steady march toward nuclear missile capability, that country soon will pose a threat to peace and perhaps to millions of lives.

Obama and his diplomats, in choosing the "just wait" strategy, need to work intensively behind the scenes to mobilize international anger at the threat from North Korean aggressiveness. Enlisting China in a serious campaign to stop Pyongyang's technological mobilization may well be the most promising avenue of action.

Beijing needs to be convinced that it is not in China's interests to allow North Korea to proceed with its weapons buildup.

On the Net:

<http://tiny.cc/2Y2Zh>

May 8

The Dallas Morning News, on a balanced energy policy:

It's been a long time coming, but Congress finally is taking a serious stab at shaping an energy policy for America. Democratic Reps. Henry Waxman of California and Edward Markey of Massachusetts deserve credit for forcing Congress to confront our national addiction to dirty fossil fuels.

Make no mistake, though: The American Clean Energy and Security Act of 2009 isn't the comprehensive energy strategy this editorial board advocates and this nation urgently requires. The bill is long on environmental policy mandates but short on energy. ...

No energy or environmental bill can be complete without a serious and comprehensive strategy to develop nuclear energy, essentially a carbon-free but reliable power source. ...

This bill must streamline the permitting process for nuclear plants, address safety concerns and provide incentives for companies to invest in nuclear power. ...

It's unlikely that this very complicated bill will be ready for the full House to consider by Memorial Day, as Waxman and Markey had hoped, but however long it takes, Congress needs to press forward with a plan to wean the nation from dirty energy.

The time for talk is over, and Congress owes it to our future to pass a better-balanced energy bill this year.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/pbdsqp>

May 8

Los Angeles Times, on the swine flu response:

Editorial Roundup

It looks like health authorities and the public can breathe a sigh of cautious relief (covering their mouths, we hope) as new information indicates that although the flu formerly known as swine spreads easily, its severity appears on par with that of most other flu viruses.

That's not to trivialize the H1N1 strain or any other; influenza kills an average of 36,000 Americans a year. That's all the more reason why the diminished alarm doesn't present government officials with an opportunity to relax. Instead, they should build on lessons learned and work on bridging gaps in the nation's public health network. ...

Where the nation's response most needs improvement is with long-term public policy. Legislation and public education campaigns should foster healthy individual actions having people stay home when they first start feeling sick, for instance, or getting them to wash their hands frequently. ...

The greatest danger would be complacency about the toll taken by flu. Epidemiologists warn that even if this outbreak proves milder than expected, the virus could return in a more dangerous form in the fall. Hopefully, by that time a vaccine will be available. Health authorities, meanwhile, should use the current sense of urgency to call for common-sense policies that will keep us all safer.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/pkinqv>

May 12

The Watertown (N.Y.) Daily Times, on Manny Ramirez:

Major League Baseball's 50-game suspension of Manny Ramirez for a drug violation shows that the Steroid Era is very much alive.

One would think that after all the discussions, hearings and disappointments surrounding the use of performance-enhancing drugs, players would get the message.

The fans are sick of it. Much suspicion clouds the game. Some of baseball's most prominent players and retired stars are implicated. ...

Manny Ramirez has helped spark the Los Angeles Dodgers to one of its best starts in recent years. He claims a doctor prescribed the **female** fertility drug HCG for undisclosed health reasons. At the same time, the player took responsibility and acknowledged his mistake.

The steroid problem lingers, raising questions of whether the league is doing enough. If a high-profile star like Mr. Ramirez is using illegal drugs, what about the player who has yet to make the majors?

Steroid use remains a vexing problem for baseball. It continues to undermine the game and set a terrible example for young players. Some have argued that the Ramirez case shows that a testing system is in place and being enforced. We'll see.

On the Net:

<http://www.watertowndailytimes.com/article/20090512/OPINION01/305129975/-1/OPINION>

May 12

Pensacola (Fla.) News Journal, on how charities and nonprofit organizations are seeing fewer donations during tough economic times:

One of the great ironies of charitable work is that when times are hard and people need help, charities and other nonprofits see donations drop.

Editorial Roundup

It's understandable. Even for people who have not lost a job or faced a home foreclosure, the shaky economy casts a pall over all money matters, and financial uncertainty forces people to hold on to what they may have. ...

Needy people who struggle to provide for themselves depend on help agencies and charitable groups to make ends meet.

Even during this economic downturn, America remains a rich nation, and this community has shown in the past that it is willing and able to take care of our problems at home. Those who can are urged to once again prove they will help to ensure the needs of the needy are met.

All of those who have the ability and the resources to assist local charities in doing their work should do so.

During these tough times, when charities will be called on even more to support those in need, let's not forget to do our part. Be generous with your time, your money, with donations of food or clothing.

Every little bit helps those who give help and those who receive it.

On the Net:

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20090512/OPINION/905120310/1020>

May 13

The Times, London, on the slaughter in Sri Lanka:

The United Nations has spoken of a "bloodbath." Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary-General, was "appalled" at the killing of hundreds of trapped civilians at the weekend, and called for an immediate halt to the Sri Lankan Army's indiscriminate shelling of the tiny coastal strip, the last hold-out on the island of the rebel **Tamil Tigers**. But the shelling goes on. ...

This carnage must stop. Already more than 6,500 civilians have been killed and 14,000 injured in the first four months of the year. ...

The Sri Lankan Government has been deaf to all entreaty. It sees itself on the verge of victory to end Asia's longest-running civil war. It believes that the fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are defeated and wants to finish them off. ...

Of course, the Tigers are at least as guilty (as) Hamas of using terror to achieve their ends, of holding civilians hostage and of blocking their escape. Their tactics are ruthless, their exploitation of human shields inhumane and their moral claims worthless. But that does not justify a campaign of annihilation. If Colombo will not show mercy, it must pay a price. The IMF bailout package of \$2 billion must be suspended. The European Union's trade preference agreement must be reviewed. Western governments should treat Sri Lanka as a pariah until it halts its heavy guns. Slaughter is a barbaric end to war.

On the Net:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading> article/article6276147.ece

May 13

Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, Sweden, on Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the Middle-East:

The Pope is traveling to the Holy Land. Or to the site of one of the longest and harshest conflicts of our time: Israel-Palestine. ...

A trip for peace is his desired headline. ...

Editorial Roundup

The previous Pope, John Paul II, operated politically in a way that popes hadn't done since the Reformation and the Counterreformation in the 1500's. He didn't tear down the Berlin wall on his own, but his contribution to the fall of communism was significant. ...

While John Paul II could see the right time for action, Benedict XVI has so far failed in a sensationally clumsy way.

His speeches have been interpreted as offensive by Muslims, while he has been perceived as being unsuspecting about anti-Semitic expressions. On top of that he has managed to drive members away from the church while his predecessor did the opposite. ...

It is therefore not any new John Paul II who is touring the Middle East. It is an old school Pope, whose voice tough politicians in the region will clearly not listen to. ...

The church leader has, of course, been welcomed, out of pure politeness. And some can even afford to make accommodating statements because they will be forgotten as soon as the Pope's plane leaves for Rome. ...

Benedict XVI is possibly too old to realize how limited his role is.

On the Net:

<http://www.dn.se>

May 11

Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo, on the stress tests done on U.S. banks:

U.S. financial authorities on Thursday announced the results of the "stress tests," or special capital assessments, of 19 major banks.

The officials are trying to cast the results as a cause for optimism about the nation's financial system. But doubts remain about whether things will really work out well as they expect. ...

Asking Congress to consider injecting more public funds into banks would certainly provoke bitter debate over the responsibility of the financial community for the current mess.

Officials at the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama are concerned that such debate could cause the White House plan to restore health in the financial system to fall apart. The centerpiece of the plan is a fund relying on both taxpayer and private money to buy bad assets from banks.

It is hard not to suspect that because of these concerns, the top financial policymakers decided to avoid causing a stir and made sure that the estimate of total capital deficits would be less than the remaining money available for capital injections.

Anyway, the U.S. administration bet on an optimistic scenario. The focus of the policy efforts will be on purchases of bad assets by the public-private fund for the time being.

A serious delay in the efforts to deal with losses in the banking system, however, would cause the recession to last longer, thereby creating more losses.

On the Net:

<http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200905110057.html>

May 11

New Zealand Herald, on Pakistan:

Editorial Roundup

Dire predictions uttered about Pakistan when Gen. Pervez Musharraf stepped down have not been long in coming to fruition. If, as United States special representative Richard Holbrooke insists, the country is not yet a failed state, it is certainly on its knees. ...

More than anything, (President Barack Obama) wanted an indication that (Pakistani President Asif Ali) Zardari's (g)overnment can deliver the strong leadership and effective policies that have eluded previous civilian (a)dministrations. ... For the most part, the U.S. has had cause to be disappointed. Rather than confronting the Taliban, the Pakistani leaders' first impulse has been to seek non-violent solutions. ...

Therein lies the difficulty in trying to pressure Pakistan. Whatever the pledges made in Washington by the civilian (g)overnment, these may not be fully translated on the ground. ...

Another, perhaps more likely, outcome is that yet another tilt at democracy will fail. The Army, despairing of the (g)overnment's incompetence, could reclaim control. This process elevated Gen. Musharraf and several other military figures to power. It could easily recur if the Taliban threat grows and the economy becomes even more sickly. It will never be an acceptable alternative. But the good options for Pakistan's survival as a moderate, democratic nation are rapidly expiring.

On the Net:

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?id466&objectid10571521>

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Stress related mental disorders

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

May 19, 2009 Tuesday

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Length: 2104 words

Dateline: Colombo

Body

Colombo, May 19 -- This is a subject which is of tremendous universal importance. Millions of people throughout the world do suffer from a psycho-somatic illness known as 'Stress' of which there is no sufficient public awareness particularly in Sri Lanka. Stress can be likened to be a destructive flood taking place in the dead of night while people are fast asleep.

Generally the word 'Stress' means tiredness or strain - a state in which one is unable to bear up external or internal pressures of normal life. Shocking experiences such as death of dear ones, loss of property or positions, family problems and too many demands, may cause stress and strain, which in turn, may make a person mentally ill. Continual stress and strain may lead to psychological disorders, such as depression, hysteria, insomnia (no sleep) or amnesia (loss of memory) and other mental illnesses, including psychotic and neurotic disorders. Stress and strain can cause physical illnesses such as cancer, brain tumours and ulcerous growths. Sociologically stress can cause family problems such as strained relations between husband and wife, and break up of families, which in turn can lead to even suicide or homicide as evident even from media reports and sociological studies conducted by some universities. If adequate measures are not taken to curtail stress and strain at individual level, even highly developed countries such as Japan, Germany or the USA would not be able to maintain their dominant positions in the world. It is not an exaggeration to say that stress can cause crises in modern civilizations. If you make a visit to a mental patient's ward in a general hospital such as Kandy or Peradeniya or to the mental hospital at Angoda, you will see hundreds of mental patients with stress related illnesses. There are some mental patients who get treatment at State expense for more than twenty years. This is an undeniable fact. The long queues that you may find at consultation centres in Katukelle in Kandy will make you wonder whether the two consultant psychiatrists can treat all such patients in two hours. In one such a queue, I saw patients from Ampara and from the village Mipilimana in Nuwara Eliya District. Mental patients come to Kandy from distant places. It is so in places like Colombo and Galle too. The small number of psychiatric consultants in the country, simply cannot cope with the demand. A social stigma Some people are afraid to be seen at psychiatric consultation centres because of a social stigma-that so and so is taking 'Pissu beheth (medicine for madness). I m deeply moved by the plight of unmarried women. Our society is generally cruel to them. Even after marriage, if the groom's party gets to know that the bride has had a mental illness, the marriage is doomed to be short lived. For example, consider the following case. Having seen a young beautiful girl, the mother of a young man moved heaven and earth and got the marriage through. The couple went on honeymoon. The groom saw his bride taking some pills. On inquiry, it was found that the bride was taking psychiatric drugs. They came for the home-coming party. Son told his mother about the pills. The marriage lasted only eight days. The bride was dropped at the doors step or her parents with shower of abuse. This case was all the more pathetic because the groom was a medical doctors: and the divorce was through within eight months of the marriage. Stress at universities Quite a number of university boys and girls get nervous breakdowns, particularly before and during the examination times. They complain of mind going blank or of

Stress related mental disorders

insomnia or getting high fever or continual purging. The cases of depression are on the increase in our campuses. One final year medical student down with depression admitted that he was contemplating committing suicide by keeping his neck on the Kandy - Matale railway line. Suicide problem In Sri Lanka suicide has taken more lives than the war with the LTTE during the last twenty five years. This is very well explained by Karunatissa Atukorale of Sociology Department Peradeniya University in his book 'Suicide Problem and Prevention'. In this sociological study, the author has shown that annually the suicide rate in Sri Lanka, is on the increase. All these facts indicate the degree of stress and strain in our country. Teachers Such stress related mental illness are rampant even at Maha Vidyalayas. Among the teacher population stress is on the increase. They are over burden with work loads. Some lady teachers have to get up by 3.00 a.m., cook meals for breakfast and lunch for the family, hurriedly get ready, travel long distance by bus or train, sometimes sleeping while standing; get down and rush to the school before the red line is drawn. After five hours of teaching to crowded class, they face the same tedious return trip. Sometimes, by the time they reach homes, their children have gone to bed. No wonder that most middle aged teachers do suffer from stress related mental illnesses. Unhappy life Professionals of various categories do suffer from stress and strain as revealed by Devika Peiris in her M. Phil thesis submitted to the University of Kelaniya. I still remember the faces of the middle aged Rotary Club members of New Maguru, Tokyo who came to listen to my lecture on 'The sex problems of the Middle aged Professionals' given in 1976. Stress is there everywhere. I am yet to see even a Cabinet Minister in Sri Lanka or India who is free from stress and strain. More and more struggles for power, more and more he will get into stressful and unhappy life. As the American political scientist Hans J. Morgenthau says, politics is struggle for power - to gain power and remains in power. Mono dimensional therapies As chemical medication was found to be not very much effective in bringing complete cure, some have turned to meditation (Bhavana) as an alternative way of therapy for mental disorders. As shown by Christopher Mclean, there are three schools of Buddhist forms of meditation - Tibetan, Zen and early Buddhists. Some researchers have experimented with Hindu traditions such as Yogasanas. Several institutions and Universities in the East and West are now conducting Buddhist therapeutical courses leading to post graduate degrees. Ten Siaw Ming of Malaysia in his M. Phil thesis - 'Critical study of Buddhist Psychotherapy' (this writer's book), has listed as many as fifty institutions in the West and the East which have turned to meditation as a therapy for mental disorders. I would like to recommend 'Full Catastrophe Living' by Jon Kabat-Zinn for anyone interested in Buddhist Meditation as an alternative therapy for mental disorders including stress management. Before the present day waves of interest in meditation, right along with the development of psychiatry, Freudian schools of psychotherapy attempted removal or exposure of the patient's memories linked to mental illness by means of psychoanalysis. Behavioural schools of psychotherapy, which was advanced by sociologists, such as Krasner and Ullman, attempted removal of symptoms of mental disorders, as a therapy. Neither of these two methods by itself can cure mental illness completely: because these schools of therapy including psychiatry are mono-dimensional. Having realized the inadequacy of the above mentioned methods, I have attempted the development of multi-dimensional system which is now known as 'Buddhist Psychotherapy'. This system of therapy is called 'Buddhist Psychotherapy' because it is based on the Buddha Dhamma - particularly on the Satipatthana Sutta (Doctrine of Mindfulness) and Sabbasava Sutta (Doctrine of Mental Defilements). This method of psychotherapy has received academic recognition in many a land. Stress related mental disorders This multi-dimensional psychotherapy aims not only to cure the particular mental illness but also to develop the full personality of the patient by following the features given below. This system is designed to finish the course of therapy within six to twelve one hour sessions. Every session has specific targets to achieve. Study the medical records of the patient first (if he has had) if the patients' behaviour is violent or extremely depressed, he should be referred to a psychiatrist first. When his violence or depression is reduced and if he is capable of communication, therapist has to go ahead with the following therapeutical steps. 1. Develop communication with the patient as explained in the book Buddhist Psychotherapy. Certain techniques and principles aimed at developing better understanding between the therapist and the patient have to be followed. Without kindness and care (Karuna) in the heart of therapist, no development of communication between the patient and therapist is possible. Development of awareness (II) Get the attention of the patient focused on his body-help the patient to see and know his own body and its movements (Kayanu passana) - allow passive awareness of the body to get developed, guidance to do so should be provided at the therapeutical sessions (each session should be limited to one hour) III Patients do have pains of the body and pains in the mind but they are hardly aware of them. Get the patient to know his pain by means of scanning the body internally and externally. This concentration on the body pains must be done daily in the morning and evening spending about twenty minutes each time, for a period of one week. Unconscious IV. By means of memory regression, get the patient to speak about his past experiences

Stress related mental disorders

related to the illness. Sometimes even the unconscious of the patient will be exposed along with the memories. The memories thus exposed will indicate the character type to which the patient belongs. There are four character types prone to mental illness (see Anguttara Nikaya Text - Chatutta Vagga) 1. Raga type = Desire driven 2. Dosa type = Anger driven 3. Moha type = Ignorance = remorseful type 4. Mana type = Conceit = superiority of inferiority conscious type. Exposure of memories or talking about them will lead to the process of catharsis-a term first used by the Buddha = Ariya Virecana, Catharsis will reduce tension of the patient. V. Analysis of the patient memories and behaviour traits will reveal the predominant klesha of patient's life. In Buddhist Psychotherapy, kleshas, mental defilements are recognised as the predominant cause of the mental illness. Thus, in the process of psychotherapy analysis the patients are encouraged to see and know the particular klesha as the major cause of his mental illness. This process will lead the patient to develop inward looking awareness which is therapeutical. In any mental disorder such as depression or schizophrenia mental defilements such as remorse or suspicion can be seen easily by the patient. VI. For the patient to see and know his own mind, he should be placed in peaceful and pleasant atmosphere. He should be encouraged to visit religious places in keeping with his own faith. For instance, a Buddhist should be encouraged to visit a Buddhist temple, a Hindu to a kovil, a Christian to a church and a Muslim to a mosque. This is aimed at spiritual development at basic level. Meditation At religious place or at home, the patient must be guided to practice two forms of meditation 1. Metta Bhavana - Meditation on good wishes to all 2. Meditation on breathing process taking place in the patient - observing and becoming aware of how he breaths in and breaths out. These two forms of meditation will promote self-discipline by means of developing awareness of what he does or speaks and thinks. VII. While the patient is on the way to full recovery, efforts must be made to rehabilitate him in the following areas. (a) Encourage him to build up self-confidence and maintain good appearance. (b) In family and community set up, treat him as normal person - for instance eat with him and play with him. Encourage him to participate even in intellectual discussions or listening to music or watching a teledrama with family members. (c) Involve him in economic activity which will give him economic security. Wherever it is possible, find employment or engage him in commercial or agricultural projects. (d) Encourage him to engage in sports activity such as playing badminton or swimming. Thus, the rehabilitation of the patient will make him a normal person. Special attention should be paid to discover the talents of the patient and help him to develop his personality along with this talents. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka.

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Empowering women in our communities

Daily News (Sri Lanka)

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Body

Sri Lanka, Oct. 16 -- Statement by Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights Mahinda Samarasinghe at the meeting Advancement of Women Third Committee of the UN General Assembly New York on October 13, 2009

The adoption of the Beijing platform for action and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are major achievements in our efforts to empower women in our communities.

The 2000 Millennium Summit, it may be recalled, set goals to be achieved by 2015 in respect of providing equal opportunities to women, in fact gender is an overarching theme in all the eight Millennium Development Goals.

The 'Unite to end violence against women' campaign 2008-2015 initiated by the Secretary-General has added impetus to our efforts to ensure the protection of women in vulnerable environments. We also appreciate the work of UNIFEM in supporting the efforts of developing countries to implement national development strategies.

We welcome the General Assembly Resolution during the last session on System Wide Coherence which expressed strong support for uniting the four UN gender specific entities into one entity led by an Under-Secretary-General.

Violence against women remains a global challenge. According to the reports before us, in 2002 alone, some 150 million girls under 18 suffered from some form of sexual violence. Some 140 million girls and women have experienced genital mutilation and live with its repercussions. Over 60 million girls worldwide are child brides and 80 percent of the people trafficked annually are women and girls. These are matters that need to be addressed as a matter of utmost urgency and we need a global fund and high level support to address these issues.

The Constitution of Sri Lanka guarantees equal rights to all irrespective of gender. We have ratified the CEDAW and implemented a Women's Charter which embodies the principles set out in the Convention. We have also set up a Ministry of Women's Empowerment to formulate policies and implement social and economic empowerment programs for the advancement of the social and economic status of Sri Lankan women. Sri Lanka has achieved impressive gains in the advancement of women and is proud that it has recently been ranked 36 out of 155 countries in terms of the Gender Development Index as a percentage of the score on the Human Development Index. In the recently published UN Human Development Report 2009.

We have also been ranked 12 in the UN Index on Equal Opportunities. Sri Lanka's free health and education systems have resulted in the life expectancy of a woman rising to 79 years. We have very low maternal and infant mortality rates comparable to those of developed countries. An ever increasing number of women are entering higher education.

Empowering women in our communities

The number of women being elected to our legislative bodies, to the bench of our Supreme Court and the Public Service has also been systematically increased in our endeavour to reflect gender balance.

Our Government has also initiated program to encourage women to generate income to their families by developing skills through numerous training schemes including self employment projects. We have also encouraged women to be entrepreneurs and have introduced credit schemes specifically designed to help rural women to break out of the cycle of poverty.

Today, these initiatives have borne fruit and as a result, 35 percent of our labour force comprises women. While we acknowledge the challenges we have to overcome in achieving the Millennium Development Goal No. 3 by 2015 Sri Lanka has taken definite measures to ensure and guarantee the rights of women as outlined. In our periodic reports submitted in pursuance of our obligations under CEDAW.

My delegation also considers combating violence against women migrant workers to be a high priority. 48 percent of Sri Lanka's migrant workers are females. Violence against women migrant workers persists, undocumented women migrant workers remain particularly vulnerable to violence, exploitation and discrimination.

We strongly support efforts by UN to promote targeted measures including strengthening of contractual agreements, control over recruitment , information campaign besides efforts to encourage Member States to implement relevant legislation. We have also recently developed a National Labour Migration Policy, which inter alia, seeks to protect human rights of female migrant workers.

Sri Lanka has also been successful in negotiating bilateral agreements with several countries to which we send our migrant workers to ensure their welfare and protection.

As a country that has just emerged after three decades of internal conflict following the defeat of the terrorist group, we have initiated special post conflict programs in the Northern and Eastern provinces to uplift the situation of women, some of whom were forcibly recruited as combatants, or who have become single parents or lost.

Some or all of their children. Many of these women are internally displaced and currently in IDP centres etc. Women from over 50 percent of the IDP population. Our process of recovery from this long period of conflict has just commenced and we consider the welfare of especially women and children as a high priority. In this regard, my Ministry is in the process of developing a National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and have taken special note of the need to place special emphasis on the rights of women.

This is also a voluntary pledge Sri Lanka made when it participated in the UPR process last year in the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Our Government has taken its responsibilities very seriously in this respect to care for the needs of women affected by the conflict. Counselling centres have also been set up to provide psychosocial support to displaced women and girls. We are committed to ensuring that women in this post conflict environment are not only treated as victims but also being involved in peace building within their communities.

My Ministry is charged with the subjects of Disaster Management and Human Rights.

We also enjoy a coordinating mandate in respect of the provision of humanitarian assistance to victims of disasters and at the same time, we have the responsibility of promoting human rights.

Terrorism and civil strife are among the worst forms of human-made disaster. It is our view that our response to and recovery from such a disaster should be informed and guided by considerations of human rights protection.

In this connection we must pay special attention to the needs of the affected population which includes children, women, in particular, pregnant women and mothers with infants, the disabled and the aged. This is why we have placed a special emphasis on a structured program of release of persons from relief villages and welfare centres giving preference to vulnerable persons and others with special needs.

We have, to date, released over 15,000 persons from welfare centres. We have made sure that families who were separated during the conflict are reunified with their kith and kin and have achieved well over 30,000 reunifications.

Empowering women in our communities

We have sought to incrementally enable the freedom of movement of IDPs through an increasing number of releases and the initial phases of the resettlement program.

We are dealing with just under 250,000 persons being housed and provided with humanitarian relief with the majority of IDPs being housed in what is known as the Menik Farm area.

The provision of humanitarian assistance and relief which encompasses provision of shelter, water and sanitation, drainage, food and nutrition, educational and medical services and protection including physical safety and security. At present this is being provided by numerous Government, supported and complemented by the United Nations and non-governmental, national and international.

For instance in response to the risk of flooding which has been highlighted due to the oncoming monsoon, the Disaster Management Centre of Sri Lanka is coordinating the construction of adequate drainage to deal with the risk of inundation.

The Centre is working in close co-operation with UN and other in this connection. The number of medical staff and health volunteers has been gradually enhanced, family-health centres established and, mortality rates have been brought down to the national average.

Work is underway to ensure better information provision to IDPs so that they are made aware of arrangements to make services available to them and development initiatives being implemented to facilitate their return.

The Ministry of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services has taken the initiative of printing and supplying newsletters detailing the progress of de-mining and reconstruction and also providing vital information to IDPs. Measures to improve freedom of movement have been taken.

The authorities in charge of maintaining the camps have also put in place a system of day-passes whereby IDPs who need to attend to specific wants, ranging from attending a family wedding to visiting their bank in a nearby town, can leave the camps for a limited period of time.

Our next goal is resettlement of the bulk of IDPs by the end of January next year. We have already commenced programs of resettlement. A total of 11,225 new IDPs, those displaced after 2006, have been resettled from end-March to the beginning of October 2009. In the August to October period alone, 10,182 IDPs from Menik Farm have been returned to their districts of origin in Ampara, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Kandy, Mannar, Trincomalee and Vavuniya. Resettlement of further IDPs from Vavuniya will continue.

To achieve, this we need to accelerate the process of de-mining. Within the 180-day window we have set ourselves as an initial target for the resettlement program, we also plan to restore basic administrative infrastructure and Construction of administrative buildings such as the District Secretariats, Divisional Secretariats and local Government buildings, schools, health facilities, co-operative sales outlets and agri-service centres have commenced in Mannar, Vavuniya, Mullaitivu and Kilinochchi districts.

While some of these facilities have already been completed, the construction of remaining facilities is on-going. With regard to de-mining, a condition precedent to any consideration of return and resettlement, from January to August 2009, a total area of 82.08 sq kms in Anuradhapura, Batticaloa, Jaffna, Mannar.

The Trincomalee and Vavuniya districts were surveyed and cleared by the Sri Lankan Army and other de-mining and handed over to the Government. In Mannar, de-mining of three-fourths of the rice bowl area will be completed by mid-October 2009 in time for resettlement of IDPs. 13,000 acres have already been cleared and cultivation will begin once resettlement takes place in time with the traditional planting season.

The Government will provide returners with two acres of land for ploughing, free seed-paddy, fertilizer subsidies and equipment for farming. The de-mining of nine Grama Niladhari (GN) Divisions - small administrative units - in Kilinochchi is expected to be completed soon to facilitate resettlement. De-mining of areas in the Mullaitivu district has also commenced.

Empowering women in our communities

The acquisition of new equipment is key to rapid de-mining. We have managed, through the injection of Government funds, managed to acquire some flailing machines and are encouraged that others have expressed an interest in contributing to funding the purchase of more machines. Chairperson, we successfully conducted a National Consultation on protracted cases of displacement last year. These IDPs, including Muslims who were expelled from the Northern Province by the **LTTE** 20 years ago, pose a challenge due to the complexity of their situation having been in a situation of displacement, in some cases, for 15 to 20 years. We have to revisit the problems faced by these persons and seek to bring them within the Government's program of reconstruction, resettlement, reintegration and reconciliation.

Reconstruction and development is also a priority on the Government's agenda. A Presidential Task Force was appointed by President Mahinda Rajapaksa in May 2009 for the Resettlement, Development and Security in the Northern Province. It is mandated to prepare strategic plans, programs and projects to resettle Internally Displaced Persons, rehabilitate and develop economic and social infrastructure of the Northern Province.

It will oversee the development of all physical infrastructure, restoration of Government and other services and the creation of an environment in which normal civilian life can resume and continue. The Chair of the Presidential Task Force, Senior Advisor to the President, Hon. Basil Rajapaksa MP, is working tirelessly to implement this program. A massive quantum of investment is required to ensure the success of this exercise with an estimated US\$ 150 million being committed to date. The Government is determined that the facilities available to the people in the rest of the country will be available to the people in conflict-affected areas.

The smooth transition from early recovery to medium and longer-term economic development is also being planned for. This long term development strategy is being developed and implemented under a program known as the Wadakkinn Wasantham, which will usher in a new era for the people of the North. The Government also is committed to focus attention on the long-standing issue of protracted IDPs. The next focus is on reintegration which is perhaps one of the most important initiatives to ensure sustainable recovery in the post conflict era. Published by HT Syndication with permission from Daily News Sri Lanka. For more information on news feed please contact Sarabjit Jagirdar at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

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Body

It is supposed to be the "silly season" when international affairs shut down and politicians really do spend more time with their families. But this year the fast pace of global events shows no sign of slacking off for the summer. With Iran still in the grip of a titanic power struggle, fighting intensifying in Afghanistan and Pakistan and much of the world still recovering from economic recession, the summer of 2009 promises to be memorable for all the wrong reasons.

Attention is still focused squarely on Iran and the battle between reformists and hardliners for the future of the Islamic state. With the dispute over the result of the presidential election being played out on the streets of Tehran, the contest shows every sign of becoming increasingly violent. The struggle threatens to split the regime in two. President Ahmadinejad will be sworn into a second term of office within the next few weeks, but against the wishes of many key figures in the leadership.

But that does not mean that Middle East peace efforts are doomed. Washington has just agreed to appoint a new ambassador to Damascus amid hopes of fresh negotiations for a comprehensive peace between Israel and the Arab states.

Though hardliners in Iran are in charge, they have to maintain a rearguard action against the opposition. Domestic turmoil in Tehran may make it more difficult for Iran to promote Islamic militants elsewhere in the region. One looming danger remains, however. If Mahmoud Ahmadinejad remains President for another four years, he will likely press ahead with his country's controversial nuclear programme. This in turn could provoke an Israeli pre-emptive attack against Iran's nuclear facilities. What to do about Iran is also set to dominate the debate at this year's United Nations General Assembly in New York, where world leaders will gather at the end of September.

Fears of nuclear proliferation are not confined to the Middle East. North Korea's aggressive push to restart its nuclear programme and boost its ballistic missile capability is thought to mask a succession battle under way in the Stalinist state. The ailing supreme leader, Kim Jong Il, is believed to have chosen his younger son Kim Jong Un, 26, as his replacement. The entire region is on alert for trouble.

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

Nuclear weapons and their reduction in number will probably dominate talks in Moscow in July when President Obama makes his first visit to Russia for talks with President Dmitri Medvedev. Washington wants to press the "reset button" with the Kremlin. The best way would be to agree a deal to reduce their nuclear stockpiles by a third, to around 1,500 each. Mr Obama then goes to Italy for the annual G8 summit of the world's most industrialised nations - America, Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Russia.

For some of the figures around the table this may be their last chance to participate as members of the world's most exclusive club. The position of Silvio Berlusconi, the veteran Italian leader and host of this year's G8, is looking increasingly precarious because of the growing public scandal about his relationship with a string of young women. The issue has led to his wife demanding a divorce on the ground that he is consorting "with minors".

The Japanese Prime Minister, Taro Aso, remains deeply unpopular at home as he leads the ruling Liberal Democratic Party into elections that are likely to be held in August or September. Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, has a better chance of staying in power when Germany holds general elections at the end of September. Not so Gordon Brown, who may yet be tempted to make way for a new Labour leader and trigger fresh elections in Britain this autumn. In any event, opinion polls and this year's local and European election results indicate that he is very unlikely to be Britain's Prime Minister this time next year.

Apart from their domestic political problems, world leaders nevertheless will be keen to coordinate strategy in Pakistan and Afghanistan, where many have troops serving. America is already deploying 21,000 soldiers and marines as part of a mini surge alongside several thousand Nato reinforcements. Part of the aim is to stabilise the country and make presidential elections possible on August 20. The downside is that President Karzai, the discredited Afghan leader accused of running a corrupt government, is expected to be re-elected.

On the other side of the border, Pakistani forces, fresh from their successful capture of the Swat Valley from the Taleban, are now planning a summer offensive against militant targets deeper in the tribal areas of South Waziristan, the stronghold of al-Qaeda. Forget the beach. A summer of elections, wars and uncertainty beckons.

Certainly the peace overtures made by President

Obama this year will have to be shelved.

30 Karlsruhe

Federal Constitutional Court in Germany makes another decision on the Government's continuing attempt to impose a countrywide smoking ban on bars and restaurants.

Houston

US judge to re-sentence Jeffrey Skilling, the former Enron Corp president and chief executive officer.

August 1 Sydney

Nicolas Sarkozy and his wife, Carla Bruni, visit Sydney for two days. The visit is the first by a French President to Australia.

Brussels

Anders Rasmussen, the former Danish Prime Minister, starts as Nato Secretary-General .

2 Moldova

New parliamentary elections. They were called after an opposition boycott prevented the ruling communists from electing a new president in the chamber.

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

Tbilisi

First anniversary of the ten-day war between Georgia and Russia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Russia and the West remain at loggerheads over the conflict. Only Nicaragua has followed the Kremlin in recognising South Ossetia and Abkhazia's "independence".

8

Sri Lanka

Areas of Sri Lanka formerly controlled by the ***Tamil Tigers*** go to the polls a month after the Government declared victory over the rebels. The elections aim to entrench civilian rule in an area wracked by war for decades.

9 Bali

Indonesia. 9th International Congress on Aids in Asia and the Pacific. The theme will be combating Aids in a world of increasing mobility.

To August 13 17

Melbourne

The 2009 Victorian Bushfires Royal Commission presents its interim report on the causes and responses to the bushfires that devastated Victoria and killed 173 people and destroyed towns this year on February 7.

18

Islamabad

First anniversary of President Musharraf's resignation. After a successful campaign against the Taleban in the Swat Valley, the army is preparing an offensive against al-Qaeda.

20

Afghanistan

Presidential elections. Under the country's constitution the vote should have been held in May, but the deteriorating security situation forced the authorities to postpone the poll. Hamid Karzai faces a number of challengers, including the main opposition party candidate, Abdullah Abdullah.

21

Finland 14th Air Guitar World Championships contested at the Oulu music festival.

2

Dili 10th anniversary of East Timor referendum in which 78 per cent voted for independence from Indonesia, provoking violence that killed 1,400 Timorese. Australian-led peacekeeping troops eventually brought an end to the violence, but a recent UN report says that the world's newest democracy remains on the brink of anarchy.

31

Phnom Penh

Verdict expected in the trial of the chief Khmer Rouge torturer, Comrade Duch, for crimes against humanity.

The Hague

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

The former Bosnian Serb interior minister Mico Stanisic and ex-police official Stojan Zupljanin stand trial for crimes against humanity.

Geneva

World Climate Conference-3 organised by the World Meteorological Organisation.

September 1 Poland 70th anniversary of German invasion of Poland that started the Second World War.

Tripoli 40th anniversary of Colonel Gaddafi seizing power in Libya.

9

Vienna

Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (Opec) holds an ordinary meeting.

10

Dalian

China. World Economic Forum. Annual meeting of the New Champions. Described as the "summer Davos", it brings together global companies and business leaders. To Sept 12 11

New York

Commemorations take place at "Ground Zero" on the 8th anniversary of the hijacked jet attacks by terrorists on the World Trade Centre's twin towers.

14

San Francisco

TechnoCrunch 50 opens. The influential conference features small start-up technology companies with big ideas that will make their pitch for cash prizes and investors in Dragons Den-style competitions.

15

New York

United Nations annual General Assembly. Discussions are likely to focus on Iran .

Paris Appeal begins in case of Rachid Ramda, who was extradited from Britain in 2005 and sentenced in 2007 16 to life imprisonment for masterminding the 1995 Algerian terror bombings on the Paris Métro.

17

Frankfurt 63rd International Motor Show. The event is reputed to be the biggest motor show in the world. To Sept 27

New York

A Somali pirate seized after the US Navy freed the crew of the Maesk Alabama and killed his fellow hijackers stands trial.

18

New York

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

The world's longest-running TV soap opera, Guiding Light, will broadcast its final episode.

19

Munich

Much quaffing at the annual Oktoberfest Beer Festival. To October 4; oktoberfest. de 20

Los Angeles 61st Primetime Emmy Awards. Last year's were dominated by the comedy 30 Rock.

24

Pittsburgh

G20 summit of the 20 major and developing economies following up from the summit that Gordon Brown hosted in London in April.

To Sept 25

The Hague

Two Congolese warlords, Germain Katanga and Mathieu Ngudjolo, accused of war crimes, will go on trial at the International Criminal Court.

Los Angeles 6th annual meeting of the Yalta European Strategy in Ukraine, an international conference and lobby group created by the billionaire Viktor Pinchuk with the goal of getting Ukraine into the European Union. To Sept 27 28

Paris

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development presents its employment outlook 2009 report.

New York

Trial of two former Bear Stearns fund managers, Ralph Cioffi and Matthew Tannin, accused of defrauding clients.

Bangkok

Fourth round of UN climatechange talks. Final agreement is due by a conference in Copenhagen on December 7.

29

Milan

Four Google executives face trial for defamation over the online screening of a video showing a boy with Down's syndrome being bullied by classmates. Google denies responsibility and is fighting the case.

July 1 Washington

China and the United States start their strategic and economic dialogue in the last week of July. Hillary Clinton, the US Secretary of State, has called for co-operation .

Brussels

Sweden takes over presidency of the European Union.

Paris

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

The rate of VAT is dropped in cafés and restaurants from 19 per cent to 5 per cent. The Government, which fought hard for the measure in Brussels, hopes that the cut will give a boost to the ailing restaurant industry.

Athens

Greece, where more than 40 per cent of over-14s smoke, bans the habit in indoor public places from today.

Moscow

Deadline for casinos to move out of Moscow and other main cities to one of four "special gambling zones" in Russia's regions. Gambling establishments are certain to miss the deadline and could be forced to close.

Geneva

Georgia and Russia, which fought a bloody border war last August, resume talks to stabilise the volatile region.

2

New York

Deadline for victims of Bernard Madoff, who swindled investors out of at least \$ 65 billion, to make a claim with the Securities Investor Protection Corporation.

New York

Ahmed Ghailani, the first Guantánamo Bay detainee to be tried in a federal court, appears in court accused of conspiring with Osama Bin Laden to kill Americans. He has pleaded not guilty.

3

Calgary

Annual Calgary Stampede starts in Alberta. To July 12 [calgarystampede. com](http://calgarystampede.com) 4

New York

Independence Day. The Statue of Liberty's crown, which has been closed to the public since the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Centre in 2001, will reopen.

6

Moscow

Barack Obama visits Russia as part of US efforts to press the "reset" button on relations with the Kremlin. To July 8

Delhi

Pranab Mukherjee, India's Finance Minister, presents the Union Budget for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

Queensland

Talisman Sabre, a bi-annual Australian and US military exercise. The 2007 exercise, involving 26,000 troops, caused damage to marine life, green protesters claimed. To July 26 7

Pamplona

Annual San Fermin bull-running festival. To July 14 8

L'Aquila

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

G8 Summit hosted by the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi. To July 10

California

The Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, addresses the Episcopal Church's 76th General Convention at Anaheim, on the topic of "Christian Faithfulness in the Global Economic Crisis". To July 17 10

Ghana

Accra. President Barack Obama makes his first visit to sub-Saharan Africa since becoming President. The two-day trip to the region, with his wife, Michelle, misses Kenya, his father's homeland.

13

Washington

Judiciary Committee hearings are set to begin for Barack Obama's first Supreme Court nominee, Sonia Sotomayor.

New York

Sentencing of Marc Dreier, a New York lawyer who has pleaded guilty to charges of running a \$ 400 million investment fraud involving fake promissory notes.

14

Paris

Bastille Day, the French holiday commemorating the storming of the Bastille fortress prison in 1789.

Havana

The Royal Ballet perform for first time in Cuba. To July 18 15 Sharm El-Sheikh

Egypt. Start of two-day summit of the 15 states of the Non-Aligned Movement.

16

Washington

Nasa's week of celebrations and educational programmes to honour the 40th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing in 1969 starts on July 16, the day that Neil Armstrong, "Buzz" Aldrin and Michael Collins blasted off into space. Activities continue until July 20 when the Moon landing took place. Nasa will present educational forums and panels, a concert with the National Symphony Orchestra and several appearances by the Apollo 11 crew in and around Washington DC. Mr Armstrong, Mr Aldrin and Mr Collins will receive the Congressional Gold Medal - the highest civilian honour in the US - from President Obama at the White House to conclude the week's festivities.

Los Angeles

Nominations for Primetime Emmy awards announced.

18

Johannesburg

Nelson Mandela's 91st birthday. In New York Aretha Franklin, Cyndi Lauper and Carla Bruni perform at a concert in honour of South Africa's first black leader.

19

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

Turkey

Turkey follows Greece in introducing a smoking ban in restaurants and bars.

20

Moon 40th anniversary of Apollo 11 landing the first man on the Moon.

Paris

Paris Plage. Mayor Bertrand Delanoë's popular conversion of the Seine embankment into a "beach resort". To August 20 22 World

Total solar eclipse visible in India, Nepal, China and the Polynesian islands.

The Hague

International Criminal Tribunal hearing in war crimes case against Radovan Karadzic, the former Bosnian Serb leader.

23

Kyrgyzstan

Presidential elections. The incumbent, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, is widely expected to win a second term after being given more than \$ 2 billion in Russian aid.

25

Arbil

Local parliament elections in Iraq's northern Kurdish region.

Germany

Annual Bayreuth festival of the works of Richard Wagner.

Channel 100th anniversary celebrations of first cross-Channel flight, by Louis Bleriot.

Five to watch Gen Stanley McChrystal The former US special operations commander assumes command this week of nearly 90,000 US and Nato troops in Afghanistan with responsibility for President Obama's most crucial foreign policy mission: winning the war against the Taleban. General McChrystal's background includes a long stint in Iraq leading the military's hunt for terrorist leaders. After his predecessor in Afghanistan, General David McKiernan, was sacked earlier this year, General McChrystal told the US Senate during his confirmation hearing that he wanted to bring a "classic counter-insurgency strategy" to the war. He said this week that success hinges on lowering civilian casualties. US airstrikes from drones have caused hundreds of civilian deaths, inflaming anti-US sentiment.

Anil Ambani The Indian mobile phone tycoon, will confirm his seat at Hollywood's top table when he finalises a deal to fund Steven Spielberg's DreamWorks studio with about \$ 800 million. Mr Ambani, who is India's thirdrichest man with an estimated \$ 12.5 billion fortune, is suing his elder brother, Mukesh Ambani, India's richest man, for 100 billion rupees in a libel suit. The sibling oligarchs fell out in 2002 after the death of their father, who founded Reliance, an industrial empire that stretched from petrochemicals to telecoms.

Guido Westerwelle The gay leader of Germany's pro-business Free Democrats, looks set to be a winner in the country's election season after winning 11 per cent of the vote in the European elections - easily enough to compensate for losses suffered by the Christian Democrats of Angela Merkel, the Chancellor. It now looks a racing

Nuclear issues set to push up temperatures in a summer of discontent

certainty that the next government will be a centre-right administration with Ms Merkel staying as Chancellor and Mr Westerwelle, who can out-talk just about everyone in parliament, becoming foreign minister.

Yuriko Koike The 57-year old former business news anchorwoman, may be one of the ruling Liberal Democratic Party's few hopes of salvation in the coming election - probably in early September. Ms Koike's importance to the poll - and the reason the LDP needs her so badly - is her clear association with Junichiro Koizumi, the popular, maverick Prime Minister who resigned in 2006, but whose reformist ghost still haunts parts of the LDP. If Japanese voters want reform, Koike may be one of the few big figures in the LDP they trust to deliver it.

Mauricio Funes The inauguration of Mr Funes as El Salvador's President in May marked the end of a journey from jungle camps to the seat of power for the former guerrilla movement Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN). After a campaign that reopened the wounds of the country's brutal 12-year civil war, Mr Funes's victory ended 20 years of right-wing rule with promises of pro-poor social and economic policies and a crackdown on corruption. His presidency could also have wider regional consequences. Will he, as opponents claim, bring Cuban-style communism to El Salvador and turn the country into a satellite of Hugo Chávez's Venezuela? Or will this former TV journalist turn out to be the pro-market

US-friendly moderate that he claims?

In-tray

G8 summit The G8 summit from July 8-10 will offer Silvio Berlusconi a chance to restore his international standing after recent scandals over his private life. The Italian Prime Minister has said that he hopes to use the summit to "define common ethical and legal standards and new rules governing the transparency, propriety and integrity of international economic and financial activity at this time of global economic difficulty". UN General Assembly This year's session, under Libyan presidency, is likely to be dominated behind the scenes by Iran's nuclear programme. Barack Obama wants to know by the year's end if progress is possible. But diplomats say that the real deadline is the gathering of world leaders at the UN in late September. China and Russia will have to decide if they can back the kind of sanctions - such as a ban on imported petroleum products - that could force Iran to back down. Arms control American and Russian negotiators are bargaining over a replacement for the 1991 START 1 treaty to cut nuclear weapons to be agreed by the time Barack Obama meets Dmitri Medvedev in Moscow on July 6. The signs are that stockpiles will be limited to 1,500 warheads each. However a major sticking point is the dispute over US plans to site a missile defence shield in Eastern Europe, which the Kremlin insists must be scrapped.

Sweden As Sweden takes over the European Union presidency it finds itself dangerously exposed to economic meltdown in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. Swedish banks helped to fuel the construction bubble across the region, making loans equivalent to 20 per cent of the Baltic states' GDP on the assumption that their Eastern neighbours would grow and grow. The European Central Bank has given a loan to the Swedish central bank to stave off a regional collapse. But will it be enough?

China China and the US launch their strategic and economic dialogue in Washington. Military-to-military exchanges are back on track, but talk of a G2 involving China and the US is premature. Beijing is not ready for such a relationship with a country still often seen as a rival and too many differences still irritate - among them political reform and military expansion. But they are clearly closer over North Korea, and China's huge holdings of US Treasuries mean their economies are increasingly interdependent.

Window on the world

Load-Date: July 1, 2009

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The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Marie Okabe, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General.

Good afternoon.

****Guest at Noon Today**

Our guest at the noon briefing today will be Michael Schulenburg, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone. He will brief on the situation in that country.

And I was just told that the Security Council President is going to the stakeout, but it looks like the action is out there anyway, with the P-5 stakeout already out there. So if you need to get to the President, he is also going to the stakeout now.

**** Lebanon**

Turning to Lebanon, the Secretary-General has been calling the Lebanese leaders this morning, following the elections that took place on Sunday. He spoke by telephone earlier today with President Michel Suleiman and Prime Minister Fouad Siniora, and just spoke to Saad Hariri, the leader of the 14 March Coalition.

He congratulated them on the elections and expressed the hope that the formation of the new Government will proceed expeditiously and that it will take place in a calm and secure environment. He said that he counts on the new Government to proceed with the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1701.

As you will recall, in his statement yesterday, the Secretary-General called on all Lebanese to respect the results of the elections and urged them to work together in the spirit of coexistence and democracy.

****Security Council**

I just mentioned to you the Security Council just finished its consultations. This morning it heard an update on the situation in Burundi, first in an open meeting and then in consultations.

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Youssef Mahmoud, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General for Burundi, briefed the Council on the significant progress that has been achieved in the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire Agreement and preparations for the 2010 elections. Yet, despite the improvement in the political climate, he said that concerns continue to be expressed about the persistent disruption of the activities of opposition political parties by the police, the intelligence service and local officials.

He said that the two most immediate security challenges are the conclusion of the demobilization and reintegration progress and the sustainable socio-economic reintegration of former combatants. Meanwhile, the Secretary-General has recommended that the mandate of the UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB) should remain unchanged through the end of 2009.

**** Somalia -- Humanitarian**

Turning to Somalia, the UN refugee agency, that is UNHCR, together with UNICEF, the UN children's agency, have expressed grave concern over the extent of civilian death and suffering caused by the escalating violence in the Somali capital, Mogadishu.

They are also concerned about human rights violations that are being committed in the latest fighting between pro-Government forces and armed opposition groups. In the past one month alone, it is estimated that more than 117,000 people have been displaced, according to UNHCR.

The majority of the displaced are women and children, with many carrying very few belongings and having to endure extremely difficult circumstances. Agencies are particularly concerned that women are vulnerable, with reports of rape and sexual exploitation as they flee the fighting.

The situation has become worse for children, with at least 34 schools temporarily occupied by armed groups since the beginning of the year. There is a joint press release from UNHCR and UNICEF issued in Nairobi, together with an update from the UN refugee agency in Geneva on this subject.

**** Somalia -- Rome Meeting**

Meanwhile, a two-day, top-level international meeting on Somalia has opened today, with the aim of generating fresh support for the legitimate, internationally recognized Government of Somalia.

The meeting of the International Contact Group -- which is chaired by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Somalia, Ahmedou Ould Abdallah -- will discuss the political, security, humanitarian and development situation in Somalia. Piracy is also on the agenda.

Somalia's Prime Minister is scheduled to participate in the deliberations along with representatives from more than 35 countries and international organizations. The meeting is taking place in Rome.

**** Myanmar -- Secretary-General Report**

Out on the racks today is the Secretary-General's report to the Security Council on children and armed conflict in Myanmar. The report provides information on the grave violations against children and identifies responsible States and non-State parties to the conflict.

The Secretary-General stresses the need for the Governments concerned to facilitate dialogue between the United Nations and the Karen National Union and Karenni National Progressive Party for the purposes of signing an action plan in accordance with [relevant] Security Council resolutions.

While steps taken to date are appreciated, the Secretary-General strongly urges the Government of Myanmar to put into place a tighter mechanism to prevent the recruitment of children. It also urges the Government to demobilize unconditionally all children who participate in any capacity in its Armed Forces, in coordination with the country task force on monitoring and reporting.

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And you can read more about that in that report.

****Thailand-Myanmar**

The UN refugee agency (UNHCR), meanwhile, is trying to get more details about a group of Karen people who have fled from Myanmar since last Wednesday. UNHCR staff have been sent, today and yesterday, to villages in northern Thailand trying to ascertain the number of people who have recently arrived. Estimates vary greatly from about 2,000 to some 6,400 people.

UNHCR says that from their preliminary discussions with a few new Karen arrivals, it seems some were fleeing fighting between the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, which is allied with Government forces, and the rebel Karen National Union (KNU). Others said that they were fleeing forced recruitment or forced labour by Government forces.

UNHCR says it is working closely with the Thai authorities to best respond to the needs of the new arrivals. There is more in the UNHCR briefing notes on this subject upstairs.

**** Pakistan**

And turning to Pakistan, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) is continuing to look for land to develop more sites to accommodate an increasing number of displaced people seeking shelter in camps. The agency's field teams report that more and more people who have been staying with host families, with relatives or in schools are now arriving in camps.

UNHCR said that it is working with its partners to improve conditions in the camps, by developing shading structures above individual tents to offer residents better protection against the heat. It also continues to put fences around the camps and to construct privacy walls for families. The agency says that it still requires \$67 million for its operation in Pakistan until the end of the year.

Meanwhile, UNFPA, the UN Population Fund, reports on the work it has been doing to ensure that the growing numbers of pregnant women uprooted by the conflict can receive essential medical care at its facilities. A 19-year-old woman last week, who had walked 50 kilometres in two days to reach a camp, became the first woman to give birth at one of five UNFPA-supported reproductive health clinics in camps for the displaced.

And on the subject of Pakistan, we will have tomorrow Martin Mogwanja, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan. He will be briefing you on the situation there at noon via videoconference from Islamabad. And our daily briefing will follow that press conference. So we'll try to get a voice from the field on this subject tomorrow for you.

****Darfur**

On Darfur, the Deputy Joint Special Representative of the UN-AU mission in Darfur (UNAMID) was this morning in a South Darfur village to meet with officials representing some 1,500 residents. Most of the villagers had just returned to their homes after lengthy stays at UN-protected camps for the internally displaced. The UNAMID official met with traditional leaders and some of the returnees to discuss how the Mission could help them resettle in a more secure environment.

He later met with peacekeepers stationed at a nearby town of Muhajeriya, which was the scene of deadly clashes earlier this year. Together they reviewed issues concerning the protection of local civilians.

And the new Deputy Force Commander, meanwhile, was visiting troops at their base near the Zam Zam camp for the internally displaced in North Darfur. You can read more about this in today's briefing notes from Darfur.

****Horn of Africa**

On the Horn of Africa, the World Food Programme (WFP) is warning today that millions of people in the Horn of Africa are facing a deadly mix of persistent drought, poor rains, conflict and the high cost of food. In addition, the

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impact of the current global financial crisis is threatening to make worse levels of hunger and desperation across the region, according to WFP.

WFP is currently providing food assistance to 17 million people in the region but funding for its operations is low. Almost \$450 million is required over the next six months, for operations in the area. There is a WFP press release with more details on that.

**** Afghanistan**

On Afghanistan, since candidates filed their nominations last month for the 20 August presidential and provincial council elections, Afghanistan's election hotline set up by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is ringing non-stop.

UNDP says its call centre provides public information on the election to about 25,000 Afghans each week and this number is expected to rise after the final list of candidates is announced on 12 June. There is a press release on that.

****Advertising Award**

And tomorrow, here at UN Headquarters, the International Advertising Agency and the Japanese agency Dentsu will co-host an awards ceremony, in collaboration with the Department of Public Information, for its global student poster competition.

The competition was launched last summer in support of the UN action on climate change and was open to students in the fields of advertising and marketing communications. A total of 145 entries from 13 countries were received. The world champion is from the Universidad Argentina de la Empresa in Buenos Aires.

The awards ceremony will take place tomorrow in Conference Room A from 11 a.m. to 12 p.m. And journalists are welcome to attend; this is an invitation from the Department of Public Information.

Our guest, Mr. Schulenburg, the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the UN Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone has just joined me. If I could just get through a couple of announcements, I will turn

Mr. Schulenburg: Do you want me to sit here? They asked me to sit here, I don't know I hope I don't disturb you!

Deputy Spokesperson: You're welcome to sit anywhere you like in this room.

****Secretary-General Statement on Gabon**

Just to flag for you, yesterday afternoon, probably closer to the evening, we did issue a statement on the death of the President of the Republic of Gabon, just for those of you who may have missed it.

****Press Conferences Tomorrow**

And, as I mentioned earlier, we have the press conferences for tomorrow. We have the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Pakistan, who will be joining us at noon via videoconference.

And at 2:45 p.m. tomorrow, there will be a press conference by the Permanent Representative of Liechtenstein who is the President of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, and we have the Ambassador of Jordan to the United States and the Chairman of the Inter-sessional Meeting on the Crime of Aggression. And they will brief on the work of the Assembly of States Parties to the Rome Statute of the ICC.

****Secretary-General Trip**

And finally, I have one trip announcement.

DAILY PRESS BRIEFING BY OFFICE OF SPOKESPERSON FOR SECRETARY-GENERAL 9 JUNE 2009

The Secretary-General on Thursday is set to travel to Saint Louis, Missouri, for a one-day visit, as part of his continental United States outreach programme. As in similar trips, he will speak to local audiences about the challenges posed by climate change, the economic crisis and food security issues.

He will address students and faculty at Saint Louis University on "Solving the World's Food and Security Problems". While he is there, he will be holding a meeting on food security issues with various representatives and experts in the local agricultural and commerce sector. He will invite them to share views on the role the UN can play in the biotechnology arena, promoting the beneficial application of biotechnology and life science research, while managing the accompanying safety and security risks.

The Secretary-General will also be meeting with the Governor of Missouri, senators and congressmen. He will also talk to the Junior Chamber of Commerce on climate change issues and visit the Boeing Company in Saint Louis, where he will discuss global warming, environment, energy-friendly corporate culture and business responsibilities. The Secretary-General is expected to be back in New York by Friday evening.

And that's what I have for you. And since our guest is already with us, I can take Okay, Matthew will have to have his daily two and then I'll turn over. Okay.

**Questions and Answers

Question: This situation in Peru, where the indigenous people are being killed as they try to block a road protesting a free trade agreement, does the UN or its Permanent Forum, the Secretariat, does it have any comment? Is there any involvement with the UN?

Deputy Spokesperson: We'll get you a contact for the Indigenous Forum people, so you can follow up after that.

[The reporter was later referred to a press release issued by the regional office for Latin America of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, which deplored the serious acts of violence that have occurred in the cities of Bagua Chica and Bagua Grande, in the Department of the Amazon, in Peru. The office stressed that the use of force and firearms by the law enforcement authorities must be limited and exceptional and must comply at all times with the full respect for human rights, in particular the right to life. The Regional Representative of the High Commissioner for Human Rights also called on all indigenous communities and the social sectors who participated in this protest, not to use violence.]

Question: I guess then on Sri Lanka, where the Secretary-General has said he is closely monitoring compliance with the joint statement, a couple of questions. There is this law, the anti-terrorism law, which has been extended which involves a [inaudible] being arrested, without having to be brought to court, various provisions Is that consistent with what Ban Ki-moon was calling for the country to do after the defeat of the LTTE?

Deputy Spokesperson: Specifically on the press reports you're mentioning today, I have no comment. But, the Secretary-General's comment on the current challenges in Sri Lanka have been mentioned daily, and for the sake of time, right now, I think will stop there, so that I can turn the floor to our guest. Mr. Abbadi, one question?

Question: Thank you, Marie. The Stockholm Institute of International Peace Research has just published its report, and the findings are that the world spends close to \$1.5 trillion on armaments. Does the Secretary-General have any reaction to these important conclusions?

Deputy Spokesperson: I don't a specific comment, I'm sorry, on the report that you mention, but his views on disarmament have not changed.

With that, Mr. Michael Schulenburg.

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The West Australian (Perth)

September 5, 2009 Saturday

First Edition

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Body

ONE POINT

1. In which country was the world's first human heart transplant performed?
2. West Coast Fever is a team in which sport?
3. Mother Teresa died in (a) 1987 (b) 1997 (c) 2007?
4. The Brandenburg Gate is in which German city?
5. In 1698, which country imposed a tax on beards (a) England (b) Russia (c) Spain?
6. Was the World War I fighter pilot, known as the Red Baron, French or German?
7. Which member of the Australian cricket team was recently sent home from England?
8. In which country did an armed gang recently raid a jail and free over 50 prisoners (a) Malaysia (b) Malta (c) Mexico?
9. Which rock band's Black Ice tour will come to Australia next year?
10. The first trunk telephone calls from a public pay phone, not requiring an operator, were made in Britain in (a) 1949 (b) 1959 (c) 1969?
11. Which two letters stand for a document containing a job applicant's work history?
12. Does the Northern Territory or South Australia have the larger area?
13. For the first time in over 300 years, the holder of which British parliamentary office was recently forced to resign?
14. In which country did the government recently declare victory over the **Tamil Tigers**?
15. What was the profession of the **women** murdered by Jack the Ripper (a) journalists (b) lawyers (c) prostitutes?

TWO POINTS

No Headline In Original

16. Retired church administrator Mimi Beardsley Alford recently signed a book deal to detail intimate details of her affair with which 1960s US president?
17. In 1966, which 40-year-old Australian became the first driver to win the world championship in a car he built?
18. "I love a sunburnt country, a land of sweeping plains," are words from which poem?
19. Oksana Grigorieva is the girlfriend of which Hollywood star?
20. In 1995, which country conducted an underground nuclear test at Mururoa Atoll?
21. Who hosts the cable TV talk show Raw Nerve?
22. At which Olympics did Palestinian guerrillas infiltrate the athletes' village?
23. In 1987, West German teenager Matthias Rust was sentenced to a four years in a labour camp after landing his light plane in which Moscow square?
24. In which country were over 17 000 people executed during the Reign of Terror in the late 18th century?
25. Horst Koehler was recently re-elected to the largely ceremonial post of president of which European country?
26. In which city were over 13,000 buildings destroyed by fire in 1666?
27. Which Jamaican recently ran the fastest ever time for 150 metres in a street race in Manchester?
28. Coconuts is in which Australian state/territory?
29. Darryl Zanuck was a co-founder of which Hollywood studio?
30. "You know you want to make me shout! Take my finger! Shout! Throw my hands back! Shout!" are lyrics from which Beatles song?

THREE POINTS

31. Name the French medical missionary and Nobel Prize winner who died in Africa in 1965.
32. Which Australian broke the world record for the women's 100m freestyle in nine successive races?
33. In 1791, which French king was forced to become a "mere civil servant"?
34. Which Belgian created the fictional detective Maigret?
35. In which year did thousands flee East Timor as pro-Indonesian militias besieged a UN compound and set fire to homes?
36. In 1948, which Dutch queen abdicated in favour of her daughter Juliana?
37. From 1975 to 1983, which US golfer won the British Open five times?
38. Which two countries have land borders with Algeria and Libya?
39. In 1998, the communist world's first hereditary succession occurred in which country?
40. Tammany Hall was the name of the Democratic party machine that was a major political influence for almost 200 years in which US city?
41. Despite losing his legs in a flying accident, who fought for the RAF in the Battle of Britain?

No Headline In Original

42. Who recently became the fifth V/AFL player to have played 300 games, been a member of a premiership team and won the Brownlow Medal?
43. Who did Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme attempt to assassinate in 1975?
44. Name the anti-crime crusading NSW parliamentarian shot dead outside his Sydney home in 1994.
45. In 1986, which Builders' Labourers Federation secretary was jailed for 18 months for receiving secret commissions?

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COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

States News Service

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Body

The following information was released by the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG):

The Human Rights Council this morning concluded its general debate on the High Commissioner's update on the situation of human rights around the world and held an interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict. It also heard an address by the Federal Minister for Human Rights of Pakistan.

Mumtaz Alam Gilani, Federal Minister for Human Rights of Pakistan, said Pakistan was a progressive and forward-looking country whose citizens could thrive in peace, and its Constitution reflected this. Over the decades, the challenge had been to translate the constitutional provisions into an ethos and a popular culture for the protection and promotion of human rights in all spheres of life. Pakistan had a separate Ministry of Human Rights which monitored and addressed human rights violations and trends, with special reference to women, minorities and vulnerable segments of society. In the past year and a half, Pakistan had made an impressive transition to democracy, and today it had a sovereign Parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media, and a vibrant civil society.

In the general debate on the update which High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay presented yesterday, speakers shared the High Commissioner's concerns on the suffering of civilians during armed conflicts, the repression of human rights defenders and discrimination against minorities. Speakers invited the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to share more details on its strategies in addressing the gravest root causes of chronic and emergency human rights situations. The Council should help reverse such trends and establish a dedicated mandate to exercise early warning of the emergence of human rights violations in any crisis situation. Several speakers drew the attention of the Council to the situation in Ashraf Camp and requested a series of measures from the United Nations and the Iraqi and United States Governments. The Council and the international human rights system were urged to move beyond simple expressions of dismay at violations and to take credible steps to study and address the institutional failings that were at the root of human rights abuse and impunity cycles.

Speaking in the general debate were the following non-governmental organizations: Human Rights Watch, International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, United Nations Watch, International Commission of Jurists, France Libertés: Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, Asian Legal Resource Centre, International Humanist and Ethical Union, Colombian Commission of Jurists, International Human Rights Association, International Lesbian and Gay

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

Association, CIVICUS, North-South XXI, Women's Human Rights International Association, Amnesty International and Indian Council of South America.

The presentation of the update of the High Commissioner can be found in press release HRC/09/100 of 15 September.

In the interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Radhika Coomaraswamy, most speakers agreed that the key for improved protection of children in armed conflict was in ending the impunity for grave violations committed against children. Among principal challenges was the implementation of normative standards for protection of children in armed conflicts. Several speakers raised the issue of the specific vulnerabilities of the girl child and the need for comprehensive protection measures. A specific challenge for the international community was reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers, as it required resources to be committed for the long term. In order to improve the situation of children in armed conflict, normative progress made on the international level should be implemented at the local level and a permanent and strengthened commitment by the international community was essential in this regard.

Ms. Coomaraswamy presented her annual report to the Council yesterday and her presentation can be found in press release HRC/09/101 of 15 September.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General were Pakistan on behalf of Organization of the Islamic Conference, Sweden on behalf of European Union, Tunisia on behalf of Arab Group, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Switzerland, Iraq, France, Algeria, United States, Philippines, Egypt, Russian Federation, India, Djibouti, Norway, Democratic Republic of the Congo, United Kingdom, Slovenia, Japan, Italy, Canada, Republic of Korea, Australia, Austria, Iran, Uruguay, the European Commission, China, Nepal, Brazil, Hungary, African Union, Syria, and South Africa.

Also speaking were the following non-governmental organizations: Colombian Commission of Jurists, and International Club for Peace Research, and the International Human Rights Association of American Minorities. The Network of African Human Rights Institutions also took the floor.

The Human Rights Council will resume its work at 3 p.m. this afternoon, when it is scheduled to hear the presentation of reports and hold interactive dialogues with the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, Gulnara Shahinian and the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, Najat M'jid Maalla.

General Debate on Update of High Commissioner for Human Rights

JULIE DE RIVERO, of Human Rights Watch, said Human Rights Watch shared the High Commissioner's concerns on the sufferings of civilians during armed conflict, in particular with regards to the situation in Sri Lanka, where the fundamental rights of more than 260,000 displaced persons, who had been deprived of their liberty and freedom of movement by being confined to detention camps in northern Sri Lanka, continued to be violated. The Council should call on the Sri Lankan Government to promptly restore the right to freedom of movement to the displaced population, and invite the Representative of the Secretary-General on the human rights of internally displaced persons to visit the country. The Council should establish an independent international investigation into violations of international humanitarian law during the fighting between the Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam.

JULIE GROMELLON, of World Organization against Torture, on behalf of International Federation of Human Rights Leagues (FIDH), said that despite the deep emotion and the outrage expressed about the murder of Natalia Estemirova, the repression of human rights defenders continued in the Russian Federation, especially in Chechnya. Other human rights defenders were subjected to acts of intimidation and harassment. In Iran, the post-electoral arrest and repression in June 2009 had particularly targeted defenders of human rights and many remained detained whilst others were subjected to judiciary harassment. Human rights defenders were also under fire in Uzbekistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Syria, among other countries, and the list of human rights

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

defenders who had been assassinated, disappeared, arbitrarily detained, tortured, threatened with death or otherwise had been harassed was becoming longer every day.

CHARLOTTE PETTERSSON, of Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, on behalf of Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, drew the attention of the Council to the particular situation of the Iranian citizens living in Ashraf camps, who had become the target of severe violations of human and humanitarian rights. The crack down on the residents had resulted in 11 deaths and over 500 wounded. The Mouvement Contre le Racisme et pour L'amitie Entre les Peoples asked the High Commissioner what steps had been taken in that regard and urged her Office to provide a monitoring presence in the camp, in the view of the threats of further violations by the Iraqi Government.

HILLEL NEUER, of UN Watch, said with regards to victims of torture, the High Commissioner was thanked for spotlighting discrimination in Tibet and other parts of China; the violation of women's rights in Sudan; and the shooting of human rights defenders in Russia. In Iran, there had been fraudulent elections, the brutal arrest of thousands, the murder of innocents, and the rape of female and male detainees. The evidence was documented in a new report by Stop Child Executions. There should be an immediate Special Session of the Council to investigate Iran's gross violation of all basic human rights, and to take critical action to protect the victims. President Ahmadinejad did not represent the people of Iran, who wanted freedom, democracy and human rights, and the abuses were getting worse and worse every day.

LUKAS MACHON, of International Commission of Jurists, said that the International Commission of Jurists invited the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to share more details on its strategies in addressing the gravest root causes of chronic and emergency human rights situations. The Council should help reverse such trends and establish a dedicated mandate to exercise early warning of the emergence of human rights violations in any crisis situation, such as in public emergency, armed conflicts, internal instability or generalized situations of violence. This mandate would carry out fact-finding missions and make recommendations to the United Nations in order to prevent and to help stop human rights violations and crimes. The Council should move beyond its call for victims' access to remedies and urge accountability of perpetrators of human rights violations in counter-terrorism.

ORETTA BANDETTINI DI POGGIO, of France Libertes - Fondation Danielle Mitterrand, on behalf of Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples, deplored that the United States had not assumed their legal responsibility to protect the inhabitants of the Ashraf camp. They further requested the Government of Iraq to protect the refugees, guarantee their fundamental rights and abstain from any action that might endanger their lives or security. France Libertes: Fondation Danielle Mitterrand requested the United Nations to assure the respect of rights as defined by the Fourth Geneva Convention and to establish a permanent delegation in the camp. The United States needed to provide the protection to the delegation to enable them to implement their mission.

MICHAEL ANTONY, of Asian Legal Resource Centre, said in many Asian nations, the main barrier to the protection and enjoyment of human rights stemmed not simply from a lack of means, but from the efforts of States to ensure the inability of national institutions of the rule of law to produce justice and guarantee the primacy of rights. The Council and the international human rights system needed to move beyond simple expressions of dismay at violations and take credible steps to study and address the institutional failings that were at the root of human rights abuse and impunity cycles. Cases such as that of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi were symptoms of the diseases that pervaded the institutions that were supposed to protect rights. The Council and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights should evolve their capacity to address the root causes of these ills. The grave and persisting problem of discrimination based on work and descent was witnessed in South Asia.

ROY W. BROWN, of International Humanist and Ethical Union, said the International Humanist and Ethical Union welcomed the High Commissioner's emphasis on the discrimination against minorities but regretted that she made no mention of the discrimination based on religion or belief. Such discrimination was widespread, even in many of the Member States of this Council. Was it not time that the Council took far more seriously the issue of discrimination based on religion or belief, the International Humanist and Ethical Union asked, also asking how

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

many times here in this Council it would be necessary to repeat that it were individuals that had human rights, not their religions or beliefs.

ISABELLE HEYER, of Colombian Commission of Jurists, said that the recent massacre of the Awa people had shown that the human rights situation of indigenous people in Colombia was critical. This massacre of the Awa people, the second this year, had shown there was no protection for the Awa, regardless of the fact that their particular situation had been brought to the attention of human rights defenders. In Colombia, there was a systematic stigmatisation of the human rights defenders by the highest level of authorities. Only implementation of the rule of law could lead to lasting peace and the Colombian Commission of Jurists counted on the support of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights to continue monitoring the human rights situation in Colombia.

DAMIEN PERCY, of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said there were a number of pertinent issues raised in the High Commissioner's statement that the people of Indian-held Kashmir faced on a daily basis and that they had faced for the past 60 years. The people were unable to cross the ceasefire line and visit family members. They were routinely denied freedom of movement resulting in the violation of a number of their human rights. Freedom of speech was strictly curtailed with local and international journalists, human rights defenders and ordinary civilians facing persecution, beatings and arbitrary arrest and even death for attempting to report the facts on the ground.

JOHN FISHER, of European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association, in a joint statement with several NGOs¹, said the High Commissioner's articulation of a broad range of human rights violations in countries and regions around the world had been a sobering reminder that the Council needed to redouble its efforts to address all human rights violations wherever they occurred. The International Lesbian and Gay Association welcomed the focus of the High Commissioner on the need to eliminate the "scourge of discrimination". This principled position was timely and appropriate. Too many people continued to face criminal sanctions, violence, torture, death, denials of freedom of expression and assembly, and discrimination in enjoying economic, social and cultural rights in all regions of the world, solely because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

RENATE BLOEM, of CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, said that the confluence of the global crises was an overwhelming challenge to the strategy of civil organizations to address the challenges of the global financial crisis, climate change, war, violence and instability. Inadequate responses meant that the problems were actually growing, the Millennium Development Goals would not be achieved and billions were condemned to death, poverty and fear. CIVICUS strongly reiterated the High Commissioner's call to Governments to ensure the rapid realisation of all economic, social and cultural rights and the speedy adoption of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. CIVICUS and the International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law had developed an early warning system to monitor, document and respond to early signs of threats to civil society and would introduce this system to the Council with a side event later during the session.

MARGREET WEWERINKE, of North-South XXI, said the world was watching the Council as it underwent a paradigm shift, moving away from the culture of confrontation and mistrust that pervaded its predecessor, the Commission on Human Rights, in its final years. A new and deep commitment to justice, objectivity and non-selectivity were needed to gain respect and confidence of the world. The High Commissioner and her Office had an indispensable role to play in encouraging and materialising this commitment in the Council's work. The problems created by the massive violations of human rights in Iraq deserved the Council's specific attention. Iraq was just one example of the illegal use of force, and the Council could not afford to ignore these violations without compromising its credibility. The Council should make increased efforts to correct this shameful omission of a serious situation of human rights violations that were reliably attested, widespread and continuing.

ELI FARHAM, of Women's Human Rights International Association, said the High Commissioner had rightly expressed concern about another global trend, that of the protection of civilians in situations of armed conflict. The Women's Human Rights International Association called on the High Commissioner to ask for serious international action regarding the 2009 attack by Iraqi forces on the Ashraf camp which left 10 dead and 500 injured. This was in clear violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Following this event, 36 captives were on hunger strike.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

PETER SPLINTER, of Amnesty International, said it was important for the Council to start its review process with a serious examination of how well it had done in implementing its mandate from the General Assembly. The Human Rights Council had fallen short in key elements of its mandate and had largely failed to address situations of violations of human rights, including many involving gross and systematic violations. Outside of the Universal Periodic Review, the Council had hardly addressed any other situations in specific countries even though there had been and continued to be gross and systematic violations in many countries. It had responded to some human rights emergencies and ignored others. The Council had some successes from which lessons should be drawn, such as the Universal Periodic Review. The Council needed to start a period of reflection and assessment. It had a sound institutional base from which to work and needed to find ways to generate much greater political will.

RONALD BARNES, of Indian Council of South America, said the right to self-determination was not excluded in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and this right was inextricably linked to all other rights, and should be considered when addressing the rights of all peoples, including indigenous peoples. Its application should be universal and non-selective. So-called anti-terrorism legislation was often used by States to avoid their obligations associated to the right to self-determination. States continued to suppress the aspirations of peoples through semi-legal means, and this violation of rights would continue unless States were pressured to cease, and the Council ceased to overlook this, as it perpetuated colonialism and oppression of peoples. The phenomenon of denial was perpetrated by treaty bodies who were instructed by States to overlook their own mandates. Human rights defenders were accused of terrorism. This issue should be specifically identified so the denial of the right to self-determination was recognised as a root cause of many violations.

Interactive Dialogue with Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict

ABRAR HUSSAIN HASHMI (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said that the recommendations of the High Commissioner to end impunity for grave violations committed against children, and at the same time undertake appropriate reforms of national legislation for the protection of children in line with international standards and obligations, should be seen as desired stepping stones to achieve the objective of protection of children in all circumstances. The Organization of the Islamic Conference also supported the High Commissioner's call for added emphasis on the subject by different human rights mechanisms which would serve to highlight the plight of affected children as well as to exert desired international pressure on parties to conflicts to ensure adherence to requisite international standards for the protection of children. The Organization of the Islamic Conference would also like to hear the views of the High Commissioner on some of the delicate issues dealt with in the report, namely the use of children by terrorists for their nefarious activities and the needed calibrated anti-terrorism measures. Her views on how the Council could ensure application, enforcement and compliance of parties to conflict with international norms and standards to protect children's rights would also be important, and the Organization of the Islamic Conference would like to emphasize the need for accurate description of specific situations in order to avoid inaccurate projection of these.

HANS DAHLGREN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said the main challenge to implement normative standards for protection of children involved in armed conflict was their implementation. Addressing impunity by bringing perpetrators to justice was key in this regard. Despite positive developments noted in the report, grave violations continued to be committed against children by all parties to conflicts and the European Union wanted to know what action the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict had in mind when requiring more to be done to systemize and activate the full range of options available to the international community. Widespread and systematic sexual violence against children in armed conflict received special emphasis in the report. National strategies to prevent and combat sexual violence were a priority and the European Union inquired to what extent the existing national strategies included specific provisions regarding the protection of the girl child. The Special Representative had identified several emerging challenges in the protection of children in armed conflict. The European Union asked in which of the areas identified the protection gap was most significant and where and how the Human Rights Council could be more active.

ABDELWAHEB JEMAL (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Arab Group, said the Arab Group accorded great attention to the situation of children in armed conflicts, while strongly condemning all crimes perpetrated against

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

children, and the crimes that children fell prey to, including abduction. It was important to address this question at the roots, and the Arab Group valued the comprehensive strategy of the Office of the Special Representative, and called for the strengthening of international standards for the protection of children, and for them to be implemented fully for the protection of children. The Arab Group also underlined the importance of paying attention to the situation of children in the occupied Arab Golan, as the rights of children there were violated by acts of murder and torture by Israel, the occupying power, and this constituted violations of all humanitarian norms. The destructive effects of armed conflict on children should not be neglected or ignored, and efforts should be made to reintegrate them into society after the conflict ended.

U.L.M. JAUHAR (Sri Lanka) said Sri Lanka welcomed the statement of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Sri Lanka had registered that the Special Representative had clearly condemned the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) for breaching international humanitarian law and for exploiting children. As evidence mounted, Sri Lanka hoped that the United Nations held accountable those of its officials who condoned the use of seventeen-year olds by the LTTE, and those who concealed that the LTTE used one to two children per family for its purposes. Sri Lanka was nevertheless grateful to the International Labour Organization which collaborated with the Government of Sri Lanka for the country's rehabilitation. Whilst the United Nations technical support system was not as good as it used to be, Sri Lanka was the only country which provided education at all levels to children living in welfare camps.

HAMZA OMER HASSAN AHMED (Sudan) took note of the recommendations the Special Representative of the Secretary-General made to the Government of Sudan in her report and would seek to implement them. In paragraph 14 of the report the Special Representative of the Secretary-General mentioned that important legal reforms had been implemented in Sudan to stop crimes against children, such as limiting the age for recruitment. The law also contained clear sanctions for a number of crimes, such as murder, sexual exploitation, rape, torture and others. The Government of Sudan would continue to follow the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General with great interest and expected the international community to put pressure on armed groups to stop recruiting children.

DAMARIS CARNAL (Switzerland) said Switzerland welcomed the adoption by the Security Council of resolution 1882, which included rape and all forms of sexual violence, as well as murder and mutilation of children in armed conflicts as criteria for inclusion of the parties to armed conflict in the annexes to the reports of the Secretary-General. This was an important step in the efforts to improve the protection of girls and boys in armed conflict. With regards to the general thrust of the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism established by the Security Council, Switzerland supported the request by the Special Representative for the recommendations of the Secretary-General and of the Working Group to be taken into account in the reports of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In order to improve the situation of children in armed conflict, normative progress made on the international level should be implemented at the local level, and a permanent and strengthened commitment by the international community were essential in this regard.

FARIS AL-ANI (Iraq) said Iraq welcomed the report presented by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict which focused on a very dangerous subject - use of children in armed conflicts, especially by terrorist groups. The protection of children and providing

an appropriate environment was necessary to ensure a better future, and Iraq aimed to protect children to the best of its ability as they were the seed for a better future. In this spirit, and despite various challenges, Iraq sought to implement all articles of the treaty on the promotion and protection of children's rights and the Government aimed to establish an organ to foster the protection of the rights of children. The Government of Iraq aimed to ensure that all rights of children were protected, including the right to education and other rights of children in prison.

JEAN-BAPTISTE MATTEI (France) said that much had been done since the publication of the Machel Report in 1996, which had raised the awareness of the international community on the gravity of the problem of child soldiers. In spite of the progress made, the scourge of child soldiers had still not been eradicated and too many grave violations of the rights of child continued in situations of armed conflict. The specific challenge for the international

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

community was reintegration and rehabilitation of child soldiers, as it required resources to be committed for long term. France wanted to know what strategy the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had and what role it could play in the implementation of the forum on follow-up to commitments held in Paris. France assured the Special Representative of its full support for her work and assured her of its determination to pursue fruitful cooperation with her office and with UNICEF.

SELMA MALIKA HENDEL (Algeria) said Algeria attached great importance to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child. Algeria welcomed the commitments made by certain States parties involved in conflicts to ensure the protection of children, even if it often took place in extremely difficult conditions. Despite these commendable commitments, the report showed that in various regions of the world, children continued to suffer the worst violations of human rights, such as forced recruitment into militias, armed groups and terrorist groups, internal displacement, sexual violations, and being placed in detention centres. There was a need to fight against impunity for the grave violations of children's rights in armed conflicts. There should be a new conference to define terrorism, whilst distinguishing it from the legitimate struggle of peoples under colonial oppression to exercise their right to self-determination. Palestinian children were specifically targeted by Israeli military operations. In the context of terrorist crimes, Algeria stood as a rule of law State, and paid the price of nearly a decade of terrorism which did not spare children, women, or the elderly. Children victims of violence were taken care of medically and psychologically, and their reintegration was aided by the State.

MELANIE KHANNA (United States) said the United States commended the High Commissioner for the progress she had achieved during this year in addressing the situation of children in armed conflict. The United States welcomed the Special Rapporteur's report and agreed with many of its recommendations as well as the concern regarding the disturbing increases in the number of rapes and other acts of sexual violence committed against children. The United States supported her call to end impunity for violations and abuses committed against children in situations of armed conflicts. Further, the United States strongly urged all parties to follow through on their agreements with the Special Representative and to devote themselves to ensuring that children were protected from violations and abuses in armed conflicts. The Government of the United States commended the Ugandan Government for signing an action plan in 2008 and hoped that other affected countries would take Uganda's lead by adopting and implementing strategies to combat sexual violence in armed conflict. The United States noted that the Government of Sri Lanka was engaging proactively with UNICEF and encouraged more attention to the plight of child soldiers. It urged governments to implement legislation to address children and armed conflict. In December 2008, the United States Congress passed the 2008 child Soldiers Prevention Act and the Child Soldiers Accountability act.

JESUS ENRIQUE G. GARCIA II (Philippines) said the Government of the Philippines had facilitated the visit of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in December 2008 and highlighted some policy measures and initiatives the Government had been taking, such as not permitting recruitment of children to armed forces and non-state actors, among others. It was rebel groups in the Philippines which had been observed to recruit or use children in situation of armed conflict. The Government continued to strengthen its capacity to resource, recover and rehabilitate and integrate into society children recruited for armed conflict by non-state actors. It provided a package of social services and interventions designed to protect and rehabilitate children directly affected by armed conflict, particularly in the sectors of education, health, life-skills and so on. By law, children 15 years of age or younger should be exempt from criminal responsibility. The Philippines reiterated its position that engaging non-state actors, including for purposes of securing the protection of children, should be approached in a careful manner and strategies to protect children should be in consonance with the larger peace process that the Government had with non-state actors in the country and in full coordination with the Philippines Government.

RANIA ABDELMEGUEID (Egypt) said the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories was one of the most serious situations faced by children. Egypt regretted that the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict had neglected the human tragedy of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territories where children were killed and wounded due to Israeli military operations. The Special Representative had only paid attention to one incident, and it was thus unbalanced, as it misrepresented the truth, ignoring the wide-spread shelling and use of phosphorus missiles. The Special Representative should have

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

provided relevant information on the grave violations of children's rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories during the Israeli aggression and should have demanded that an end be put to this, as well as an end to impunity. She should objectively cover this aggression and violations in the future report on her visit to the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Israel in February 2009 in order to fill the gap.

ROMAN KASHAEV (Russian Federation) said the Russian Federation commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and was happy that this mandate had been extended. It also shared the great concern noted in the report of the Special Representative as to continuing serious violations of the rights of the child involved in armed conflict. The Russian Federation called on the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to pay equal attention to all violations of children in armed conflict and to categorically condemn all attacks on civilians, including those on children. In this context, it was unacceptable to attempt to describe civilian victims as collateral damage, and such incidents needed to be investigated. The Russian Federation requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to explain in greater detail how parties violating rights were pursued. One year after the ratification of the Optional Protocol of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Russian Federation had embarked on the first report on the implementation of this international instrument in Russia, which highlighted the Russian Federation's willingness to continue a frank dialogue with all interested countries.

SANJEEV KUMAR SINGLA (India) said that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General had highlighted in her report the need to address impunity and bring to justice those responsible for violations of the rights of children in armed conflict. India took note of the commitments made by various groups and governments cited in the report. The Special Representative of the Secretary-General had outlined outstanding and continuing concerns in the report. Many of her recommendations with regard to those concerns were in the domain of action by those States whose capacities might often be strained in their attempts at nation rebuilding or containing internal strife. Violations were often perpetrated by powerful non-state actors. Progress had already been made on one of the recommendations, namely rape and sexual violence against children in armed conflict in the shape of United Nations Security Council resolution 1882 adopted last month. India requested the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to share her thoughts on additional measures that might be useful to induce meaningful action by and against the persistent non-state violators listed in her report.

MOHAMED SIAD DOUALEH (Djibouti) said armed conflict and the degradation of the security situation that it caused created an environment favourable to the violation of all rights of the civilian population as a whole, and affected in particular the most vulnerable categories, namely women and children. While Government efforts should be entirely devoted to creating a safe space allowing the total and successful implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, children found themselves caught in the toils of armed conflict, confronted with the worst brutalities and the denial of their fundamental rights. The activities of the Special Representative, including her visits in the field, gave a greater visibility to the situation of children and armed conflict. The recommendations contained in the report gave a clear view of the actions to take in the context of collective efforts to improve the protection of the rights of the child in times of armed conflict. Children participating in armed conflicts were dangerous children, but they should be viewed as innocent victims submitted to multiple pressures and psychological manipulation which could lead them to commit grave atrocities.

BEATE STIRO (Norway) said Norway thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for her independent expert advice on this issue. Norway commended her for lending her voice to the thousands of children throughout the world who would otherwise not be heard. Norway also appreciated the recommendation given by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to give special attention to girls and women regarding education, and it wished to be given specific advice and follow-up on this. Norway emphasized its strong approval of the adoption of landmark resolution 18/82 by the United Nations General Assembly. This empowered the United Nations to enter into dialogue with armed groups and to bring perpetrators to accountability. Norway looked forward to seeing how this would be implemented in future reports.

SEBASTIEN MUTOMB MUJING (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that the situation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo mentioned in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General was of

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

particular interest to the Government and would remain so until it was resolved and eradicated. The Government had a zero tolerance policy for impunity in the armed forces and the police. Multiple measures had been taken to avoid that rebel groups that had committed crimes were integrated into the national army. Recruitment of children in armed forces in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been carried out since 1999 and had surged with the recurrence of armed conflict. Children that either had been or still needed to be demobilised belonged to residual rebel groups from the east of the country. The National Commission on Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration had demobilised over 30,000 children since 2003. The Government had undertaken a number of measures such as promulgation of the law that prohibited mobilisation of children in the armed forces, a zero tolerance policy with regard to use of child soldiers, and a comprehensive plan carried out in cooperation with MONUC and UNICEF to prevent recruitment of children in armed forces, among others.

BOB LAST (United Kingdom) said in too many situations children remained in danger. More action at the national level was vital to address the culture of impunity for violations against children and ensure investigation and prosecution of those responsible. Widespread and systematic rape and other forms of sexual violence against children were increasingly a feature of armed conflict, and the attention of the report to this was positive. It was crucial to ensure accountability and remedy to such cases of crimes against children. The high incidence of rape and sexual violence in a number of countries including Burundi, Chad, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Sudan and others was mentioned, and these States should indicate how they combated this and engaged with the work of the Special Representative. The positive commitment given by countries in the report such as Iraq, Chad, the Central African Republic, Nepal and the Democratic Republic of the Congo was welcomed. The United Kingdom supported the ongoing mandate of the Special Representative.

ANDREJ LOGAR (Slovenia) said Slovenia expressed its firm support to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. Since 2005 the activities in protecting children affected by armed conflict had shifted from mainly creating the normative standards to implementing them. In these four years, the gap between standards and reality had been in some situations narrowed whilst unfortunately expanded in others. In strengthening the fight against impunity at the national level it was important that international and regional actors on the ground found the right formula of cooperation, and Slovenia would like to ask the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict for her opinion on how this could be achieved. The problem of intentional killing and maiming and sexual violence of children in armed conflict had also become more and more serious. How did the Special Representative of the Secretary-General see the role of the international community to stimulate further action to address this issue, especially on the ground, Slovenia asked, and how could the activities for the protection of children in conflict from sexual violence and abuse be complemented with the implementation of the SCR 1820 and SCR1325.

AKIO ISOMATA (Japan) said there had been no significant decline in grave violations of child rights such as recruitment of child soldiers, sexual violence against children or their murder. The international community must take a firm stand against impunity for perpetrators and accelerate the implementation of measures to remove children from these situations. Japan welcomed legislative reforms undertaken at the national level in countries affected by conflict to respond to the issue of impunity. It was essential that a strong political message continued to be sent to those who had committed offences against children. Japan supported the idea of "Rights and Guarantees" which should be accorded to every internally displaced child affected by armed conflict as outlined in the report. The Government was actively supporting the United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security. The question now was how best to combine the various tools in place related to the agenda on children and armed conflict, for a well-organized response.

ROBERTO VELLANO (Italy) said in the past decades children had been increasingly involved in armed conflicts all over the world, as porters, sex slaves, and also as soldiers. The fight to stop their plight was one of the priorities of the international community's policy in the protection and promotion of human rights. Three lines of action were crucial: prevention (also through the fight against the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons); recovery of the victims; and their reintegration in the social context. Specific provisions on the protection of children should be included in the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions. Italy fully supported the commendable activities of the Special Representative, and wished to fully subscribe to her reminder on the prohibition of the death

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

penalty for any offences committed by children under the age of 18. The report also referred to the fact that there was an emerging consensus that children below the age of eighteen should not be prosecuted for war crimes and crimes against humanity by the international courts, and the Special Representative should elaborate more on this issue.

JEFFREY HEATON (Canada) said the adoption of resolution 1882 had brought incremental improvement to the children and armed conflict agenda and Canada was happy to have contributed to bringing them forward. It was especially pleased that incidents of rape and sexual violence against children in situations of conflict would now trigger action by the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism and in turn inform the Security Council and its Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. Canada was confident that concrete results on children and armed conflict as a result of resolution 1612 would continue with the adoption of resolution 1882. Specifically, given the on-the-ground reduction of child soldiers as a result of the diligent monitoring and reporting of persistent perpetrators, Canada believed that a similar exercise for perpetrators of rape and sexual violence would result in a significant reduction of these incidents. Canada was also pleased to see the element of accountability brought into the agenda of the Security Council Working Group. Sanctions should be imposed more systematically in order for persistent perpetrators to be held accountable for violations. With the adoption of resolution 1882, the international community needed to continue the momentum and keep the children and armed conflict agenda moving forward. Areas where the international community could focus on were: taking stronger measures to bring persistent perpetrators to account; strengthening the monitoring and reporting mechanism with the addition of rape and sexual violence and killing and maiming of children to the agenda; and adding to the agenda the remaining three categories of violations as outlined in resolution 1612.

CHUN HYE RAN (Republic of Korea) welcomed recent improvements in addressing impunity for crimes against children. It was regrettable many perpetrators were still unpunished. The Republic of Korea remained alarmed by the fact that many children often become the primary target of armed actors and were shocked to learn they have been abused even by people who were there to protect them. The Government had co-sponsored the resolution 1882 of the United Nations Security Council, believing it could serve, together with Paris Principles and Commitments, as an effective deterrent to grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict. The Republic of Korea was concerned about a wide gap between the normative infrastructure and the stern reality regarding children in situations of armed conflict. It was crucial that member states, particularly those in conflict, took necessary actions to narrow the gap in their territories.

ANGELA ROBINSON (Australia) said Australia welcomed the reports of progress included in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, and acknowledged her efforts in undertaking field visits in support of the protection of children, which had yielded results. Nevertheless, elements of the report were deeply disturbing, particularly information regarding the use of sexual violence against children. The Special Representative emphasised the importance of monitoring and timely follow-up on commitments of parties to conflict in order to secure concrete results, and she asked how the Council and the international community could assist in this role. The Special Representative also underlined the need to address concerns around a number of issues relating to children displaced as a result of conflict, including the care and protection of children with disabilities - she should suggest what measures could be taken to protect this particularly vulnerable group.

PETER GUSCHELBAUER (Austria) said that over the last decade, the international protection system for children affected by armed conflict had evolved like no other thematic area on the agenda of the United Nations. Security Council resolutions 1583 and 1612 were milestones in creating an international protection system for children. It had been encouraging to learn that the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on grave violations against children had been established in all situations mentioned in the Secretary-General report's annexes and that the work at the country level had led to a number of action plans and the release of a number of children. Austria would be interested to hear the views of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict on possible ways of cooperation between this mechanism and the United Nations human rights mechanism, in particular the Human Rights Council and relevant Special Procedures. How had the Special Representative of the Secretary-General cooperated with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and what was the

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH
REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

relevance of the newly established focal point for children and armed conflict within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Austria asked.

ASADOLLAH ESHRAGH JAHROMI (Iran) said Iran supported various initiatives to promote the protection of children armed conflict. It was indispensable to make those initiatives integral parts of peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions. All States must raise awareness about children in armed conflict both during and in post-conflict contexts, with particular attention given to the rights of the girl child. Iran drew the attention of the Council to the situation of children in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan. Children's well-being was best assured in their families and communities.

PAULINE DAVIES (Uruguay) said Uruguay supported the progress achieved in coordination between the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Uruguay attached a great deal of importance to the work done, and saw with concern the grave violations of the rights of the child, and the impunity that persisted, despite extensive international legislation on the matter. Resolution 1882 was a great advance for the protection of children in situations of armed conflict. Within the framework of its participation in peacekeeping operations of the United Nations and its commitment to the rights of the child, Uruguay supported the inclusion of advisors on the rights of the child in the missions. Uruguay wished to mention recommendations contained in the report, saying that children should be dealt with as victims and in accordance with international norms on juvenile justice, including their psychological, social and physical rehabilitation.

JOELLE HIVONNET, (European Commission) said the European Commission remained deeply concerned about the situation of children affected by armed conflicts and agreed that children continued to bear the overwhelming burden of instability and armed conflict, as well as the related collapse of State institutions. The European Commission attached great importance to the coordination between the work promoted by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the European Commission's activities in this area, which aimed at implementing the European Union's guidelines on children and armed conflict. How could coordination among its initiatives be enhanced, specifically for the prevention of rape and other sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict, the European Commission asked. The European Commission would also be grateful if the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict could elaborate on the role of international assistance and cooperation on the protection of children and internally displaced as a result of armed conflict.

YAO SHAOJUN (China) said that protecting children during and after armed conflict was a task that required the work of many organizations and bodies. United Nations organizations and agencies must take necessary and concerted action and work together to that end. China was concerned with long-term effects of armed conflict on children. Long-term measures must be taken to help children return to their regular lives. In promoting post-conflict rehabilitation, China agreed with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General that the international community must give priority to children returning to their families, schools and communities and to provide necessary resources.

BHARAT RAJ PAUDYAL (Nepal) said the report contained comprehensive strategies for protecting the rights of the child, particularly in situations of armed conflict. Nepal attached great importance to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, and during the armed conflict, the Government had taken extra measures and care of these rights and those of other vulnerable groups. The laws of the country forbade the recruitment of child soldiers and their use in the conflict. The rehabilitation and reintegration of children affected by the conflict was provided for. It was in this context that Nepal had welcomed the Special Representative in December last year, and appreciated her constructive approach, having benefited greatly from her expertise. The Special Committee formed under the CPA had begun the discharge of combatants, and this was an important priority of the Government.

MURILO VIEIRA KOMNISKI (Brazil) said the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict affirmed that grave violations of the right of children in armed conflict posed a great challenge in the international order. The segments that were most exposed to vulnerability, namely women,

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH
REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

children and elders, were often most targeted. Brazil also noted alarming issues such as rape, sexual violence, the impact of terrorism and counter-terrorism, as well as attacks on schools. It attached great importance to the issue of protection of children in conflict which reflected its signing of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, among others. Human rights obligations of States did not stop during armed conflicts and Brazil perceived progress in the establishment of monitoring and reporting in these issues. An aspect that deserved close attention was that children living in camps had been recruited to engage in armed conflict. Although this action, conducted by whomever, needed to be condemned, there was a responsibility of the State to protect its citizens from this. In this issue, Brazil emphasized the relevance of the Universal Periodic Review in supporting and strengthening the activities of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Besides being a grave human rights violation, violence against children in armed conflict was also an obstacle for future reconciliation, and human rights perspectives needed to be guaranteed in all cases and every situation.

ZOLTAN BANYASZ (Hungary) shared the concerns of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General regarding the alarming issue of systematic sexual violence used as a tactic of war to deliberately target civilians, including children and women. Such assaults significantly aggravated situations of armed conflicts and post-conflict situations, while their lasting negative impact might seriously impede the restoration process. No efforts should be spared to take effective steps to put an end to such violence. Hungary asked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict about the actions she planned to increase the effectiveness of the efforts on the international community to halt such violations.

KHADIJA RACHIDA MASRI (African Union) said the recommendations in the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict were very useful, in particular with regards to internally displaced persons and the obligation to report violations of children's rights. The protection of children in armed conflict was a major concern for the Commission of the African Union. The African Union had since its creation multiplied its efforts and programmes to deal with the issue of children and armed conflict from all its aspects, and aimed to protect children from all forms of abuse and negligence, in particular those affected by armed conflicts and those who were sexually exploited. The Plan of Action of 2001 should be implemented to create an Africa that was suitable for children. The Heads of the Union should adopt a convention which reasserted the obligation to protect children in the context of armed conflicts, including among those who were other than State forces. In situations of armed conflict, children risked greatly having their rights violated, and consciousness-raising and training should be undertaken on a massive scale to avoid this to the greatest possible extent. There should be mobilisation of the international community as a whole to prevent violations of children's rights.

ABDULMONEM ANNAN. (Syria) said Syria welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict. However, the report failed to address the violations of the rights of children that had been taking place in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Syrian Golan, particularly the military intervention earlier this year in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, during which many civilians had been killed. The report also failed to discuss the measures that could be taken to assist internally displaced children, as well as the juridical responsibility resulting from the blind bombardment of schools. The report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict also discussed protection and prevention systems on children in conflict, but this was confined to some aspects which were events resulting from armed conflict. Further, as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict referred to the death of civilians as 'collateral damage', she failed to sufficiently refer to the responsibility of States to protect civilians.

KGOMOTSO DAPHNE RAHLAGA (South Africa) said that important precedents had been set to end impunity for crimes against children. Several individuals who had committed grave violations against children in situations of armed conflict had been brought to justice by national, international and special courts and tribunals. The Universal Periodic Review still remained an effective tool to deal with situations of violations of human rights of children in all their aspects. Long-term needs of children affected by armed conflict must not be forgotten and more attention should be paid to the reintegration and rehabilitation of children associated with armed forces and groups, with particular attention being paid to the specific needs of the girl child. South Africa asked for more information about care and protection of children with disabilities in situations of armed conflict.

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

MAHYOUB EL HAIBA, of Network of African Human Rights Institutions, said the Network of African Human Rights Institutions welcomed the progress that had been made in mainstreaming child right issues relating to armed conflict into the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in various parts of the world as well as into the work of human rights mechanisms, including the Universal Periodic Review of the Council. In relation to the tasks that had been clearly marked out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on children and armed conflict, the Network would liaise with its member institutions with a view to building their capacities in and understanding of the principles and guidelines on children associated with armed forces or armed groups. The Network was pleased to report that in some countries where it had memberships some of the rights of children who had been displaced by armed groups had been accorded. It was also pleased to inform the Human Rights Council that it was planning to closely collaborate with the African Commission on Human and People's Rights, the African Court on Human and People's Rights as well as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child so as to build the capacities of African national human rights institutions that used the African human rights mechanisms in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child.

ISABELLE HEYER, of Colombian Commission of Jurists, said that many boys and girls in Colombia continued to be victims of violations of human rights. The Colombian Commission of Jurists stressed the need to stop impunity and bring to justice those who committed genocide and crimes against humanity against children in armed conflicts. Internally displaced children were of particular concern. In addition to having had their rights violated, those children were also the most vulnerable among the children in Colombia. The Colombian Commission of Jurists called on all parties to the conflict in Colombia to respect life and integrity of boys and girls and free any of those who were still held.

STEPHAN CICOL, of International Club for Peace Research, said the violence perpetrated by arms groups raped the lives of young boys and girls. Groups such as the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the militias in Africa engaged in the forcible recruitment of children, but also groups such as Al Qaeda took children from their parents and enrolled them forcibly in their groups, sometimes grooming them to be suicide bombers. Pakistan should ask itself why it allowed the creation of an environment where such groups could flourish. Successive military and civilian Governments in Pakistan allowed the creation of an ethos that allowed this, and the West was not entirely blameless in this regard.

SYED FAM NAQSHBANDI, of International Human Rights Association of American Minorities, said that children were among those who were most affected in areas of conflict. They were disadvantaged in several regards as they were mentally and physically defenceless. In Indian Kashmir, many children were living as orphans as their parents had been taken prisoners or had been killed. The International Human Rights Association of American Minorities urged the Human Rights Council to take account of the severe situation of children in armed conflict.

Statement by the Federal Minister for Human Rights of Pakistan

MUMTAZ ALAM GILANI, Federal Minister for Human Rights of Pakistan, said Pakistan attached highest importance to the work of the Council, and had remained actively and constructively involved in its work. Pakistan was a progressive and forward-looking country whose citizens could thrive in peace, and its Constitution reflected this, as it was based on equal rights for all, without distinction, including social, economic and political justice, freedom of thought, expression, worship and association, and independence of the judiciary. Over the decades, the challenge had been to translate these constitutional provisions into an ethos and a popular culture for the protection and promotion of human rights in all spheres of life. Some impressive strides had been made, but progress remained to be achieved, in concert with the human rights machinery.

Pakistan was a signatory to several human rights instruments, and joining these international human rights instruments reflected the priorities of the democratic Government of Pakistan to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights. Pakistan had a separate Ministry of Human Rights which monitored and addressed human rights violations and trends, with special reference to women, minorities and vulnerable segments of society. Elaborate groundwork had been done for the establishment of an independent Human Rights Commission,

COUNCIL CONCLUDES DEBATE ON UPDATE OF HIGH COMMISSIONER, HOLDS DIALOGUE WITH
REPRESENTATIVE FOR CHILDREN AND ARMED CONFLICT

and the matter was presently before the Parliament. Highest importance was attached to human rights education. The core human rights education curriculum was being incorporated in different relevant subjects in schools.

In the past year and a half, Pakistan had made an impressive transition to democracy, and today it had a sovereign Parliament, an independent judiciary, a free media, and a vibrant civil society. Democracy should lead to prioritising the interests of all groups, and the Government had developed a coherent vision of a welfare state for Pakistan. An end had been put to the murderous killings carried out under the pretext of "honour killings" through the 2004 Criminal Law Act. Pakistan had one of the freest and most vibrant media in South Asia and indeed in the world, acting not only as a watchdog on Government policies but also to raise awareness in the masses about their human rights. Today the world and in particular South Asia were faced with the spectre of terrorism and extremism. Pakistan was determined to eliminate these evils from its soil, as they were alien to its ethos, and the entire nation was united in its determination to do this. Pakistan was committed to strengthening its democracy, improving its governance, and enhancing its institutional capacities.

1Joint statement on behalf of: European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association; Canadian HIV/Aids Legal Network; Swedish Federation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Rights; Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany; International Commission of Jurists; Danish National Organisation for Gay Men and Lesbians; and Center for Women's Global Leadership.

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UNITED NATIONS, July 20 -- The United Nations Office of the Secretary General issued the text of the following statement:

The following is a near-verbatim transcript of today's noon briefing by Marie Okabe, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General, and Enrique Yeves, Spokesperson for the President of the General Assembly. Briefing by the Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General Good afternoon. **Press Conferences Today Following the noon briefing today, at approximately 12:20 p.m., there will be a background briefing by senior UN officials on the Secretary-General's report on the "Responsibility to Protect". The Secretary-General will present the report entitled "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect" to the General Assembly at a plenary meeting starting at 10 a.m. tomorrow. And just before today's background briefing, Enrique Yeves, the General Assembly's Spokesperson, will brief you more on tomorrow's plenary session. I hope he gets here quickly because his window is going to be rather narrow because the officials are going to have to leave for a prior engagement.

That's why we have to start pretty close to 12:20 p.m. And at 2:15 p.m., there will be a press conference by Rajendra Pachauri, Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. **Secretary-General's Travels I have an announcement to make on the Secretary-General's next travels. He will be travelling this week to China and Mongolia. During his working visit to China, he will pursue his dialogue with the Chinese leadership on climate change and other global issues. He is scheduled to meet on Friday with the President [Hu Jintao], the Premier [Wen Jiabao], and the Foreign Minister [Yang Jiechi] and other Chinese officials in Beijing and later, on Saturday, in Xi'an. He will participate during his stay in China in climate change events, including a "Green Light" event focused on energy efficient technologies and the extensive production and use of energy saving lamps in China. The Secretary-General is then scheduled to go to Mongolia on Sunday, 26 July, for an official visit. There, he will address the challenges of climate change and adaptation, with an emphasis on the special needs of landlocked countries. He will meet the President [Elbegdorj Tsakhia], the Prime Minister [Bayar Sanj] and the Foreign Minister [Sukhbaatar Batbold] there, as well. In his continuing focus on how climate change affects the lives of populations, the Secretary-General will also spend time in a traditional Mongolian herder community faced with water shortages and desertification. ** Somalia In Somalia today, two UN compounds were looted today in Baidoa and Wajid. Al-Shabaab men entered both compounds and took UN equipment and vehicles, according to the UN in Somalia. In Baidoa, the looting of all emergency communication equipment and the lack of security officers makes it impossible for the United Nations as a whole to continue its operations. The UN office in Somalia deeply regrets having to relocate staff and temporarily suspend its operations in Baidoa. In Wajid, where the minimum security conditions are unchanged, operations will continue. The United Nations is reassessing the situation on the ground and is optimistic that the minimal conditions on the ground will be restored to allow the critical humanitarian work to resume in Baidoa and continue elsewhere in Somalia. ** Sudan Turning to Sudan, Ashraf Qazi, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Sudan, welcomed the renewed commitment by the National Congress

Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) to respect the ruling of the Permanent Court of Arbitration on Abyei. However, Mr. Qazi voiced concern over several confirmed or reported violations of the Abyei road map area by armed elements other than joint integrated units and joint integrated police units. Mr. Qazi is scheduled to be in Abyei on Wednesday, 22 July, when the ruling will be announced. Mr. Qazi emphasized the need for UNMIS [United Nations Mission in Sudan] to have full freedom of movement in the broader Abyei area. UNMIS has reinforced its presence in Abyei to protect civilians in case of any incidents. And the Secretary-General, in his latest report on Sudan to the Security Council, welcomed the public commitments made by the parties to accept and peacefully implement the decision of the Court, and he assured the parties that the United Nations stands ready to assist them and the local communities in these efforts. **United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad The Secretary-General's latest report on the United Nations Mission in the Central African Republic and Chad (MINURCAT) is out as a document. In it, the Secretary-General says that the brief rebel incursion in eastern Chad in May and the fighting that ensued with Government forces exacerbated the security situation in eastern Chad. The incursion opened a fresh opportunity for banditry, which undermined the achievements of the European Force (EUFOR) and the UN Mission. He adds that the further deterioration of relations between the Governments of Chad and Sudan was also a setback for the security of the broader region. The Secretary-General calls on the two Governments to redouble their efforts to build confidence and address the sources of their tensions in order to bring stability to the region and improve the humanitarian situations in Darfur and eastern Chad. In addition, the Secretary-General urges the Government of Chad and all stakeholders to create the foundations for an inclusive and comprehensive political process in Chad, which should address the sources of conflict in the eastern part of the country. Such a process is urgently needed to alleviate the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees and internally displaced persons in Chad, and to help the conditions for the Mission to complete its mandate. **Security Council And here at UN Headquarters this morning the Security Council held consultations and received a briefing on the work of the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). Karin Landgren, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Nepal, briefed Council members on the Secretary-General's new report on Nepal's request for UN assistance in support of its peace process. In that report, the Secretary-General says that the two major tasks at the current stage of the peace process are the integration and rehabilitation of the Maoist army personnel and the drafting of a new Constitution. He says that the Nepalese Government has asked for a further six-month extension of the UN Mission there, and he accordingly recommends that the Council extend its mandate by six months, until 23 January 2010. **Afghanistan And a month before the beginning of the elections in Afghanistan, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) says that the huge logistical operation to support Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission is moving forward. Over the weekend, millions of ballot papers arrived in Kabul. Meanwhile, the special free phone helpline concerning the elections is now taking 30,000 to 40,000 calls a week, while more than 1,600 civic educators are briefing voters around the country. There are more details in the briefing notes from Kabul. **Economic and Social Council In Geneva today, the Economic and Social Council opened its humanitarian affairs segment, focusing on the strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian assistance. Addressing the meeting, John Holmes, the Under Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, said that, in 2009, complex emergencies had taken an even heavier toll than in previous years. He added that, while long-running conflicts such as those in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Somalia continued to affect millions, also outbreaks of conflict in Pakistan and the end game of the long running conflict in Sri Lanka had disrupted the lives of hundreds of thousands more people. Holmes also said he was deeply saddened and increasingly horrified by the rising attacks on humanitarian workers. He urged the Economic and Social Council to join him in strongly condemning these unacceptable and extremely damaging attacks on humanitarian staff. **HIV/AIDS And a new report has found that funding levels for HIV vaccine research decreased for the first time since investment trends started being tracked. This may have been influenced by shifts in scientific priorities, the declining economy and competing priorities in the larger global health agenda. Responding to the report, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibe said that research to develop new HIV-prevention tools and strategies is essential to prevent new infections. Such research should be sustained and increased, he added. He also said that an HIV vaccine still holds the greatest hope to ending the epidemic. The report was put out by the HIV Vaccines and Microbicides Resource Tracking Working Group, of which UNAIDS is a partner. And there is more on that upstairs. **World Food Programme And I have two more press releases to flag for you. The World Food Programme (WFP) today named former Ghanaian president John Kufuor as a Global Ambassador against Hunger. And you can read more about that upstairs. **United Nations

Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team And the UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team (UNDAC) started today its work in Bamako, Mali, on its first induction course targeting mainly West and Central Africa. ** Sri Lanka I have one other additional item that was just brought to me, and that is that Jordan Ryan, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, visited Sri Lanka from 12 to 15 July 2009, where he discussed the recovery process with senior Government, NGO and civil society representatives in Colombo, Vavuniya and Jaffna. He raised and discussed issues and concerns about security, access, freedom of movement, the rapid release and return of internally displaced persons (IDPs), and reunification of families. The Government is taking the lead on the resettlement and recovery processes, and note was taken of the continued improvement in camp conditions for the IDPs and the gradual handover of camp management to civilian authorities. And that's what I have for you. **Press Conferences At 1 p.m. tomorrow, there will be a press conference by the Chairperson of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on the Committee's current session which started today. And I just mentioned to you, we're going to have two senior officials to talk to you about the Secretary-General's report on the "Responsibility to Protect". And before that, we have Enrique Yeves, the General Assembly Spokesperson, who is going to brief you on tomorrow's plenary meeting, at which the Secretary-General will present this report. So, unless you have... I'll just take a couple of questions before we go to Enrique. Yes? **Questions and Answers Question: Thank you. My question is about the looting of the UN offices in Somalia. Al-Shabaab said that "these agencies have been found to be working against the [inaudible] of the Somali Muslim population and against the establishment of an Islamic State in Somalia". Do you have a response to those allegations? Deputy Spokesperson: Well, right now what I read to you is the latest that we have from the ground, from our UN Office in Somalia. I have seen the press reports that you mention, and as of now, our UN Office there, headed by Mr. [Ahmedou] Ould-Abdullah, has not confirmed any official notification of that kind. But what we do have is the press release on the looting that took place earlier today, which is obviously a very worrisome situation. Yes. Question: Yes, Marie. Have the members of the Benazir Bhutto Commission returned to Headquarters, and if so, what are their plans for now? Deputy Spokesperson: As I mentioned to your colleague on Friday, the last update I had from them was the press conference that they had while they were in Islamabad. And beyond that, for security reasons, I really cannot go into the exact time and place of their work. But I did mention to you, and a fact sheet is available, that they will be doing their work within their mandated period and submitting a report at the end of that period. Question: All the agencies are reporting on Saturday that they had left for New York. So I just wanted a confirmation that they have arrived. Deputy Spokesperson: Well, let me see the latest and what we can say about the mission. Matthew? [The Deputy Spokesperson later noted that the Commissioners gave a press conference in Islamabad last Friday to mark the end of their initial working visit to the country. A team of core staff will remain and be based regularly in Pakistan to carry out the Commission's activities.] Question: Sure, Myanmar and Sri Lanka. On Myanmar, there were these arrests of these marchers over the weekend, the NLD. I remember the Secretary-General had said he was not clear on the scope of the amnesty the Government was offering when he gave the... spoke at the stakeout. Has he learned more about... Who'd been given amnesty, and what's the response to these arrests? Deputy Spokesperson: I think the arrests that you're referring to -- I read about them in the press reports as well -- and from the press reports it was a temporary detention. I don't have a direct comment on that. As for the Secretary-General and his position on the release of prisoners, that remains the same. And in terms of the amnesty, as you know, the Secretary-General responded to that question following the Permanent Representative's announcement in the Security Council session, and so the ball remains in their court and it remains to be seen. Yes. Question: On Sri Lanka, the two UN staff members that were detained there have now appeared in court and said that they were tortured and taken to Vavuniya camp to point out LTTE members. What does the UN say about that? Is that appropriate? Has Mr. Ryan raised that while there on behalf of the UN staff? Deputy Spokesperson: As you know, this piece of paper about Mr. Ryan's activities was brought to me while I was sitting in here. So I think you need to follow up with UNDP for more information on Mr. Ryan. Question: [inaudible] what about the Secretary-General? Deputy Spokesperson: As for the Secretary-General, I mentioned to you that, while he was at the Non-Aligned Movement meeting in Sharm el-Sheikh, he did raise the issue in his conversations with the President there. So with that, I am going to turn over to Enrique, because I really would like for the background briefing to begin on time so you will all have sufficient time to address your questions to them. So Enrique first. Briefing by the Spokesperson for the General Assembly President Good afternoon to everybody. I just wanted to give you some practical information on the events that we're going to have this week on the "Responsibility to Protect", that this is

going to take place tomorrow, 23 and possibly 24 July, depending on the amount of people who speak at the General Assembly. Let me give you an overview for tomorrow, Tuesday, 21 July. The Secretary-General will present his report entitled "Implementing the Responsibility to Protect", and that will be in a formal session in the General Assembly Hall starting at 10 a.m. This session will be immediately followed by an informal session envisaged to last for an hour or so, for questions and answers with the Secretary-General. Then on Thursday, on 23 July, we will have an informal General Assembly panel on the responsibility to protect that will be held in the Trusteeship Council, starting at 10 a.m. The meeting will consist of 15-20 minutes presentations by each of the four panellists that I am going to give you the names of, followed immediately by an interactive debate. The panellists are key voices in this area and are Professor Noam Chomsky from the United States, Professor Jean Bricmont from Belgium, Professor Gareth Evans from Australia and Professor Ngugi wa Thiong'o from Kenya. Then, on the very same day, Thursday, in the afternoon at 3 p.m., the formal debate on the Responsibility to Protect will begin in the General Assembly Hall. All this information, and a brief concept note on this issue to facilitate the dialogue, as well as the short programme and a note with a biographical details of some of the participants are available in the President of the General Assembly web page online in a letter he has sent to the Member States. And I am going to leave it here, because I understand you have the background with the experts from the Secretariat, and I'll come back to you on other issues later. **Questions and Answers Question: May I ask you one question about this? Spokesperson: Okay. Question: Is there any expectation of some kind of an outcome document? It seems that's something that some of the countries were thinking about. A couple of ambassadors said that their thought was that the setting up of this was less than transparent, and substantively they think it is an attempt to roll back the concept of the Responsibility to Protect. What do you say to that? Spokesperson: Well, it is up to the Member States to decide. I don't have information right now on whether there is any draft resolution being discussed, to be honest. But it's up to them to decide whether they want to have a resolution on this particular issue. Question: The President of the General Assembly has no intention to circulate... himself? Spokesperson: No, not right now, no, no, no. Definitely not himself. Question: Enrique, the Responsibility to Protect is a very controversial concept in small developing countries. What are the President of the General Assembly's personal views about this concept? Spokesperson: Well, I think it would be good, since we're going to have this conference and the President is going to, himself, make very clear what his ideas are on this topic in the speech that he is going to make in the opening on Thursday. I will leave it there and then we can discuss it afterwards if you want. Okay, thank you very much. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Body

It's only natural I welcome the coverage of the Newspoll survey of 1000 Australians' attitudes to breastfeeding ("Feeding mums get 'that look'," August 30, p16).

It is disappointing this report reveals 25 per cent believe the very natural act of breastfeeding in public is unacceptable.

It is shocking that young adults are the most prudish group, with 36per cent disapproving of breastfeeding in public.

Women do not have to tolerate this form of discrimination and I encourage them to contact the ACT Human Rights Commission with any concerns and/or complaints.

Congratulations to the **women** who defy dirty looks and shunning treatment, and breastfeed anyway.

Not only is breastfeeding in the best interest of the baby as shown by research and recommended by the World Health Organisation for at least six months after birth, it is also a woman's legal right to breastfeed.

The Discrimination Act 1991 makes it unlawful to treat a woman unfavourably when she is breastfeeding in areas of public life, such as shops, cafes, theatres, work and educational facilities. Discrimination on the ground of breastfeeding still occurs in our culture, as also shown by inquiries and complaints that the ACT Human Rights Commission continues to receive.

Service providers, employers and others need to encourage breastfeeding **women**, or face the legal consequences for discrimination.

The National Health and Medical Research Council goal of 80 per cent of infants being breastfed at the age of six months is not met fewer than 20 per cent of Australian babies are being breastfed at that age.

UNICEF reports six million infants' lives are saved annually by breastfeeding, due to the protection it gives against respiratory and gastric illnesses.

There is obviously a large amount of work to be done to change our cultural attitude to breastfeeding, including education at schools. I applaud Bishop Pat Power's forward thinking, and hope other religious leaders in the ACT share his strong support for mothers and families.

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At the community level we need to make breastfeeding mothers welcome in all areas of life.

Australia is catching up with the rest of the developed world in establishing a paid parental leave system, as recommended by the Productivity Commission and the Australian Human Rights Commission this is important as the length of maternity leave has a significant impact on when mothers stop breastfeeding.

Dr Helen Watchirs, ACT Human Rights and Discrimination Commissioner E Timor births Your East Timor editorial ("East Timor struggle persists 10 years on", Forum, August 29, p12) had perhaps the right mix of congratulation and caution.

While this struggling little nation lacks infrastructure, jobs and stability, millions in aid from Australia and elsewhere are going down the gurgler because Timor's women are swamped by being citizens of a Portuguese precinct of the papacy, which means they go on popping out an unsustainable number of babies.

If East Timor's infrastructure ever does succeed in creating jobs, a vast crowd of youngsters will mop them up very smartly.

There is something very immoral about the old US "strings attached" approach to aid. However, if Kevin Rudd really has his eye on the climate change wheel, he will begin at last to see the inexorable tie between beating climate change and holding back the world's galloping inflation rate.

Yes, that will be the day! Reports from East Timor suggest some progress yes, women are using intrauterine devices but on average only after eight births.

Aid from Australia needs to be conditional on a significant proportion of the aid going to the education of East Timorese women about contraception.

Otherwise our aid should dry up, sad as that may be.

Barrie Smillie, Duffy Sad Tamil tales In the past few months, I have listened to endless heart-breaking stories of cruelty suffered by the Tamil people in their home country.

Their relatives and friends in Australia cannot comprehend how a just and democratic country such as ours can be seemingly indifferent to so many violations of human rights.

They have asked me how Kevin Rudd, who has shown such compassion and leadership in other areas, can remain silent on the plight of their people.

Bruce Haigh challenges Australia to look objectively at the bloodshed and injustice suffered by the Tamil people in Sri Lanka ("Terrorists or tomorrow's allies?", September 1, p11).

Somehow Australia and the rest of the international community have been hoodwinked by the Sri Lankan Government into seeing the conflict in terms of Tamil terrorist activities.

Haigh, on the other hand, points to the campaign of terror conducted by the Sri Lankan Government against the Tamil population.

Having crushed the opposition, the Government is now systematically punishing innocent Tamils, including women and children, by locking them up in what are effectively concentration camps.

I might add, that the Tamils to whom I have spoken in no way supported the tactics of retaliation of the Tamil Tigers, even though they well understood to what they were reacting.

Surely, now is the time for Australia and other democratic countries to demand that the Sri Lankan Government resile from its persecution of the Tamil people and set about building a peace which is based on justice and which recognises the rights of all its people.

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(Bishop) Pat Power, Canberra City Airport worries About 1.45am on Tuesday, the drone of an aircraft arriving at or leaving Canberra Airport could be clearly heard inside my house.

This is not an unusual occurrence, yet the Rudd Government is happy to make the situation much worse for my household and thousands of other residents through its support of a 24-hour operation at this airport.

They are putting economic gain before the wellbeing of the Canberra community, all to ensure that a multi-millionaire gets his way in his drive to wring every dollar from his airport investment.

I find it amazing that while curfews at Sydney and other airports serve to protect residents from the racket of all-night aviation, this Government is relaxed enough to decide that a curfew is not warranted in Australia's national capital, and that consequently this din should be inflicted on its residents.

I note also that the Government's cynical use of vile spin is to the fore in Anthony Albanese's announcement with its weasel words about Airservices Australia reviewing ways to minimise the impact of aircraft noise. How will they be able to do that?

Aircraft noise is aircraft noise, no matter how your Government engages in contortions of language to disguise it.

Nora Barrow, Hackett

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"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN"

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MODERATOR: Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center. Today, were very pleased to have Dr. Amin Tarzi, who is the director of the Marine Corps University. He serves as the Director of Middle East Studies. Today, he is here to talk about his latest book, The Taliban And The Crisis Of Afghanistan, and he will start with some opening remarks and then take your questions. Thanks.

DR. TARZI: Thank you. Good morning, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you for being here. The book in question right here a copy actually came in paperback, which were very happy was published by Harvard and it looks its actually an edited volume looks at the what we call the Taliban phenomenon.

I myself call it the neo-Taliban because I the crux of what is in this place is that the Taliban that we are dealing with, the enemy that we are dealing with in Afghanistan and now in Pakistan, is not exactly the same Taliban that were in part in charge of Afghanistan in the 1990s, but rather theyre morphed into something else. They are different groups. Some of them have nothing to do with religious fanaticism. Some of them have nothing to do with even political power. There are some criminal gangs. And this makes this enemy very elusive and also very multifaceted.

So that the book basically looks at that from a cultural perspective, from different perspectives, by the way. Its not one point of view. Its different points of views. And thats what we discussed. And if you want to discuss whether the Taliban, Irans relations with Afghanistan, Pakistan, those are issues that are covered there and those are issues we can discuss at your leisure. Thank you.

MODERATOR: Great. Well open it up for questions, and Dr. Tarzi can discuss any of those topics that he just mentioned.

QUESTION: Ive got a question. The Taliban militarily seem to be defeated in Pakistan at the moment. What do you see as the future of the Taliban in Pakistan?

DR. TARZI: Okay. They are militarily defeated only in a specific area, which is when you look at Pakistan, theres what we call the settled areas or parts of Pakistan, which are provinces of Pakistan. Pakistan has four provinces, and those are directly under the rule of Pakistan, and the Pakistani constitution applies there.

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

The fight that goes on right now is in the Northwest Frontier province. The Taliban's power in the FATA area, the, you know, Federally Administrated Tribal Areas, such as areas such as Waziristan, especially Waziristan, north and south, Bajaur, there have been no operations there. So their power and military and otherwise is pretty much intact there. I'm not diminishing the fact that there is a good progress happening in Swat Valley, but there is a difference.

And unfortunately, still I think that difference has been seen and is felt that the areas of settled as it's called in Pakistan settled areas are viewed differently than the FATA area. In the FATA area, even in Pakistan, the mentality is such that that is kind of an outside area. It is in Pakistan, but it is not directly into the Pakistani military doesn't see it as its responsibility in the first hand. So what I would think is that the defeat that is happening right now in Swat, if these operations continue into places like Waziristan, then you see a it might be a breakdown of the Taliban infrastructure.

My view, also something that is very positive with this Pakistani military engagement, is that the Taliban reaction to the military offensive has been to hit mainly civilian targets. Not only just the military they used to go hit military now there's, I think, civilian targets, cinemas. My own view is that the Taliban movement has become less and less popular among the Pakistanis themselves. And this may be the most positive aspect of it. I think the Taliban will not be defeated militarily at the end. It has to be military action and it has to be popular dissatisfaction with them, and I think that is happening.

So I think the trend right now is toward positive. As I said, one thing I you know, I think would be very positive is if the Pakistani movement militarily goes into places like Waziristan. Thank you.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: I have a question regarding Pakistan and Afghanistan and the Taliban. To what extent, really, the supply by fighters or by equipment from Pakistan is sustaining Taliban in Afghanistan? Is it exaggerated or what let's say Taliban of Pakistan has been defeated. To what extent the trouble in Afghanistan would remain, or will it diminish?

DR. TARZI: That's, I think, a key question. When you look at the Taliban in Afghanistan after 2001, after they were let us say in December when the leadership of the Taliban left Kandahar and dispersed either into Afghan countryside but mostly into Pakistan leadership as such, the Taliban phenomenon, as such, ended. And this is why I call them in this book the neo-Taliban. The morphing of the Taliban in 2003, mainly it started in 2002, but it mainly came into force in 2003 was organized, centered, and supported on Pakistani soil. There is no question about that.

Their centers of training, their centers of education, their centers of financial support mainly, especially in the early days, 2003, 2004, was on the other side of the border. Afghanistan is a country which does not have any access to the sea, so smuggling fuel and other supplies, weapons into Afghanistan from you know, from outside to the sea is not possible. Therefore, it has to be another country. When you look at the Afghan map, it wasn't happening from Iran at that time. It was definitely not coming in from the Central Asian republics, and it wasn't coming from China. So it was happening in Pakistan.

The question was what was the relationship of various Pakistani governmental organizations with this. That is the question that is very vague. There was support within the people. One thing that is very interesting, when you look historically at Pakistan, Afghanistan's map I actually wrote my dissertation on Afghan state building, and hopefully, that will be soon published, by the way, by Harvard as well these two countries, their same people who share these two countries, these borderlines, namely the Pashtuns. The Pashtuns are spread out along that border, and the border, when it was drawn in 1893, literally cut some villages in half. So there are Waziris on one side, there are Waziris on the other side.

And it is very easy for the people we call the Taliban to live on the other side. And I mean, since they don't have identity cards, they will be just like regular people. And this is why it has been very hard to determine, number one, who is a Talib and who is not. This is why we considered who is a Talib. We still have not identified them. And in United States of America I'll tell you about my own country are the Taliban terrorists? But the State Department

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

does not see them as terrorists. We see only one individual, Mullah Omar, but we do not see their organization as a terrorist organization, whereas some of the Pakistani Taliban are seen as terrorists.

So there's a vagueness on all sides because one part is that they are not really a typical rebellion force, let us say, when you look at Sri Lanka, for example. You can't compare them with the Tamil Tigers. These people do not wear a uniform, they do not have a single leadership, they do not even have a single ideology. And they're with the people. One day, they you know, in the morning, they may be tilling their ground, and at night they shoot you.

And this is another thing with the civilian casualties. Sometimes, the line between civilian and combatant in Afghanistan is so blurred, and I don't think any other recent conflict in which we have been involved has had that problem. You really do not know who is a civilian and who is a combatant because of all the (inaudible) I've told you.

So for that reason, I think the relationship between the two insurgencies is very, very much linked. If the Taliban on the Pakistan side are defeated, which I see, as I said, a very good trend happening, you will definitely see, in my view, a weakening of the Afghan side militarily.

The other issue in Afghanistan which is on Afghanistan's responsibility, not Pakistan's, is that Afghanistan has to have governance. In Afghanistan, there is a unfortunately, there is a trend to move towards what we call Taliban because the lack of trust in the Afghan central government. So one is the military aspect; the second one is governance. The Afghan Government, whichever government comes in power in Afghanistan after the August elections, their number-one priority has to be to get the gain the trust or regain the trust of their own people. If they don't do it, whether they whether we call them the Taliban, some force will come in to void that lack of governance.

You know, a U.S. former U.S. general who is now our ambassador in Afghanistan said something a couple of years ago. He said it's not the power of the insurgency; it's lack of authority in Afghanistan that creates these voids, and it's filled by somebody. Whether they're drug lords, whether they're war lords, whether they're Islamists, they fill it. If you fill that with governance, with law and justice and again, justice here doesn't mean Western justice, it means the Afghan concept of justice then the lure of this insurgency will be much less.

So this fight has to be done more also militarily, but more importantly, at the same hand, with that. And this is something the Afghans only can do. The international community can help them, but the Afghans have to gain their own legitimacy. This cannot be given to them by any foreign country.

QUESTION: How you can create or establish reconciliation or political solution in Afghanistan? There was lots of talks about the possibility of moderate Taliban to be invited to participate in the political process. What really from one hand we hear there is no military solution, and now you stress the issue of military-civilian approach, and now the Administration is doing such. But at the same time, there is a mixed signal. First there is no identification of those moderate Taliban in Afghanistan. Second, there is more stress on military means, especially people now taking we have hearing today by General McChrystal, who is now the overall commander in Afghanistan, that people think that more of the same going to happen because his specialty is special forces. So again, you stressed the issue of civilian casualties if you're going to continue the same military tactics, then you're going to have more civilian casualties and we have

MR. TARZI: Vicious cycle.

QUESTION: -- this dilemma. Vicious cycle.

MR. TARZI: Chapter 7 of this book says moderate Taliban and a question mark. So we did address that, whether there is such a thing as a moderate Taliban. This is very important. You are raising a crucial point. From day one, literally, and this book at least we actually go and talk about specifically what happens the minute Kandahar fell, which is about early December December 5th to 8th, 2001. At that point, until today, and this is something that I think I would say has been a shortcoming of all parties involved in Afghanistan, nobody has tried to identify who is the moderate, who is not the moderate.

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

In the United States at least we have certain people that we have Mullah Omar, for example, has been listed as a terrorist. There's actually a certain amount of money I think it's 10,000, I'm not sure 10 or 25,000 million, million 10 million or 25 million on his head. Whereas, in Afghanistan, we get signals sometimes from the Afghan Government that they are ready to even sit down with Mullah Omar and talk. This sends a very vague message if vagueness is part of the tactic, then good, as a grand strategy. But if it is not, it creates a sense of who is good, who's bad. Where are you going to stop?

Who is you know, the term we hear at Kabul they don't call it the Taliban, by the way, in the Afghan Government. They're called the enemies of peace and security. That is as vague as you can get. Anybody who, you know, goes and stabs somebody in the street is an enemy of peace and security, as far as I'm concerned, because that individual is disturbing peace and security. So enemies of peace and security is very in a way, you Pakistan is calling them miscreants. And that again is very vague because you don't want to name it. If something is hard to name, you create these vague terms to identify them.

My view is this is my personal view, not the United States Government's view I want to make my view is that the Afghan Government again, this is not the foreigners, not us, the Afghan Government needs to set a very, very strict, very liberal, but strict, meaning it should be very broad but strict, on who can be reconciled, who cannot be. The term accepting the Afghan constitution, again, is very vague that's another term you hear from Kabul. There are people, I think in Afghan, who right now are fighting the majority, I will say. I can't tell you what percentage, but I would say a vast majority, who would, under certain circumstances, would come back and become part of this process. There are prices to pay for it.

We in the international community have to think about that. There may be losses and for example, in human rights. There'd be losses specifically on the rights of women. Look what happened with this law that President Karzai had signed in. Why do you think he signed it in? That was an election issue trying to lure certain people in. So it's always engaging what you want to give, what you want to take. You can't gain everything. So this is something that first, the Afghan Government, I think ought to they have an election. They have a very good opportunity to redraw and think of what they want to do.

Once they take their decision, then they can talk to the international side and say, okay, these are the concessions we want to make. But concretely, they don't have to give all their cards on the table initially. But it has to be something that the internationals know what is happening. Because right now, it's very ad hoc it's very knee-jerk. Things happen suddenly and nobody said what happened here.

So in that case, I think people will come in towards the side of government. In my dissertation, which is not in this book, by the way, it's called The Judicial State. I wrote it way before Afghanistan was even in vogue. My whole concept is that in Afghanistan the central government in Afghanistan gains its legitimacy when it becomes the distributor of justice and security an Islamic notion of justice, specifically in Afghanistan a Hanafi notion of justice.

And with that aspect as the center, whether it's king, president, whatever you name the ruler or the leadership, cannot be seen as giving those, there's no legitimacy. Right now, that is not happening. Afghanistan was not created by the Taliban, there was a state beforehand, and then a mistake we did in the international community is we while redrawing the Afghan map after 2001, we kind of forgot what was beforehand. I think we need to go back and see what Afghans did themselves. This country wasn't there. It wasn't very prosperous. It wasn't very, you know, but it was there and it functioned. It functioned pretty normally as a state. To look at that aspect of it and gain the trust of the people through justice and security.

Now, an issue of military versus reconciliation I think you have to do both together. There are people who kill you, you have to defend. There are people who destroy I mean, right now, they just stole 400 students in Pakistan. What you do to a people who don't stop at any level of destruction, so because they have guns in their hands and more than guns, unfortunately and they're shooting at you, there is a military solution part of it.

So if you say there's no solution and we just have to reconcile, I think it would be unrealistic, because the other side is an armed opposition. They are not a political opposition sitting on the table demanding certain things and saying

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

if you dont do that we will become armed. They are already armed. And because of that, I think when an armed opposition intends to destroy, you have to try to make sure.

I agree with you on the side of making sure that dont give the opposition the big tool. The biggest tool right now they have is their propaganda tool. Sometimes its justified; sometimes not. Sometimes they exaggerate the number of civilian casualties. But they say, look, what the you know, the coalition forces are doing. President Karzai was in this town in Washington. The entire trip was overshadowed by the incidents in Herat province in western Afghanistan, so I understand his frustrations.

And sometimes they are exaggerated, by the way. The outside may believe it or not. Theyre actually we have even heard of incidents where they have put bodies from other places into graves. So theres a lot of this because it is the best tool for the Taliban to discredit the coalition and bring in the anger. Theres actually a war of words. In a way theyre doing their own strategic communication in a very, you know, morbid way, but theyre actually more successful than we are with all of our good deeds that we do. People dont see the good deeds, but when something goes wrong people see it. So we have to be very careful.

I think that is being implemented as much as possible, again, in a war, unfortunately in a war like this where the enemy has no rules. Unfortunately, therell be some incidences that things will happen that shouldnt happen innocent lives might be lost. Our job is to make sure that that happens the least amount possible, the least amount possible. And when it happens, we have to make sure we are we take responsibility for it.

As I say, the question is that sometimes we are drawn in into situations. How do you deal with that? This is on the commanders on the ground. Their job is very tough. I think we have a very smart military and I think they will understand that they know whats going what is at stake right there.

But to say that reconciliation can happen without any enforcement of the Afghan Government, I dont think that can happen. Hopefully, the fight eventually will stop and people as more and more people come towards the government side, meaning they accept this notion of Afghan state, the Taliban or the insurgency will be marginalized more and more, and then they will disappear, or at least they will become a group of very militant groups in certain pockets. At that point, I think the war has been you can say the war has been won. You can live with it.

QUESTION: I dont want to take all of the time myself, but since we have limited Im taking advantage of that. I just want to follow up on the issue of the military approach. General McKiernan was complaining about the lack of enough forces, and now hes been replaced and we are relying on special forces approach, which means that were not going to be able to send more forces, right? One of the military tactics thats resulting in a negative is that the lack of having enough forces, and there is no way to provide enough forces from NATO or from the United States. At the same time, the Afghan army still and police, et cetera, still at the level that need to be doubled probably in number to be able to task for security. So I think as long as the military approach is going to result for the lack of having enough forces, and there is no way to bring more forces. These going to incidents are going to occur, and civilian going to be targeted and the negative effect of it, its going to be there. There is need to be a different military tactic of dealing with this. And you need sometimes you approach by military and by political, and sometimes you have to give more emphasis on economic, civilian, political approach than that.

This is just considered as a comment, but the question is really the issue of Taliban, al-Qaida. And I think its time to really in the mind of many people, if we get rid of al-Qaida, there should be better way of dealing with Afghanistan-Pakistan situation. If there is a way to isolate al-Qaida, who they were the one that, after all, attacked in September 11th. The issue now is becoming and, you know, we are forgetting about al-Qaida and we think I think if we have the stability in Afghanistan, neither al-Qaida or others will be able to utilize the failed state phenomenon to prosper, because in my opinion, if you want to talk on the tactical level or strategic level, al-Qaida does not need Afghanistan to operate.

They could operate from any place, you know. They didnt have military forces, they didnt have Boeing 747, or they didnt have airport to train. They were trained here. Its an intelligence failure more than a security failure here, more than the issue of I think we are obsessed with having Afghanistan as the you know, the place where al-Qaidas

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

operating, and were forgetting that this is really creating a situation where there's going to be an open-ended war in Afghanistan.

DR. TARZI: Well, I'll give you a very brief answer. This is the policy right now, the Af-Pak policy as presented by President Obama, is mainly geared towards al-Qaida, is to disrupt, dismantle, and destroy al-Qaida. So that is the policy, and this is part of it. Al-Qaida right now is not sitting somewhere outside of this problem. The Taliban what we call the Taliban, that's why I said when I talked the neo-Taliban there, they are meshed with al-Qaida, they are meshed with even Uzbek and Uzbek insurgency, the IMU. It's not just one group. Even there you know, there are Filipinos, there you know, there are Filipino fighters are there.

So it is not just one group. There is all of them are there, and in order to destroy, disrupt, and dismantle this organization, you have to look at that. They are the main targets. They are the ones who attacked our country and have done things in Europe and elsewhere and in the Arab world as well, Turkey.

As you have to get rid of their support (inaudible) this insurgency. They are behind they are in on the lines, but they are also behind the lines. So I agree with you; that has to come in, but they are one and the same. There are groups of the Taliban, what we call the Taliban, which may not have direct access to al-Qaida, but a lot of them do.

MODERATOR: New York, did you have a question?

MODERATOR: Yes. Yes, we do.

QUESTION: Can you tell me something about you know, can you foresee a scenario in the case President Karzai is going to be reelected? And regarding the (inaudible), not a lot of international support, you know, it seems like it's more considered an imposition.

DR. TARZI: You know, that is an issue of democracy. Afghanistan is you know, we talk about all the negatives. There is an aspect that just a few months ago, we had a conference at the Marine Corps University on Afghanistan, and there were some very senior Afghan officials there, including their defense minister, members of their parliament. And I made a comment to one of my colleagues. I said, you know, whatever we say yes, there have been mistakes done, a few years past, these people will kill each other. Right now, they're actually talking. They may not agree, but they're doing this disagreement at a conference table rather than with rifles.

So whatever we say about Afghanistan, those of us who have been involved in Afghanistan since I have been involved, since 1980, one way or the other, the Afghan society, with all the negativities we are talking right now about you know, in the 1990s, they would have fought. Right now, the democracy is there. The election will happen.

The main hope is that the elections are fairly acceptable by the majority of Afghans, and I'll caveat, fairly acceptable by majority of Afghans. Will it be a perfect election? No way. There are parts of Afghanistan that are no-go to begin with. There are security problems. But as long as the majority accept it, whoever is chosen there you know, if its President Karzai reelected, I don't think the international community, all of us, have any say in that. That is what the Afghans pick. You know, we can say that he is becoming more conservative or not. Part of it is because he wants to gain more votes. Maybe the country is more conservative.

So I'm not saying this is good. I'm not saying this is good. But all I'm saying is that we, as the international community, in my view, do not have we can't have our cake and eat it, let's put it that way. We can't say on one hand democracy, and on the other hand say, you know what, whoever is elected, we don't like. This is and I've said, you know, this is not going to be a French democracy or a Norwegian democracy or a U.S. democracy. This is another thing. We think democracy somehow, we think in four years Afghanistan would reach the levels of a liberal, Western democracy. That's another mistake we had in our own heads.

I always say that, you know, all of our countries should also do a little bit of strategic communication within our own countries, because the American public I can speak for my country sometimes think, you know, well, we went to Afghanistan, and now it should be functioning like any other country that is like, in Europe, or even countries in the

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

Arab world which have had more democratic or more civil society. Its not. Afghanistan has just come out of 30 years of war. Afghanistan was the fighting ground of two superpowers.

So within that context, we have to be realistic what we are looking for. And I think it would be very, very wrong in my view again, my personal view that we interfere in the Afghan election process unless we see some gross violations that unfortunately, there are no observers anyway. We have very few the United States has. Europe chose not to send major observers, so therefore, you know, we cant stay away from it and then say, you know what, we dont like what theyre saying. As long as they are abiding by the norms that they have accepted, we have to accept whatever whoever comes in and have to work with them. Thats all I can say about that one.

MODERATOR: Well go back to New York for the next question.

QUESTION: I have a question about you were just talking about this legitimacy of the present government in Kabul. My question is you know, its as clear as crystal. I mean, if one nation was not imposed represent current government, do you think todays insurgency, which is, as you were talking about it, would do was predictable, that todays because the government really is not very popular in Afghanistan. And if Afghan nation was allowed to participate in their tradition elections with (inaudible), do you think (inaudible) insurgency will be this strong, like we see it?

DR. TARZI: You know, I kind of understand what youre trying to say about the Afghan tradition of it. I think this government this government was elected. There were quite a bit of Afghans waiting in line to vote. Whether those votes you know, the problem in Afghanistan, to be honest with you, is having that Afghan history 25 years on and off; whoever comes in the there, theyll be always saying, you know what, this person has had this or that and it the I think the lack of legitimacy of the current government is not how it was chosen, but rather the fact that the promises made for the Afghans are like any other people.

The number one thing they want is they want to make sure that their daughter and son is not raped or killed, as any other human being. Theyre not any different. Second so meaning that they want security second, once they have security, they want to have opportunities to work and make themselves better people. This country used to function pretty normally. Not the best country in the world, but it was pretty normal.

The third thing they would like to have is, in my view and I mean, we do surveys, everybody does surveys is to have opportunities for their children to grow and go to school. They do want to go to school. They dont want the things that the Taliban want. But they may not want Western-style schools. Thats another difference. They would want to educate themselves. Maybe its, you know, in a madrassa. A madrassa is not a bad concept. It is what is taught in a madrassa. You can teach bad things in a room like this too.

So the question here of legitimacy, I dont think I dont think you know, when you say the government was imposed was on them, I mean, right now theres another election. They have choices. Will again, I keep on wanting to say, will it be absolutely clear, clean elections? Maybe not, but it will be pretty representative. You talk to any side, they say that the results of the Afghan parliamentary election and the results of the Afghan presidential election in 2004, 2005 respectively were pretty fair.

So thats what people chose. If they are very frustrated with this government, they may not vote for them. Thats what Im saying.

QUESTION: Just regarding to your book, I mean, its a different generalization, actually. How do you see I mean, the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan I mean, how do you see the future? Will the West be able to defeat it?

DR. TARZI: It is not for the West to defeat them. I think its for the Afghan society and Afghan Government to absorb most of them into the system, because most of them will be absorbable. And then the West can help. There are certain things that need to happen. Yes, my answer is yes, it will be and its not issue of defeat. Its success of Afghan Government. This is not a classical battle; therefore, I dont want to use the word defeat in here.

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

What you want to do is you want to enable the Afghan authorities, not just the government, the Afghan civil society as well, to gain see look at imagine this table. What you want to do is you want to spread the governance, spread rule of law, spread Afghan traditional the Afghan traditions, which are now being by the way, another thing thats happening is right now theyre relying more and more on what the gentleman there is talking about, to go and actually look at the traditional Afghan concepts of society from bottom up, from the district level up, or even in the nontraditional way where theres a jirga system to attach the government with its society. But it has to be done by the Afghans in the Afghan way. The West has to only be in a supportive role.

And another thing that is very important which we never discussed about is this whole culture of criminality, whether it is drug or not drug. You cannot look at Afghanistan and say, you know what, you can just look the other way where Helmand province alone is producing more opium than entire world. When you have that much illicit economy, criminality comes in. Criminality whether that money goes to the Taliban directly or not is irrelevant. The fact is that that culture of criminality creates lack of order. So it is a big package. Afghanistan is not an easy thing to deal with.

And also, lastly, it is not just the West. Afghanistan cannot be stabilized unless the neighbors number one, Pakistan; number two, Iran; in the third degree, Russia and India also join in. It has to be regional as a concept because Afghanistan is a landlocked country, is a country where countries that I just named fought their proxy wars for 30 years. They have to be involved. They have to want this to be a working solution.

You know, look at history of Afghanistan. One thing that I go to Afghanistan at least once a year, sometimes more. I think the greatest asset of that country is its people. They are one of the most resilient people I have seen around. With all of the things that has happened to them, you still go there, they want to do something better. So I think that is the greatest asset in that country. And if that asset is used and then given an opportunity, I think the future of Afghanistan will be good. Again, let us not think Afghanistan is a Norway in five years. Look at Afghanistan, what Afghanistan should be. As an agricultural country, it will not be very rich. It will be a stable agricultural country going towards a life in peace and security. I think thats possible. If I didnt think thats possible, I wouldnt be in the job I am.

MODERATOR: We have time for two more questions.

QUESTION: Since you mentioned the issue of regional, I want to ask you about the issue of regional, especially with the focus now on Pakistan. And it seems that the political situation in Pakistan is still fragile. The relation inter-relation between the military and the civilian government is not at the best shape, or there is some rumors about to what extent the military campaign will affect the stability of Pakistan itself. There is many people talking about disintegration of Pakistan or other scenario if this military campaign continue.

From the other hand, you have Iran, that it used to be in almost entering war with the Taliban at the before the (inaudible).

DR. TARZI: Right, in 98, 99.

QUESTION: Yeah. So to what extent Iran and others Russia, China, Turkey they have influence, but it seems to me that Pakistan has now the most impact on what will happen. But what kind of approach you could have? You mentioned that it needs to be a regional approach. The Administration talking about regional approach. But what with the situation in Pakistan dictating the security situation, military situation, how are you going to have reconcile with the interest of all regional factor or element, especially with the unknown outcome of whats going to be in Pakistan?

DR. TARZI: Okay, Ill give you a brief answer. I think first of all, again, whether Pakistan can I think the war in Pakistan, the campaign by the Pakistani military, in my view, is having very positive aspects, not only on the ground, but most importantly, as I said before, you look at the Pakistani side, and not just dont look at the media from the West side. Look read the Pakistani media itself. People, just regular Pakistanis, are becoming frustrated with this insurgency. That is very, very important. So I dont see the Pakistani state as collapsing. I just see the Pakistani state as reevaluating its own relationship with this militancy.

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

The question of Afghanistan and Pakistan is, I think and this is why I think it was a very good decision to put these two countries together is there is a problem between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Its historical. Right now, President Zardari and President Karzai like each other. This is wonderful. But this is, again, not something thats institutional. Its personal. Its ad hoc. Which is great; Im not saying its bad.

There is a problem. Afghanistan, as a whole, the national psyche of Afghanistan, what I can call it, the historical narrative of Afghanistan, sees Pakistan as an illegitimate state. They dont even recognize the border between the two countries. Afghanistan does not recognize that boundary. They actually dont even call it the Afghan-Pakistani border. They call it Durand Line. So there has to be a conceptual change that Pakistan is a legitimate country with very specific borders.

On the Pakistani side, the concept of Afghanistan is always as a country that is in cahoots with India and squeezing Pakistan from two sides, so Pakistan always the Pakistani militancy sees Afghanistan as what they call at the strategic depth, that if India hits them, they always look Pakistans main obsession and main problem is always with India, so they see Afghanistan as a place where they can fall back. And when Afghanistan becomes closer to Pakistan sorry, to India, they get very, very jittery.

I think the solution, which is happening right now, because we have at least the leadership liking each other, is for these two countries to they dont have to love each other, but they have to respect each others states. Until that happens and I am very unfortunate to say that unless that happens, were going to always have a friction, if not an open conflict. If they can accept each other as states and here is where Europe can help us I think its a win-win situation. How Europe can help the solution of this border and all that is to forget about where is the border, make the border disappear like Europeans disappeared their borders through economic integration.

These two countries need each other. They will be a perfect not union. Im talking about two countries coming together, but working with each other. Central Asian routes will open. That is a zero-sum game. It has to be a win-win situation. It has mentality. It has history. This is long-term, but it has to start today. It has to start in Afghan textbooks, it has to start in Pakistani textbooks, to see each other as states.

This history we unfortunately when we do policy I work on the policy end of it, and I look at things very short-term we dont look long-term. Unless we look long-term this is a long-term solution, its a very slow process, but it has to have mentality of these two people liking each other, or at least living with each other.

The other regional countries the other more important regional country, in my view, is Iran. Iran has been a very odd situation in Afghanistan. They have done very good things, but they have also done very bad things. Irans bite is a potential what they can do. You said very correctly that, you know, they had lost eight diplomats, one journalist, in Mazari Sharif. The Taliban executed him when they attacked their Consulate General there in 97 or 98.

Iran right now Iran plays a very different game. If you imagine this is a roulette table, Iran puts money on pretty much every number there is. They dont care Shia, Sunni, heathen. They are more interested in what they can gain. The Iranians are supporting the Taliban. We know that for a fact. Its a very limited support, but they want to have make sure they have a card to play when that is needed.

That card is not vis-à-vis Afghanistan. Unlike Pakistan, Iran is not worried about Afghanistans stability. Iran is worried about the West. Theyre using Afghanistan as a card against the West. For example, if something to happen to a pressure from either Europe or anybody else comes in to Iran on their nuclear file, they will use Afghanistan as a new pressure point, or even maybe as a battleground. They have more assets in Afghanistan than Pakistan has. Thats the reality. They have a lot of assets.

And it is a danger point. And they Western Afghanistan is infested with Iranian influence, and they dont care whether its Taliban or not Taliban. And a case in point to that, I always point when the Taliban kicked out Hekmatyar, a Pashtun Sunni, ordered (inaudible) openly. Guess where he went and stayed? In Iran. They dont care. They if they can get an asset, they will get an asset. They have a lot of assets in Afghanistan.

Thank you.

"THE TALIBAN AND CRISIS OF AFGHANISTAN "

MODERATOR: Maam, did you have a question?

QUESTION: No.

MODERATOR: Okay.

DR. TARZI: Okay.

MODERATOR: Well, well have to end there. Thank you very much, Dr. Tarzi

DR. TARZI: Youre very welcome.

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The following information was released by the U.S. Department of State:

INDEX:

SRI LANKA

Hostilities in Mullaittivu / Concern about Danger to Civilian Lives and Humanitarian Situation / Call to Stop Hostilities / Return to Humanitarian Pause / Call to Halt Shelling of Safe Zone / Enforce International Humanitarian Standards / Sri Lankan Government Has Opportunity to End Conflict / Power-Sharing Arrangements / U.S. Working the Issues Diplomatically

NORTH KOREA

Expulsion of Inspectors / Four U.S. Personnel in Yongbyon Preparing to Leave / Discussions Among Various Parties / Denuclearized Peninsula / Security Council Presidential Statement / Communications with North Korea / 1718 Sanctions Committee / Flow of Goods / Addition Rounds of Consultations / Dealing with the Consequences / Working Closely with Russia and China / Six-Party Framework

CHAD

Mohammad al-Qurani Case / Allegations and Internal Discussions

RUSSIA

Strategic Arms Talks to be Held on April 24

GUANTANAMO BAY

President Obama's Decision to Close Guantanamo Bay / Cases Being Reviewed

Spanish Decision Regarding Prosecution of Six Bush-Era Officials / Internal Matter

Jurisdiction Laws

IRAN

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

Roxana Saberi / Trial / Verdict Expected Soon / In Regular Contact with the Swiss / Working Hard to Secure Her Release / Call on Iranian

Engaging with Iran

ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS

Special Envoy Mitchell Travel Meeting with Foreign Minister Lieberman / Reiteration of U.S. Policy / Two-State Solution

Annapolis Process / Roadmap Obligations / Working with Israel and the Palestinians

SOMALIA

Representation at the Brussels Conference

TRANSCRIPT:

11:49 a.m. EDT

MR. WOOD: Okay. Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the briefing. I've got one brief statement I'd like to read, and this is with regard to the hostilities going on in Sri Lanka.

The United States Government is deeply concerned about the current danger to civilian lives and a dire humanitarian situation created by the fighting in the Mullaitivu area of Sri Lanka. We call upon the government and military of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers to immediately stop hostilities until the more than 140,000 civilians in the conflict are safely out. Both sides must immediately return to a humanitarian pause and both must respect the right of free movement of those civilian men, women, and children trapped by the fighting.

The United States calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to assist its Tamil citizens by halting shelling of the safe zone, permitting international monitors to ensure the safe exit of the civilians. The Government of Sri Lanka should also enforce international humanitarian standards in IDP camps, grant visas to international aid groups, and permit entry into Sri Lanka of international monitors and media access to those camps.

The Sri Lankan Government, as the legitimate sovereign power, has before it an opportunity to put an end to this lengthy conflict. A durable and lasting peace will only be achieved through a political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Sri Lankan communities. Further killing, particularly killing of civilians, will not end the conflict and will stain any eventual peace. We urge the Sri Lankan Government to employ diplomacy to permit a peaceful outcome of this conflict. We call on the Sri Lankan Government to put forward a proposal now to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism, and to develop power-sharing arrangements so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved.

And with that, I'm ready to take your questions. On this?

QUESTION: No.

MR. WOOD: On this?

QUESTION: Yesterday, the UN human rights coordinator humanitarian coordinator Mr. John Holmes at the UN said that the LTT is preventing the civilians to come out of the (inaudible). What do you have to say on that? And what will the (inaudible) do under those circumstances?

MR. WOOD: Well, look, I've just, basically through the statement, told you that we're calling on both sides to basically prevent any further harm to civilians, allow them to get access. Yeah, I don't have anything more than I have in the statement. That is --

QUESTION: The statement is mostly on Sri Lankan Government, not on LTT.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

MR. WOOD: Well, we've called on the LTT to take actions as well. So this is not just the United States calling on the Sri Lankan Government to do something. The LTT has responsibilities, and they need to protect civilians.

Yes.

QUESTION: And the political solution is within the Sri Lankan constitutions what do you mean?

MR. WOOD: Look, we have been working this issue diplomatically with the Government of Sri Lanka, and other partners have been involved. And that work continues. And what we want to try to do, first and foremost, is to protect civilians, to make sure that they have access to food, water, and medicine, and finally, bring an end to this conflict.

Yes, ma'am.

QUESTION: But you're not saying it should be solved through the constitution?

MR. WOOD: Look, I'm just saying we've been working this diplomatically --

QUESTION: I mean, usually when you want a political solution, you say you very deliberately say that it should be solved within a country's constitutional law.

MR. WOOD: Well, I --

QUESTION: But why won't you say that now?

MR. WOOD: Well, I mean, I can say that.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. WOOD: But what I'm saying right now is our immediate objective is to try to make sure that civilians are protected and get the access to food and humanitarian supplies that they need.

QUESTION: But when you call for a political solution sorry. When you call for a political solution, what does that mean?

MR. WOOD: Just what it means. Calling for a political solution.

Matt.

QUESTION: North Korea?

MR. WOOD: Yes.

QUESTION: Have your experts left yet? Or what's the latest on trying to get them back to the Six-Party Talks?

MR. WOOD: Well, we have currently four U.S. personnel who are in Yongbyon and they are preparing to leave and they should be leaving over the next several days.

QUESTION: So but they're still there, as far as you know?

MR. WOOD: As far as I know, they're there making preparations to leave. I don't know if they're actually on the site, still working, packing up. I don't know. But they will be leaving over the next several days.

QUESTION: And has there been any further communication with the North Koreans or with your other the other five parties to the talks the four parties to the talks?

MR. WOOD: There may have been some communications, but I'm not aware of any formal meetings or anything like that.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

Yes, Sue.

QUESTION: When you said they're preparing to leave, how are they doing that? Are they I mean, you said they're gathering up their equipment. Is there anything else that they have to do? Do they have to shut anything down, turn off other

MR. WOOD: Well --

QUESTION: What does that entail?

MR. WOOD: Well, I'm not on the ground, so I'm not able to tell you exactly what's going on. But obviously, moving equipment, maybe putting seals on things. You know, I don't know. It's just that they're making preparations to leave.

QUESTION: Would they put seals on things, or wouldn't the IAEA put seals on things?

MR. WOOD: Yeah, the IAEA would be doing that sort of thing itself. Again, I'm not on the ground, so I'm just giving you, you know, a possibility of something that they might have to do. But I mean, whatever the normal preparations are for leaving after doing that kind of work, that's what they're engaged in.

QUESTION: I may be setting myself up for possible embarrassment here, but whatever happened with the two --

MR. WOOD: I won't embarrass you.

QUESTION: -- journalists who were detained? Did you ever hear anything back from the Swedes on them?

MR. WOOD: No, I don't recall. I'll look into that, Matt.

QUESTION: They seem to have gotten forgotten about after the --

MR. WOOD: No, the efforts are let me get you an update on that.

QUESTION: But they're still there, though, right?

MR. WOOD: As far as I know. Let me get you an update.

James.

QUESTION: A few things, Robert. You said yesterday you called this a step backwards.

MR. WOOD: Right.

QUESTION: So, presumably, you would like to see this reversed somehow. All of the remarks were hearing from you are in the direction of simple compliance with the expulsion order. So what efforts are being made to reverse this situation and get it back moving in a direction you'd like to see it moving in?

MR. WOOD: Well, look, as you know, James, discussions have been going on amongst various parties who have equities in the North Korean situation. And you know, the North Koreans took a decision. They wanted these monitors out. As I said, it's a step backwards. We want to see the Korean Peninsula denuclearized. This clearly is not taking us in the right direction. But the North made a decision. As I mentioned to you many times the other day, the Security Council has spoken through that presidential statement, made very clear what is required of the North. Should the North not comply, then they will have to deal with the consequences of that decision.

QUESTION: Well, can you tell us about these discussions that are going on between the various parties with equity?

MR. WOOD: I don't have anything to tell you about it right now, but at some point, you know, we'll be able to talk more about it.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: Have you talked to the North Koreans since this all since they brought the inspectors? Have there been any communications through the New York channel? Has Ambassador Bosworth called the North Koreans?

MR. WOOD: There may have been communications with the North, but I'm not going to elaborate further than that.

QUESTION: Well, I mean, just to James point, I mean, you seem to just be like, okay, well, well leave. But why aren't there direct communications with the North Koreans in an effort to reverse this decision?

MR. WOOD: Well, look, we have, as I said, personnel on the ground who have been in touch with the North with regard to the modalities of the departure. As I said, you know, discussions have we have had discussions with the North on this, on the question of their decision. But I don't have anything further for you on it. They are going to have to face the consequences of, you know, kicking these personnel out.

QUESTION: What consequences are they?

MR. WOOD: Well, we have to see what those consequences are. But they're going to have to face consequences for, you know, disobeying the rule of the international community.

QUESTION: Well, is that unilateral consequences? Because you weren't able to impose any consequences at the UN Security Council.

MR. WOOD: Well, look, there is a 1718 Sanctions Committee that met yesterday to deal with the question of next steps with regard to implementing the presidential statement, so and they agreed on, you know, two categories one of goods, the other being entities. Goods meaning trying to be you know, make sure that we prevent the flow of goods that could be used to support the North's program. And entities, those entities involved in supporting and supplying the North with various technologies for its nuclear program.

So let me finish so the committee met yesterday. There will be, you know, additional rounds of consultations, and then they will agree on a list of those goods and entities. And that will be made public, as you know, and then member-states will be required to prevent the North from getting access to these goods and from entities from supplying the types of material that we don't want to see get to the North.

QUESTION: It seems to me, that answer you could have given a little while ago and would have saved us (laughter) --

MR. WOOD: Well --

QUESTION: -- some time here, right?

MR. WOOD: How much time?

QUESTION: I don't know. I mean, it was just a I mean, there something has happened, there was a meeting. They talked about this, the process is moving forward.

MR. WOOD: She asked a question about, you know, measures, so I followed up on that.

QUESTION: Well, I mean (inaudible) last question for what anyway, it doesn't matter.

QUESTION: Can you confirm that in that meeting, the United States, with or without other countries joining in, proposed entities for sanction?

MR. WOOD: Absolutely. I'm not going to get into those at this point for, as you can understand, obvious reasons. But yes indeed, we did come with our own --

QUESTION: And what other countries also proposed entities for sanction?

MR. WOOD: Well, I'm you'll have to talk to the Sanctions Committee. I'm not going to get into that.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: One other a couple of other things, Robert, please. As you just specified, this Sanctions Committee was meeting pursuant to the presidential statement.

MR. WOOD: Thats correct.

QUESTION: The presidential statement was a response to the launch of the rocket. The question that you were asked before was about potential consequences as a result of the expulsion of the inspectors and the technicians.

MR. WOOD: Right.

QUESTION: Do you mean to tell us that the rocket launch and the expulsion are jointly being dealt with through the Sanctions Committee? Those are the consequences for each or for both?

MR. WOOD: Look, when I talk about overall consequences, Im talking about I was referring specifically to the decision to of the North to, you know, kick out IAEA and, you know, American monitors. There will be, Im sure, additional measures and additional consequences on the North. But right now, were working through the Sanctions Committee at the UN pursuant, as you said, to the presidential statement. And thats where we are right now. And again, what we want to see is the North come back to the Six-Party framework. But clearly, it seems to be heading in the wrong direction, and thats something that the North will have to face consequences for.

QUESTION: Two final questions, and I appreciate your indulgence and that of my colleagues here. Prior to the rocket launch, you and Secretary Clinton were very specific in telling us that the consequences for the rocket launch, if it went forward, which it did, would come within the framework of the Security Council. Can you tell us whether now whether the consequences for the expulsion order will also come within the Security Council or in some other form?

MR. WOOD: James, let me just put it to you very broadly. The international community has required that the North take certain actions and not take certain actions. The North has not listened to the will of the international community, and therefore its going to have to face the consequences from its unwillingness to meet the international communitys requirements. So however you want to put it together, the North is going to have to deal with the fact that the international community is not happy with the decisions its taken. And its going to have to deal with the consequences that flow, whether that be national measures, whether that be international measures, as I just spoke to, with regard to the Sanctions Committee. Theres been a pattern of, you know, bad behavior on the part of the North. And this has been going on for quite some time.

As you know, the Six-Party framework has had a lot of ups and downs. And were very concerned about what decisions that the North has recently taken with regard to the launch and, of course, with regard to American and international personnel that have been asked to leave. And so we are going to continue to work with our partners, both on the Security Council and outside of the Security Council, to bring consequences upon the North for the actions that its taken. And thats the best way Id like to leave it now.

QUESTION: And do you still maintain that UN Security Council presidential statements are legally binding?

MR. WOOD: James, for you, were going to post an answer to that question. And well post that later today and youll have an answer.

QUESTION: Thank you.

WOOD: Sue.

QUESTION: Okay, you said that, you know, youve had discussions with the North on this issue was that --

MR. WOOD: Which issue are we talking about?

QUESTION: Well, just generally in terms of throwing out the inspectors and also the launch. I think youre referring to the inspectors there. Was that through the New York channel?

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

MR. WOOD: I don't want to get into which, you know, channel we have, you know, had discussions with the North, but just to say that we have, you know, relayed our views to the North.

QUESTION: But why not? Why not, though? I mean, do you know? Why can't you tell us which channel you've been working through?

MR. WOOD: Obviously, I don't want to tell you which channel we're working through.

QUESTION: But why not? I'm a bit perplexed as to why not.

MR. WOOD: Well, just let me just say that we have had conversations with the North.

QUESTION: Directly or through the Chinese?

MR. WOOD: Conversations.

QUESTION: Direct conversations?

MR. WOOD: Conversations. I don't want to get into the specifics, nor the substance.

QUESTION: So these are specific conversations then?

MR. WOOD: That it could be your characterization, but I'm just giving you what I have.

QUESTION: Not, but, I mean, you can tell us whether there have been direct conversations between the U.S. and North Korea.

MR. WOOD: We have had conversations. Let me just let me just put it that way.

QUESTION: Sorry. And then just to follow up on another thing that you said, you said that, you know, whether these would be international or national measures. So are you looking independently at taking your own list of set of sanctions?

MR. WOOD: Well, Sue. I don't want to, you know, talk about what we may or may not do. But I think what's important is in the Sanctions Committee, there's the clear will of the international community to pursue additional measures against you know, to prevent entities from supporting North Korea's nuclear program as well as goods getting to the North that can support that program as well.

QUESTION: So this Committee met yesterday. Is it meeting again today?

MR. WOOD: They will. I don't know if it's meeting again today, but there will be several rounds of discussions before there's an agreement on the list of entities and goods.

QUESTION: So how many entities are you looking at: 10s, 20, 30, 50?

MR. WOOD: I don't know. I don't want to put a number on it. But we're obviously going to look very closely at those entities that have been providing support, that could provide support to the North's program, and those goods that would in any way contribute to a continuation of the North's program.

QUESTION: And how many countries are on that Sanctions Committee?

MR. WOOD: I don't have the number. I don't have the number off the top of my head.

QUESTION: Robert?

MR. WOOD: Yes, Charlie.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: Could you tell us who was the U.S. representative, and if there was one, at the Sanctions Committee? And also, a related question. Could you inform us about Ambassador Bosworth's participation, if at all, in any of this? To use a word we often hear about North Korea, at least, to me, its opaque, to know whether Ambassador Bosworth is actively involved, partly involved? What's going on?

MR. WOOD: Well, to go to your first question about the Sanctions Committee, that's usually headed by an expert who deals with those questions at the UN. I don't know who it is up there at the moment who is on that committee. It's not normally at an ambassadorial level. It's usually an expert that sits on that committee.

With regard

QUESTION: As the U.S. participant or as a

MR. WOOD: As a U.S. participant, yes.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. WOOD: What I need to check, Charlie, is I have to check and make sure that we are actually on that committee. We probably are, but I need to check and make sure of that. But usually that committee is headed by an expert.

With regard to Ambassador Bosworth, he has certainly been involved. He's had discussions with the Secretary and others. And he's engaged on the issue. I don't want to get into the specifics of what he's doing, but I can assure you that he is following this issue very closely, having meetings within the government, has talked to the Secretary about this and others. And, you know, if we have anything further to say about his activities, we'll let you know.

QUESTION: And just one follow-up.

MR. WOOD: Sure.

QUESTION: Has he been operating from Washington, or is he in Boston or New York or --

MR. WOOD: I don't know where he is at the moment. But, as I said, he's been in close touch on this issue and will continue to be.

Yes.

QUESTION: You said he's having conversations with the Secretary and others. Is that exclusive to the U.S. Government or is he talking to the other parties in the Six-Party Talks?

QUESTION: The North?

MR. WOOD: Well, he --

QUESTION: The North?

MR. WOOD: I don't know that he has talked to the North. I don't believe so. But he's talked to other the other parties.

Lets see. Who else?

QUESTION: Do you know if the U.S. liaison who is based in a hotel in Pyongyang is still there?

MR. WOOD: I don't know. I honestly don't know.

QUESTION: One more on Bosworth?

MR. WOOD: Sure.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: He said kind of just days before the launch that after an acceptable cooling-off period he was prepared to go back to Pyongyang and begin talks again on how to get this all started. Are there any plans for him to travel?

MR. WOOD: Im not aware of any at this point. Im not going to rule out the fact that he may at some point travel, but I dont have anything right now in terms of travel schedule.

Please.

QUESTION: Robert, is the United States satisfied with the efforts that Russia and China are doing to pressure on North Korea in this issue? And what practical steps would you expect from Russia and China to make to solve this problem?

MR. WOOD: Well, weve worked obviously, we have worked very closely with the Chinese and the Russians up in New York to try to agree on a presidential statement, which we were able to do. And weve had good conversations with both governments. Weve worked very closely, as I said, with them on this issue and well continue to be.

Both parties have an interest in seeing the North go back to the Six-Party framework, as we do. And what we need to find a way is to we need to find a way to get them back to the Six-Party framework. But clearly, the North doesnt seem to be interested in doing that, and therefore it has to deal with the consequences that as I said, that will flow from that decision that theyve made. But weve had were not looking for anything specific from Russia and China. As I said, we have good working relations with them on this issue and a host of other issues. So, you know, well continue to work with them as we all try to figure out the way forward with regard to the North.

James, youve had a whole bunch. Let me go to some

QUESTION: North Korea said they will not return at Six-Party Talks anymore. Do you expect North Korea come back to table in near future?

MR. WOOD: Well, we certainly hope so. Its a decision for the North to make.

Sir.

QUESTION: Just as the your monitors leave, can you give us and I realize this number might not have changed since the last time you gave given it. But how much of the disablement had been completed?

MR. WOOD: I dont have anything beyond what we said last time.

QUESTION: So but can you just give us the number of steps that have been finished, or the number of rods --

MR. WOOD: The number of steps? I dont know what you mean by that. You mean in terms of where we are?

QUESTION: In terms of the disablement of Yongbyon that was --

MR. WOOD: Ill check and see if we have any update to it, but I dont think we do.

Yes, maam.

QUESTION: Do you have any statement today to make on allegations of mistreatment by Mohammad al-Qurani, whos Chad --

MR. WOOD: Same to well, just to answer it, no, I dont.

QUESTION: Well, can I weve you referred us yesterday to the Department of Justice. They categorically said it was not their jurisdiction and referred us back to you. And weve also spoken to the Chadian ambassador, who says that hes had conversations with the State Department about al-Qurani and his allegations. Can you confirm that thats taken place?

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

MR. WOOD: Well, Im not going to get into any, you know, discussions that we may have had on this particular case at all.

QUESTION: Do you know the allegations Im talking about?

MR. WOOD: Yes, Im aware of the allegations that youre talking about, and Ive given you my answer.

QUESTION: Well, what does that say about the Administration --

MR. WOOD: Ive given you my answer.

QUESTION: Im just curious. The IAEA inspectors monitors have already left North Korea, and the U.S. are still on the ground there. Im just wondering if we should read into this if you are negotiating with the North Koreans or talking with the North Koreans for extra time. I assume the IAEA inspectors had the same administrative duties to complete before they left North Korea. So Im wondering why the U.S. is still there. Are you asking them for more time for the U.S. inspectors?

MR. WOOD: Its not a question of asking them for more time. The North made a decision. Its asked our people to leave, as it did ask the IAEA to leave. We are in the process we are having talks with the North on the ground in terms of the modalities of that departure.

But Im not aware that we are seeking additional time. If we do if our people feel they need additional time, theyll request it. But Im not aware that there was any type of request of that nature.

James.

QUESTION: Youve said many times that North Korea knows what the international community is asking it to do. This expulsion of inspectors and technical personnel obviously changes materially the facts on the ground. So I wonder what the U.S. Government regards as the most urgent action that the North Koreans need to take in order for things to be moving in the right direction. Is it a rescission of this order, or a return to the Six-Party Talks? What is the most urgent thing, now that this these changes have happened, that we are asking North Korea to do?

MR. WOOD: Well, reversing this decision would be the most immediate that we would like to see happen, and then, of course, getting back to the Six-Party framework. I mean, if we dont have our people on the ground, theyre not able to monitor and observe whats happening. And thats deeply troubling to not only the United States, but other members of the Six-Party Talks and others in the international community. So that would be the ultimate priority right now. And then, of course, moving them back to the Six-Party framework.

Okay. Oh, please, ask --

QUESTION: New topic?

MR. WOOD: Yeah.

QUESTION: On the the Russians announced today theyre pulling out or yesterday that theyre pulling some troops out of Chechnya, saying that the situation has stabilized. So does the United States has anything to say about that? I mean, do you welcome that as a sign, or do you share the same assessment?

MR. WOOD: Well, again, I havent seen these reports about it, so Id prefer to hold comment until weve had a chance to look at them.

Dave.

QUESTION: Russian officials are saying that there will be strategic arms talks next week in Rome. Can you confirm that? I think its April 24th.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

MR. WOOD: Yeah, thats correct. Ive heard that as well. I dont have any more details. I just heard about that before coming down that that was the date.

QUESTION: April 24th?

MR. WOOD: April 24, yes.

Yes.

QUESTION: Sorry. Can you tell us why youre not willing to talk about what (inaudible) the conversations --

MR. WOOD: Ive given you the answer to the question.

QUESTION: But what does it say about the Obama Administration and the Presidents promise to shut down Guantanamo Bay --

MR. WOOD: That decision has not changed.

QUESTION: -- and no one from his department will even acknowledge --

MR. WOOD: That has not changed. The President has made a decision --

QUESTION: -- those allegations that its --

MR. WOOD: Are you going to let me talk, or do you want to continue?

QUESTION: Well, I was trying to finish my question.

MR. WOOD: Well, Ive given you the answer to the question.

Matt.

QUESTION: The Spanish attorney general says that theyre not going to move that he wont move ahead on the possible prosecution of the six Bush Administration-era officials. The President in an interview yesterday, the transcript of which was released today, said that he had not been in contact with the Spanish about this, but that his team my team has been. Can you elaborate on what that contact was?

MR. WOOD: No, I cant.

QUESTION: Do you know do you have any position on the what is the Administrations position on universal jurisdiction laws in general?

MR. WOOD: Well, I mean, I think well, let me talk specifically to the Spanish case. That is really is an internal matter. And from my understanding, the Spanish havent made a decision as to whether to go forward. So I dont really have anything more to say on that particular issue.

QUESTION: Well, Id like, if I could can you get an answer about what the Administrations position is on universal jurisdiction laws, or universal jurisdiction, in general, and also find out what the contact that the President was talking about was?

MR. WOOD: Well, you know, again, Id have to refer you to the White House for that particular part of this in terms of what the President you know, what the President said.

QUESTION: Well, the President said my team has been in contact. Now, his team, in dealing with foreign governments, is the State Department.

MR. WOOD: Absolutely. Yeah. I just --

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: So thats --

MR. WOOD: Ill look into that.

Yes.

QUESTION: Sorry, just to follow up on the Guantanamo detainee issue. I mean, is the State Department looking into these allegations that he made on Al Jazeera?

MR. WOOD: Well, look, I havent seen these allegations. Ive heard about them. But you know, Ive spoken to this issue many times here about, you know, these cases in with regard to Guantanamo. And the Presidents made that decision to close Guantanamo. A number of cases are being reviewed. You know that were having discussions with a number of countries in terms of taking some of these detainees. But I dont have anything further to say about it, and Im not going to go beyond that.

QUESTION: But isnt this a concern for you that I mean, the U.S. image was very seriously affected by, you know, claims of torture.

MR. WOOD: Sure.

QUESTION: Guantanamo Bay is a blemish on the U.S. image, and these kinds of stories are emerging again. So why is the Obama Administration not actively coming out and saying, you know, were looking into this, were doing something about it?

MR. WOOD: Well, I think its very clear that were looking into this. Were dealing with the whole Guantanamo question, and there are a number of parts to this. I just dont want to get into specific cases. Believe me, the Administration is very focused on this. As I said, were having discussions with foreign governments about taking detainees.

QUESTION: But I mean --

QUESTION: But this is a case that has been broadcast in the Arab world. It incenses people when the Administration does not publicly come out and say, Were looking into this, were doing something about it.

MR. WOOD: Look, as I said, this Administration has taken a fundamentally different approach to dealing with this particular issue. The President made a decision that were going to close Guantanamo, and obviously, in order to do that, you have to deal with a number of questions with regard to the people who were in Guantanamo, what happened there.

All of this is being looked at, and I dont I think its an unfair conclusion to draw that we are not concerned or looking into various cases. All Im saying is, I dont want to go into details of it, but I can assure you that we are focused on dealing with a number of these cases. Were going to continue to do so. And the Presidents ultimate objective of closing Guantanamo is what were focused on.

QUESTION: Does the ultimate Robert, does the ultimate objective of closing Guantanamo preclude you looking into allegations of mistreatment of detainees?

MR. WOOD: Look, we certainly have been looking into a number of these issues. I just dont want to get into specifics --

QUESTION: Were not I mean, were not even, at this point, asking you to get into specifics.

MR. WOOD: Well, yes, Ive been asked to --

QUESTION: Were asking you to say whether you look into cases into allegations, in general, of mistreatment.

MR. WOOD: Of course we do, of course we do. What more do you want me to say than that?

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: That's what we wanted you to say.

MR. WOOD: Well, you got it.

QUESTION: Okay.

MR. WOOD: Okay.

(Inaudible), mm-hmm.

QUESTION: Change of subject.

MR. WOOD: Yeah.

QUESTION: An Iranian news source has reported that four American banks have applied for permits to open branches on Iranian soil. Have you heard anything about this?

MR. WOOD: I don't know anything about it.

QUESTION: Can you confirm?

MR. WOOD: You might want to check with Treasury, see if Treasury knows anything. I don't know anything about it.

QUESTION: It specifically cites Citibank and Goldman Sachs as two of those four, and that a Saudi prince has been following this up and has made this --

MR. WOOD: Well, then I (inaudible) about it, but I would check with Treasury to see if Treasury is aware.

QUESTION: Thank you.

QUESTION: On Iran, have they, to your knowledge, responded to the invitation yet?

MR. WOOD: I think the Secretary spoke to that yesterday. Certainly in --

QUESTION: I know, but that was yesterday, and today is today --

MR. WOOD: I don't think there's --

QUESTION: -- and there's been 24 hours that have passed and --

MR. WOOD: Not that I'm aware of.

QUESTION: -- things can happen and --

MR. WOOD: Very true, but I'm not aware that anything has happened.

QUESTION: All right. Have you heard back from the Swiss yet about Roxana Saberi?

MR. WOOD: Yeah. We've been informed by our Swiss protecting power that and obviously, able to confirm that Roxana Saberi --

QUESTION: I'm sorry, you are able to confirm?

MR. WOOD: Yeah, we were able to confirm that Roxana Saberi went on trial in Iran earlier this week, and we understand that a verdict is expected soon. We're in regular contact with our Swiss protecting power, and but were unable to go beyond what we've said about this case unless we get, you know, written permission from Roxana Saberi to talk further about it.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

But our concerns remain. We want to see her released. Were working hard to secure that release. These charges, as I said yesterday, are baseless, without foundation. And we've been very concerned about the transparency of this judicial process. And you know, just to emphasize again, we're going to work to try to get her released, and we call on the Iranians to provide as much information as they can to us about Roxana Saberi, and go from there.

QUESTION: Did we have the Swiss presumably, since they didn't know until today or late yesterday, was there a Swiss representative in the courtroom for the trial? Was there any --

MR. WOOD: I don't know, Matt, if there was someone from the Swiss Embassy there in the courtroom. I don't know that. I don't know the answer to that question.

QUESTION: Well, apparently, she had met with her lawyer.

MR. WOOD: Yeah, I'm hearing that and no, they were not, so --

QUESTION: Do you think that this trial will have any impact on your efforts to engage with Iran? I mean, the President has said that he wants a better (inaudible) the Secretary has said that they want you want a better relationship with Iran. Yet Iran is trying an American citizen for charges that you say are baseless and continue to do it with a host of American citizens. So at what point does this affect your kind of goodwill towards trying to forge a new relationship with Iran?

MR. WOOD: Well, I can't give you a good answer to that right now, Elise. But this is certainly not helpful, you know, and we think responding in a positive way to the Saberi case would be helpful in terms of winning goodwill on the part of the United States and the American people. But we've made a strategic decision to engage Iran directly in dialogue. We're committed to that. We have yet to see that Iran is interested in reciprocating. So we'll have to see.

We don't want to see more of these cases. We as I said, we want to see Roxana Saberi released, and the Swiss are working very hard to try to help achieve that. But you know, again, as we've said many times, our hand is stretched out to Iran. We'd like to see Iran reciprocate.

QUESTION: Well, at what point do you take away your hand? I mean, if your hand is out there for a long time and Iran doesn't take you up on it, I mean, is your patience unlimited here? And have you heard any reaction back to the letter that or the aide-memoire or whatever you call it that Secretary Clinton sent?

MR. WOOD: To answer the second part of your question, no, we have not heard back yet. But you know, the first part you know, that's a judgment we'll have to make at some point. Obviously, our outreach to Iran is relatively new, and we'll have to see how it goes. But these types of cases where, you know, someone has an American is brought to trial on, you know, basically baseless charges is not helpful. And we'll just have to see. I just can't give you an answer to that right now in terms of, you know, your question.

Okay? Thank you all.

QUESTION: Mideast, Mitchell and met with Lieberman today, after which Lieberman's office said that going back to Oslo, none of the peace efforts had worked and that a new approach was needed. You know, what does that say for your efforts there?

MR. WOOD: Well, look, what I can tell you is Senator Mitchell had a very good and candid discussion with Foreign Minister Lieberman. Senator Mitchell reiterated what U.S. policy is with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And by that, I mean our pursuit of a two-state solution with the two countries living side-by-side in peace. With regard to Foreign Minister Lieberman's comments, I'd have to refer you to him or his office. But Senator Mitchell, you know, made it clear what the U.S. position is with regard to --

QUESTION: That with regard to two-state solution?

MR. WOOD: Two-state solution, yes.

ROBERT WOOD ACTING DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN DAILY PRESS BRIEFING APRIL 16, 2009

QUESTION: And following on Annapolis?

MR. WOOD: Its been very clear that out of Annapolis, there were a number of different elements that the U.S. Government and the other parties were committed to. And certainly, Roadmap obligations are important, making sure that we dont take steps that further inflame tensions in the region, taking steps that dont contribute to a positive atmosphere. So the foreign minister is well aware, as is the rest of the Israeli Government, about what the United States wants to see happen in the region.

Its a new government. There are going to be comments coming from various officials in terms of their views. Senator Mitchell looks forward to working with the new government, and of course with the Palestinians and others, to try to reach that two-state solution, Matt. Its not going to be easy and there are going to be ups and downs in this process, as we have them in the North Korea the Six-Party process. So you know, we just have to dig in, roll up our sleeves, and continue to go to work, because thats what the people of the region they would expect no less from us.

QUESTION: Okay. I got one more unrelated. On Somalia and the Secretarys announcement yesterday, do you know who will be representing the U.S. at this conference in Brussels?

MR. WOOD: Yeah, thatll be Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Phillip Carter. And I think therell also be a representative from USAID going, but we dont have that name yet.

QUESTION: Do you know if theres anyone from PM going, Political --

MR. WOOD: I dont think so.

QUESTION: Because I mean, they have taken the lead on the piracy issue.

MR. WOOD: I know theyve been very involved in it.

QUESTION: Well, I guess thats it.

MR. WOOD: Okay. Thank you all.

(The briefing was concluded at 12:25 p.m.)

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STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

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Body

WASHINGTON, April 16 -- The U.S. Department of State issued the following transcript of the daily press briefing:

INDEX: SRI LANKA Hostilities in Mullaittivu / Concern about Danger to Civilian Lives and Humanitarian Situation / Call to Stop Hostilities / Return to Humanitarian Pause / Call to Halt Shelling of Safe Zone / Enforce International Humanitarian Standards / Sri Lankan Government Has Opportunity to End Conflict / Power-Sharing Arrangements / U.S. Working the Issues Diplomatically NORTH KOREA Expulsion of Inspectors / Four U.S. Personnel in Yongbyon Preparing to Leave / Discussions Among Various Parties / Denuclearized Peninsula / Security Council Presidential Statement / Communications with North Korea / 1718 Sanctions Committee / Flow of Goods / Addition Rounds of Consultations / Dealing with the Consequences / Working Closely with Russia and China / Six-Party Framework CHAD Mohammad al-Qurani Case / Allegations and Internal Discussions RUSSIA Strategic Arms Talks to be Held on April 24 GUANTANAMO BAY President Obama's Decision to Close Guantanamo Bay / Cases Being Reviewed Spanish Decision Regarding Prosecution of Six Bush-Era Officials / Internal Matter Jurisdiction Laws IRAN Roxana Saberi / Trial / Verdict Expected Soon / In Regular Contact with the Swiss / Working Hard to Secure Her Release / Call on Iranian Engaging with Iran ISRAEL/PALESTINIANS Special Envoy Mitchell Travel Meeting with Foreign Minister Lieberman / Reiteration of U.S. Policy / Two-State Solution Annapolis Process / Roadmap Obligations / Working with Israel and the Palestinians SOMALIA Representation at the Brussels Conference TRANSCRIPT: 11:49 a.m. EDT MR. WOOD: Okay. Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the briefing. I've got one brief statement I'd like to read, and this is with regard to the hostilities going on in Sri Lanka. The United States Government is deeply concerned about the current danger to civilian lives and a dire humanitarian situation created by the fighting in the Mullaittivu area of Sri Lanka. We call upon the government and military of Sri Lanka and the Tamil Tigers to immediately stop hostilities until the more than 140,000 civilians in the conflict are safely out. Both sides must immediately return to a humanitarian pause and both must respect the right of free movement of those civilian men, women, and children trapped by the fighting. The United States calls on the Government of Sri Lanka to assist its Tamil citizens by halting shelling of the safe zone, permitting international monitors to ensure the safe exit of the civilians. The Government of Sri Lanka should also enforce international humanitarian standards in IDP camps, grant visas to international aid groups, and permit entry into Sri Lanka of international monitors and media access to those camps. The Sri Lankan Government, as the legitimate sovereign power, has before it an opportunity to put an end to this lengthy conflict. A durable and lasting peace will only be achieved through a political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of all Sri Lankan communities. Further killing, particularly killing of civilians, will not end the conflict and will stain any eventual peace. We urge the Sri Lankan Government to employ diplomacy to permit a peaceful outcome of this conflict. We call on the Sri Lankan Government to put forward a proposal now to engage Tamils who do not espouse violence or terrorism, and to develop power-sharing arrangements so that lasting peace and reconciliation can be achieved. And with that, I'm ready to take your questions. On this? QUESTION: No. MR. WOOD: On this? QUESTION: Yesterday, the UN human rights coordinator - humanitarian coordinator Mr. John Holmes at the UN said that the LTT is preventing the civilians to come out of the (inaudible). What do you have to say on that? And what will the (inaudible) do under those circumstances? MR. WOOD: Well,

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

look, I've just, basically through the statement, told you that we're calling on both sides to basically prevent any further harm to civilians, allow them to get access. Yeah, I don't have anything more than I have in the statement. That is - QUESTION: The statement is mostly on Sri Lankan Government, not on LTT. MR. WOOD: Well, we've called on the LTT to take actions as well. So this is not just the United States calling on the Sri Lankan Government to do something. The LTT has responsibilities, and they need to protect civilians. Yes. QUESTION: And the political solution is within the Sri Lankan constitution's - what do you mean? MR. WOOD: Look, we have been working this issue diplomatically with the Government of Sri Lanka, and other partners have been involved. And that work continues. And what we want to try to do, first and foremost, is to protect civilians, to make sure that they have access to food, water, and medicine, and finally, bring an end to this conflict. Yes, ma'am. QUESTION: But you're not saying it should be solved through the constitution? MR. WOOD: Look, I'm just saying we're - we've been working this diplomatically - QUESTION: I mean, usually when you want a political solution, you say - you very deliberately say that it should be solved within a country's constitutional law. MR. WOOD: Well, I - QUESTION: But why won't you say that now? MR. WOOD: Well, I mean, I can say that. QUESTION: Okay. MR. WOOD: But what I'm saying right now is our immediate objective is to try to make sure that civilians are protected and get the access to food and humanitarian supplies that they need. QUESTION: But when you call for a political solution - sorry. When you call for a political solution, what does that mean? MR. WOOD: Just what it means. Calling for a political solution. Matt. QUESTION: North Korea? MR. WOOD: Yes. QUESTION: Have your experts left yet? Or what's the latest on trying to get them back to the Six-Party Talks? MR. WOOD: Well, we have currently four U.S. personnel who are in Yongbyon and they are preparing to leave and they should be leaving over the next several days. QUESTION: So - but they're still there, as far as you know? MR. WOOD: As far as I know, they're there making preparations to leave. I don't know if they're actually on the site, still working, packing up. I don't know. But they will be leaving over the next several days. QUESTION: And has there been any further communication with the North Koreans or with your other - the other five parties to the talks - the four parties to the talks? MR. WOOD: There may have been some communications, but I'm not aware of any formal meetings or anything like that. Yes, Sue. QUESTION: When you said they're preparing to leave, how are they doing that? Are they - I mean, you said they're gathering up their equipment. Is there anything else that they have to do? Do they have to shut anything down, turn off other - MR. WOOD: Well - QUESTION: What does that entail? MR. WOOD: Well, I'm not on the ground, so I'm not able to tell you exactly what's going on. But obviously, moving equipment, maybe putting seals on things. You know, I don't know. It's just that they're making preparations to leave. QUESTION: Would they put seals on things, or wouldn't the IAEA put seals on things? MR. WOOD: Yeah, the IAEA would be doing that sort of thing itself. Again, I'm not on the ground, so I'm just giving you, you know, a possibility of something that they might have to do. But I mean, whatever the normal preparations are for leaving after doing that kind of work, that's what they're engaged in. QUESTION: I may be setting myself up for possible embarrassment here, but whatever happened with the two - MR. WOOD: I won't embarrass you. QUESTION: - journalists who were detained? Did you ever hear anything back from the Swedes on them? MR. WOOD: No, I don't recall. I'll look into that, Matt. QUESTION: They seem to have gotten forgotten about after the - MR. WOOD: No, the efforts are - let me get you an update on that. QUESTION: But they're still there, though, right? MR. WOOD: As far as I know. Let me get you an update. James. QUESTION: A few things, Robert. You said yesterday - you called this a step backwards. MR. WOOD: Right. QUESTION: So, presumably, you would like to see this reversed somehow. All of the remarks we're hearing from you are in the direction of simple compliance with the expulsion order. So what efforts are being made to reverse this situation and get it back moving in a direction you'd like to see it moving in? MR. WOOD: Well, look, as you know, James, discussions have been going on amongst various parties who have equities in the North Korean situation. And you know, the North Koreans took a decision. They wanted these monitors out. As I said, it's a step backwards. We want to see the Korean Peninsula denuclearized. This clearly is not taking us in the right direction. But the North made a decision. As I mentioned to you many times the other day, the Security Council has spoken through that presidential statement, made very clear what is required of the North. Should the North not comply, then they will have to deal with the consequences of that decision. QUESTION: Well, can you tell us about these discussions that are going on between the various parties with equity? MR. WOOD: I don't have anything to tell you about it right now, but at some point, you know, we'll be able to talk more about it. QUESTION: Have you talked to the North Koreans since this all - since they brought the inspectors? Have there been any communications through the New York channel? Has Ambassador Bosworth called the North Koreans? MR. WOOD: There may have been communications with the North, but I'm not going to elaborate further than that. QUESTION: Well, I mean, just to James' point, I mean, you seem to just be like, okay, well, we'll leave. But why aren't there direct communications

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

with the North Koreans in an effort to reverse this decision? MR. WOOD: Well, look, we have, as I said, personnel on the ground who have been in touch with the North with regard to the modalities of the departure. As I said, you know, discussions have - we have had discussions with the North on this, on the question of their decision. But I don't have anything further for you on it. They are going to have the face the consequences of, you know, kicking these personnel out. QUESTION: What consequences are they? MR. WOOD: Well, we'll have to see what those consequences are. But they're going to have to face consequences for, you know, disobeying the rule of the international community. QUESTION: Well, is that unilateral consequences? Because you weren't able to impose any consequences at the UN Security Council. MR. WOOD: Well, look, there is a 1718 Sanctions Committee that met yesterday to deal with the question of next steps with regard to implementing the presidential statement, so - and they agreed on, you know, two categories - one of goods, the other being entities. Goods meaning trying to be - you know, make sure that we prevent the flow of goods that could be used to support the North's program. And entities, those entities involved in supporting and supplying the North with various technologies for its nuclear program. So - let me finish - so the committee met yesterday. There will be, you know, additional rounds of consultations, and then they will agree on a list of those goods and entities. And that will be made public, as you know, and then member-states will be required to prevent the North from getting access to these goods and from - entities from supplying the types of material that we don't want to see get to the North. QUESTION: It seems to me, that answer you could have given a little while ago and would have saved us - (laughter) - MR. WOOD: Well - QUESTION: - some time here, right? MR. WOOD: How much time? QUESTION: I don't know. I mean, it was just a - I mean, there - something has happened, there was a meeting. They talked about this, the process is moving forward. MR. WOOD: She asked a question about, you know, measures, so I followed up on that. QUESTION: Well, I mean (inaudible) last question for what - anyway, it doesn't matter. QUESTION: Can you confirm that in that meeting, the United States, with or without other countries joining in, proposed entities for sanction? MR. WOOD: Absolutely. I'm not going to get into those at this point for, as you can understand, obvious reasons. But yes indeed, we did come with our own - QUESTION: And what other countries also proposed entities for sanction? MR. WOOD: Well, I'm - you'll have to talk to the Sanctions Committee. I'm not going to get into that. QUESTION: One other - a couple of other things, Robert, please. As you just specified, this Sanctions Committee was meeting pursuant to the presidential statement. MR. WOOD: That's correct. QUESTION: The presidential statement was a response to the launch of the rocket. The question that you were asked before was about potential consequences as a result of the expulsion of the inspectors and the technicians. MR. WOOD: Right. QUESTION: Do you mean to tell us that the rocket launch and the expulsion are jointly being dealt with through the Sanctions Committee? Those are the consequences for each or for both? MR. WOOD: Look, when I talk about overall consequences, I'm talking about - I was referring specifically to the decision to - of the North to, you know, kick out IAEA and, you know, American monitors. There will be, I'm sure, additional measures and additional consequences on the North. But right now, we're working through the Sanctions Committee at the UN pursuant, as you said, to the presidential statement. And that's where we are right now. And again, what we want to see is the North come back to the Six-Party framework. But clearly, it seems to be heading in the wrong direction, and that's something that the North will have to face consequences for. QUESTION: Two final questions, and I appreciate your indulgence and that of my colleagues here. Prior to the rocket launch, you and Secretary Clinton were very specific in telling us that the consequences for the rocket launch, if it went forward, which it did, would come within the framework of the Security Council. Can you tell us whether - now - whether the consequences for the expulsion order will also come within the Security Council or in some other form? MR. WOOD: James, let me just put it to you very broadly. The international community has required that the North take certain actions and not take certain actions. The North has not listened to the will of the international community, and therefore it's going to have to face the consequences from its unwillingness to meet the international community's requirements. So however you want to put it together, the North is going to have to deal with the fact that the international community is not happy with the decisions it's taken. And it's going to have to deal with the consequences that flow, whether that be national measures, whether that be international measures, as I just spoke to, with regard to the Sanctions Committee. There's been a pattern of, you know, bad behavior on the part of the North. And this has been going on for quite some time. As you know, the Six-Party framework has had a lot of ups and downs. And we're very concerned about what decisions that the North has recently taken with regard to the launch and, of course, with regard to American and international personnel that have been asked to leave. And so we are going to continue to work with our partners, both on the Security Council and outside of the Security Council, to bring consequences upon the North for the actions that it's taken. And that's the best way I'd like to leave it now. QUESTION: And do you still maintain that UN Security Council presidential statements are

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

legally binding? MR. WOOD: James, for you, we're going to post an answer to that question. And we'll post that later today and you'll have an answer. QUESTION: Thank you. WOOD: Sue. QUESTION: Okay, you said that, you know, you've had discussions with the North on this issue was that - MR. WOOD: Which issue are we talking about? QUESTION: Well, just generally in terms of throwing out the inspectors and also the launch. I think you're referring to the inspectors there. Was that through the New York channel? MR. WOOD: I don't want to get into which, you know, channel we have, you know, had discussions with the North, but just to say that we have, you know, relayed our views to the North. QUESTION: But why not? Why not, though? I mean, do you know? Why can't you tell us which channel you've been working through? MR. WOOD: Obviously, I don't want to tell you which channel we're working through. QUESTION: But why not? I'm a bit perplexed as to why not. MR. WOOD: Well, just - let me just say that we have had conversations with the North. QUESTION: Directly or through the Chinese? MR. WOOD: Conversations. QUESTION: Direct conversations? MR. WOOD: Conversations. I don't want to get into the specifics, nor the substance. QUESTION: So these are specific conversations then? MR. WOOD: That - it could be your characterization, but I'm just giving you what I have. QUESTION: Not, but, I mean, you can tell us whether there have been direct conversations between the U.S. and North Korea. MR. WOOD: We have had conversations. Let me just - let me just put it that way. QUESTION: Sorry. And then just to follow up on another thing that you said, you said that, you know, whether these would be international or national measures. So are you looking independently at taking your own list of - set of sanctions? MR. WOOD: Well, Sue. I don't want to, you know, talk about what we may or may not do. But I think what's important is in the Sanctions Committee, there's the clear will of the international community to pursue additional measures against - you know, to prevent entities from supporting North Korea's nuclear program as well as goods getting to the North that can support that program as well. QUESTION: So this Committee met yesterday. Is it meeting again today? MR. WOOD: They will - I don't know if it's meeting again today, but there will be several rounds of discussions before there's an agreement on the list of entities and goods. QUESTION: So how many entities are you looking at: 10s, 20, 30, 50? MR. WOOD: I don't know. I don't want to put a number on it. But we're obviously going to look very closely at those entities that have been providing support, that could provide support to the North's program, and those goods that would in any way contribute to a continuation of the North's program. QUESTION: And how many countries are on that Sanctions Committee? MR. WOOD: I don't have the number. I don't have the number off the top of my head. QUESTION: Robert? MR. WOOD: Yes, Charlie. QUESTION: Could you tell us who was the U.S. representative, and if there was one, at the Sanctions Committee? And also, a related question. Could you inform us about Ambassador Bosworth's participation, if at all, in any of this? To use a word we often hear about North Korea, at least, to me, it's opaque, to know whether Ambassador Bosworth is actively involved, partly involved? What's going on? MR. WOOD: Well, to go to your first question about the Sanctions Committee, that's usually headed by an expert who deals with those questions at the UN. I don't know who it is up there at the moment - who is on that committee. It's not normally at an ambassadorial level. It's usually an expert that sits on that committee. With regard - QUESTION: As the U.S. participant or as a - MR. WOOD: As a U.S. participant, yes. QUESTION: Okay. MR. WOOD: What I need to check, Charlie, is I have to check and make sure that we are actually on that committee. We probably are, but I need to check and make sure of that. But usually that committee is headed by an expert. With regard to Ambassador Bosworth, he has certainly been involved. He's had discussions with the Secretary and others. And he's engaged on the issue. I don't want to get into the specifics of what he's doing, but I can assure you that he is following this issue very closely, having meetings within the government, has talked to the Secretary about this and others. And, you know, if we have anything further to say about his activities, we'll let you know. QUESTION: And just one follow-up. MR. WOOD: Sure. QUESTION: Has he been operating from Washington, or is he in Boston or New York or - MR. WOOD: I don't know where he is at the moment. But, as I said, he's been in close touch on this issue and will continue to be. Yes. QUESTION: You said he's having conversations with the Secretary and others. Is that exclusive to the U.S. Government or is he talking to the other parties in the Six-Party Talks? QUESTION: The North? MR. WOOD: Well, he - QUESTION: The North? MR. WOOD: I don't know that he has talked to the North. I don't believe so. But he's talked to other - the other parties. Let's see. Who else? QUESTION: Do you know if the U.S. liaison who is based in a hotel in Pyongyang is still there? MR. WOOD: I don't know. I honestly don't know. QUESTION: One more on Bosworth? MR. WOOD: Sure. QUESTION: He said kind of just days before the launch that after an acceptable cooling-off period he was prepared to go back to Pyongyang and begin talks again on how to get this all started. Are there any plans for him to travel? MR. WOOD: I'm not aware of any at this point. I'm not going to rule out the fact that he may at some point travel, but I don't have anything right now in terms of travel schedule. Please. QUESTION: Robert, is the United States satisfied with the efforts that Russia and China are

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

doing to pressure on North Korea in this issue? And what practical steps would you expect from Russia and China to make to solve this problem? MR. WOOD: Well, we've worked - obviously, we have worked very closely with the Chinese and the Russians up in New York to try to agree on a presidential statement, which we were able to do. And we've had good conversations with both governments. We've worked very closely, as I said, with them on this issue and we'll continue to be. Both parties have an interest in seeing the North go back to the Six-Party framework, as we do. And what we need to find a way is to - we need to find a way to get them back to the Six-Party framework. But clearly, the North doesn't seem to be interested in doing that, and therefore it has to deal with the consequences that - as I said, that will flow from that decision that they've made. But we've had - we're not looking for anything specific from Russia and China. As I said, we have good working relations with them on this issue and a host of other issues. So, you know, we'll continue to work with them as we all try to figure out the way forward with regard to the North. James, you've had a whole bunch. Let me go to some - QUESTION: North Korea said they will not return at Six-Party Talks anymore. Do you expect North Korea come back to table in near future? MR. WOOD: Well, we certainly hope so. It's a decision for the North to make. Sir. QUESTION: Just as the - your monitors leave, can you give us - and I realize this number might not have changed since the last time you gave - given it. But how much of the disablement had been completed? MR. WOOD: I don't have anything beyond what we said last time. QUESTION: So - but can you just give us the number of steps that have been finished, or the number of rods - MR. WOOD: The number of steps? I don't know what you mean by that. You mean in terms of where we are? QUESTION: In terms of the disablement of Yongbyon that was - MR. WOOD: I'll check and see if we have any update to it, but I don't think we do. Yes, ma'am. QUESTION: Do you have any statement today to make on allegations of mistreatment by Mohammad al-Qurani, who's Chad - MR. WOOD: Same to - well, just to answer it, no, I don't. QUESTION: Well, can I - we've - you referred us yesterday to the Department of Justice. They categorically said it was not their jurisdiction and referred us back to you. And we've also spoken to the Chadian ambassador, who says that he's had conversations with the State Department about al-Qurani and his allegations. Can you confirm that that's taken place? MR. WOOD: Well, I'm not going to get into any, you know, discussions that we may have had on this particular case at all. QUESTION: Do you know the allegations I'm talking about? MR. WOOD: Yes, I'm aware of the allegations that you're talking about, and I've given you my answer. QUESTION: Well, what does that say about the Administration - MR. WOOD: I've given you my answer. QUESTION: I'm just curious. The IAEA inspectors - monitors have already left North Korea, and the U.S. are still on the ground there. I'm just wondering if we should read into this if you are negotiating with the North Koreans or talking with the North Koreans for extra time. I assume the IAEA inspectors had the same administrative duties to complete before they left North Korea. So I'm wondering why the U.S. is still there. Are you asking them for more time for the U.S. inspectors? MR. WOOD: It's not a question of asking them for more time. The North made a decision. It's asked our people to leave, as it did ask the IAEA to leave. We are in the process - we are having talks with the North on the ground in terms of the modalities of that departure. But I'm not aware that we are seeking additional time. If we do - if our people feel they need additional time, they'll request it. But I'm not aware that there was any type of request of that nature. James. QUESTION: You've said many times that North Korea knows what the international community is asking it to do. This expulsion of inspectors and technical personnel obviously changes materially the facts on the ground. So I wonder what the U.S. Government regards as the most urgent action that the North Koreans need to take in order for things to be moving in the right direction. Is it a rescission of this order, or a return to the Six-Party Talks? What is the most urgent thing, now that this - these changes have happened, that we are asking North Korea to do? MR. WOOD: Well, reversing this decision would be the most immediate that we would like to see happen, and then, of course, getting back to the Six-Party framework. I mean, if we don't have our people on the ground, they're not able to monitor and observe what's happening. And that's deeply troubling to not only the United States, but other members of the Six-Party Talks and others in the international community. So that would be the ultimate priority right now. And then, of course, moving them back to the Six-Party framework. Okay. Oh, please, ask - QUESTION: New topic? MR. WOOD: Yeah. QUESTION: On the - the Russians announced today they're pulling out - or yesterday that they're pulling some troops out of Chechnya, saying that the situation has stabilized. So does the United States has anything to say about that? I mean, do you welcome that as a sign, or do you share the same assessment? MR. WOOD: Well, again, I haven't seen these reports about it, so I'd prefer to hold comment until we've had a chance to look at them. Dave. QUESTION: Russian officials are saying that there will be strategic arms talks next week in Rome. Can you confirm that? I think it's April 24th. MR. WOOD: Yeah, that's correct. I've heard that as well. I don't have any more details. I just heard about that before coming down that that was the date. QUESTION: April 24th? MR. WOOD: April 24, yes. Yes. QUESTION: Sorry. Can you tell us why

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

you're not willing to talk about what - (inaudible) the conversations - MR. WOOD: I've given you the answer to the question. QUESTION: But what does it say about the Obama Administration and the President's promise to shut down Guantanamo Bay - MR. WOOD: That decision has not changed. QUESTION: - and no one from his department will even acknowledge - MR. WOOD: That has not changed. The President has made a decision - QUESTION: - those allegations - that it's - MR. WOOD: Are you going to let me talk, or do you want to continue? QUESTION: Well, I was trying to finish my question. MR. WOOD: Well, I've given you the answer to the question. Matt. QUESTION: The Spanish attorney general says that they're not going to move - that he won't move ahead on the possible prosecution of the six Bush Administration-era officials. The President in an interview yesterday, the transcript of which was released today, said that he had not been in contact with the Spanish about this, but that his team - my team - has been. Can you elaborate on what that contact was? MR. WOOD: No, I can't. QUESTION: Do you know - do you have any position on the - what is the Administration's position on universal jurisdiction laws in general? MR. WOOD: Well, I mean, I think - well, let me talk specifically to the Spanish case. That is - really is an internal matter. And from my understanding, the Spanish haven't made a decision as to whether to go forward. So I don't really have anything more to say on that particular issue. QUESTION: Well, I'd like, if I could - can you get an answer about what the Administration's position is on universal jurisdiction laws, or universal jurisdiction, in general, and also find out what the contact that the President was talking about was? MR. WOOD: Well, you know, again, I'd have to refer you to the White House for that particular part of this in terms of what the President - you know, what the President said. QUESTION: Well, the President said "my team" has been in contact. Now, his team, in dealing with foreign governments, is the State Department. MR. WOOD: Absolutely. Yeah. I just - QUESTION: So that's - MR. WOOD: I'll look into that. Yes. QUESTION: Sorry, just to follow up on the Guantanamo detainee issue. I mean, is the State Department looking into these allegations that he made on Al Jazeera? MR. WOOD: Well, look, I haven't seen these allegations. I've heard about them. But you know, I've spoken to this issue many times here about, you know, these cases in - with regard to Guantanamo. And the President's made that decision to close Guantanamo. A number of cases are being reviewed. You know that we're having discussions with a number of countries in terms of taking some of these detainees. But I don't have anything further to say about it, and I'm not going to go beyond that. QUESTION: But isn't this a concern for you that - I mean, the U.S. image was very seriously affected by, you know, claims of torture. MR. WOOD: Sure. QUESTION: Guantanamo Bay is a blemish on the U.S. image, and these kinds of stories are emerging again. So why is the Obama Administration not actively coming out and saying, you know, we're looking into this, we're doing something about it? MR. WOOD: Well, I think it's very clear that we're looking into this. We're dealing with the whole Guantanamo question, and there are a number of parts to this. I just don't want to get into specific cases. Believe me, the Administration is very focused on this. As I said, we're having discussions with foreign governments about taking detainees. QUESTION: But I mean - QUESTION: But this is a case that has been broadcast in the Arab world. It incenses people when the Administration does not publicly come out and say, "We're looking into this, we're doing something about it." MR. WOOD: Look, as I said, this Administration has taken a fundamentally different approach to dealing with this particular issue. The President made a decision that we're going to close Guantanamo, and obviously, in order to do that, you have to deal with a number of questions with regard to the people who were in Guantanamo, what happened there. All of this is being looked at, and I don't - I think it's an unfair conclusion to draw that we are not concerned or looking into various cases. All I'm saying is, I don't want to go into details of it, but I can assure you that we are focused on dealing with a number of these cases. We're going to continue to do so. And the President's ultimate objective of closing Guantanamo is what we're focused on. QUESTION: Does the ultimate - Robert, does the ultimate objective of closing Guantanamo preclude you looking into allegations of mistreatment of detainees? MR. WOOD: Look, we certainly have been looking into a number of these issues. I just don't want to get into specifics - QUESTION: We're not - I mean, we're not even, at this point, asking you to get into specifics. MR. WOOD: Well, yes, I've been asked to - QUESTION: We're asking you to say whether you look into cases - into allegations, in general, of mistreatment. MR. WOOD: Of course we do, of course we do. What more do you want me to say than that? QUESTION: That's what we wanted you to say. MR. WOOD: Well, you got it. QUESTION: Okay. MR. WOOD: Okay. (Inaudible), mm-hmm. QUESTION: Change of subject. MR. WOOD: Yeah. QUESTION: An Iranian news source has reported that four American banks have applied for permits to open branches on Iranian soil. Have you heard anything about this? MR. WOOD: I don't know anything about it. QUESTION: Can you confirm? MR. WOOD: You might want to check with Treasury, see if Treasury knows anything. I don't know anything about it. QUESTION: It specifically cites Citibank and Goldman Sachs as two of those four, and that a Saudi prince has been following this up and has made this - MR. WOOD: Well, then I - (inaudible) about it, but I

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

would check with Treasury to see if Treasury is aware. QUESTION: Thank you. QUESTION: On Iran, have they, to your knowledge, responded to the invitation yet? MR. WOOD: I think the Secretary spoke to that yesterday. Certainly in - QUESTION: I know, but that was yesterday, and today is today - MR. WOOD: I don't think there's - QUESTION: - and there's been 24 hours that have passed and - MR. WOOD: Not that I'm aware of. QUESTION: - things can happen and - MR. WOOD: Very true, but I'm not aware that anything has happened. QUESTION: All right. Have you heard back from the Swiss yet about Roxana Saberi? MR. WOOD: Yeah. We've been informed by our Swiss protecting power that - and obviously, able to confirm that Roxana Saberi - QUESTION: I'm sorry, you are able to confirm? MR. WOOD: Yeah, we're able to confirm that Roxana Saberi went on trial in Iran earlier this week, and we understand that a verdict is expected soon. We're in regular contact with our Swiss protecting power, and - but we're unable to go beyond what we've said about this case unless we get, you know, written permission from Roxana Saberi to talk further about it. But our concerns remain. We want to see her released. We're working hard to secure that release. These charges, as I said yesterday, are baseless, without foundation. And we've been very concerned about the transparency of this judicial process. And you know, just to emphasize again, we're going to work to try to get her released, and we call on the Iranians to provide as much information as they can to us about Roxana Saberi, and go from there. QUESTION: Did - were the Swiss - presumably, since they didn't know until today or late yesterday, was there a Swiss representative in the courtroom for the trial? Was there any - MR. WOOD: I don't know, Matt, if there was someone from the Swiss Embassy there in the courtroom. I don't know that. I don't know the answer to that question. QUESTION: Well, apparently, she had met with her lawyer. MR. WOOD: Yeah, I'm hearing that and no, they were not, so - QUESTION: Do you think that this trial will have any impact on your efforts to engage with Iran? I mean, the President has said that he wants a better (inaudible) - the Secretary has said that they want - you want a better relationship with Iran. Yet Iran is trying an American citizen for charges that you say are baseless and continue to do it with a host of American citizens. So at what point does this affect your kind of goodwill towards trying to forge a new relationship with Iran? MR. WOOD: Well, I can't give you a good answer to that right now, Elise. But this is certainly not helpful, you know, and we think responding in a positive way to the Saberi case would be helpful in terms of winning goodwill on the part of the United States and the American people. But we've made a strategic decision to engage Iran directly in dialogue. We're committed to that. We have yet to see that Iran is interested in reciprocating. So we'll have to see. We don't want to see more of these cases. We - as I said, we want to see Roxana Saberi released, and the Swiss are working very hard to try to help achieve that. But you know, again, as we've said many times, our hand is stretched out to Iran. We'd like to see Iran reciprocate. QUESTION: Well, at what point do you take away your hand? I mean, if your hand is out there for a long time and Iran doesn't take you up on it, I mean, is your patience unlimited here? And have you heard any reaction back to the letter that - or the aide-memoire or whatever you call it that Secretary Clinton sent? MR. WOOD: To answer the second part of your question, no, we have not heard back yet. But you know, the first part - you know, that's a judgment we'll have to make at some point. Obviously, our outreach to Iran is relatively new, and we'll have to see how it goes. But these types of cases where, you know, someone has - an American is brought to trial on, you know, basically baseless charges is not helpful. And we'll just have to see. I just can't give you an answer to that right now in terms of, you know, your question. Okay? Thank you all. QUESTION: Mideast, Mitchell and - met with Lieberman today, after which Lieberman's office said that going back to Oslo, none of the peace efforts had worked and that a new approach was needed. You know, what does that say for your efforts there? MR. WOOD: Well, look, what I can tell you is Senator Mitchell had a very good and candid discussion with Foreign Minister Lieberman. Senator Mitchell reiterated what U.S. policy is with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. And by that, I mean our pursuit of a two-state solution with the two countries living side-by-side in peace. With regard to Foreign Minister Lieberman's comments, I'd have to refer you to him or his office. But Senator Mitchell, you know, made it clear what the U.S. position is with regard to - QUESTION: That - with regard to two-state solution? MR. WOOD: Two-state solution, yes. QUESTION: And following on Annapolis? MR. WOOD: It's been very clear that out of Annapolis, there were a number of different elements that the U.S. Government and the other parties were committed to. And certainly, Roadmap obligations are important, making sure that we don't take steps that further inflame tensions in the region, taking steps that don't contribute to a positive atmosphere. So the foreign minister is well aware, as is the rest of the Israeli Government, about what the United States wants to see happen in the region. It's a new government. There are going to be comments coming from various officials in terms of their views. Senator Mitchell looks forward to working with the new government, and of course with the Palestinians and others, to try to reach that two-state solution, Matt. It's not going to be easy and there are going to be ups and downs in this process, as we have them in the North Korea - the Six-Party process. So you know, we just have to

STATE DEPARTMENT CONDUCTS DAILY PRESS BRIEFING, APRIL 16

dig in, roll up our sleeves, and continue to go to work, because that's what the people of the region - they would expect no less from us. QUESTION: Okay. I got one more unrelated. On Somalia and the Secretary's announcement yesterday, do you know who will be representing the U.S. at this conference in Brussels? MR. WOOD: Yeah, that'll be Acting Assistant Secretary for African Affairs Phillip Carter. And I think there'll also be a representative from USAID going, but we don't have that name yet. QUESTION: Do you know if there's anyone from PM going, Political - MR. WOOD: I don't think so. QUESTION: Because I mean, they have taken the lead on the piracy issue. MR. WOOD: I know they've been very involved in it. QUESTION: Well, I guess that's it. MR. WOOD: Okay. Thank you all. (The briefing was concluded at 12:25 p.m.)For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

For any query with respect to this article or any other content requirement, please contact Editor at htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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Body

Here are excerpts from editorials in newspapers around the world:

May 13

The Times, London, on the slaughter in Sri Lanka:

The United Nations has spoken of a "bloodbath." Ban Ki Moon, the Secretary-General, was "appalled" at the killing of hundreds of trapped civilians at the weekend, and called for an immediate halt to the Sri Lankan Army's indiscriminate shelling of the tiny coastal strip, the last hold-out on the island of the rebel ***Tamil Tigers***. But the shelling goes on. ...

This carnage must stop. Already more than 6,500 civilians have been killed and 14,000 injured in the first four months of the year. ...

The Sri Lankan Government has been deaf to all entreaty. It sees itself on the verge of victory to end Asia's longest-running civil war. It believes that the fighters from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam are defeated and wants to finish them off. ...

Of course, the Tigers are at least as guilty (as) Hamas of using terror to achieve their ends, of holding civilians hostage and of blocking their escape. Their tactics are ruthless, their exploitation of human shields inhumane and their moral claims worthless. But that does not justify a campaign of annihilation. If Colombo will not show mercy, it must pay a price. The IMF bailout package of \$2 billion must be suspended. The European Union's trade preference agreement must be reviewed. Western governments should treat Sri Lanka as a pariah until it halts its heavy guns. Slaughter is a barbaric end to war.

On the Net:

<http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/leading> article/article 276 147.ece

May 13

Dagens Nyheter, Stockholm, Sweden, on Pope Benedict XVI's trip to the Middle-East:

The Pope is traveling to the Holy Land. Or to the site of one of the longest and harshest conflicts of our time: Israel-Palestine. ...

No Headline In Original

A trip for peace is his desired headline. ...

The previous Pope, John Paul II, operated politically in a way that popes hadn't done since the Reformation and the Counterreformation in the 1500's. He didn't tear down the Berlin wall on his own, but his contribution to the fall of communism was significant. ...

While John Paul II could see the right time for action, Benedict XVI has so far failed in a sensationally clumsy way.

His speeches have been interpreted as offensive by Muslims, while he has been perceived as being unsuspecting about anti-Semitic expressions. On top of that he has managed to drive members away from the church while his predecessor did the opposite. ...

It is therefore not any new John Paul II who is touring the Middle East. It is an old school Pope, whose voice tough politicians in the region will clearly not listen to. ...

The church leader has, of course, been welcomed, out of pure politeness. And some can even afford to make accommodating statements because they will be forgotten as soon as the Pope's plane leaves for Rome. ...

Benedict XVI is possibly too old to realize how limited his role is.

On the Net:

<http://www.dn.se>

May 11

Asahi Shimbun, Tokyo, on the stress tests done on U.S. banks:

U.S. financial authorities on Thursday announced the results of the "stress tests," or special capital assessments, of 19 major banks.

The officials are trying to cast the results as a cause for optimism about the nation's financial system. But doubts remain about whether things will really work out well as they expect. ...

Asking Congress to consider injecting more public funds into banks would certainly provoke bitter debate over the responsibility of the financial community for the current mess.

Officials at the U.S. administration of President Barack Obama are concerned that such debate could cause the White House plan to restore health in the financial system to fall apart. The centerpiece of the plan is a fund relying on both taxpayer and private money to buy bad assets from banks.

It is hard not to suspect that because of these concerns, the top financial policymakers decided to avoid causing a stir and made sure that the estimate of total capital deficits would be less than the remaining money available for capital injections.

Anyway, the U.S. administration bet on an optimistic scenario. The focus of the policy efforts will be on purchases of bad assets by the public-private fund for the time being.

A serious delay in the efforts to deal with losses in the banking system, however, would cause the recession to last longer, thereby creating more losses.

On the Net:

<http://www.asahi.com/english/Herald-asahi/TKY200905110057.html>

May 11

No Headline In Original

New Zealand Herald, Auckland, New Zealand, on Pakistan:

Dire predictions uttered about Pakistan when Gen. Pervez Musharraf stepped down have not been long in coming to fruition. If, as United States special representative Richard Holbrooke insists, the country is not yet a failed state, it is certainly on its knees. ...

More than anything, (President Barack Obama) wanted an indication that (Pakistani President Asif Ali) Zardari's (g)overnment can deliver the strong leadership and effective policies that have eluded previous civilian (a)ministrations. ... For the most part, the U.S. has had cause to be disappointed. Rather than confronting the Taliban, the Pakistani leaders' first impulse has been to seek non-violent solutions. ...

Therein lies the difficulty in trying to pressure Pakistan. Whatever the pledges made in Washington by the civilian (g)overnment, these may not be fully translated on the ground. ...

Another, perhaps more likely, outcome is that yet another tilt at democracy will fail. The Army, despairing of the (g)overnment's incompetence, could reclaim control. This process elevated Gen. Musharraf and several other military figures to power. It could easily recur if the Taliban threat grows and the economy becomes even more sickly. It will never be an acceptable alternative. But the good options for Pakistan's survival as a moderate, democratic nation are rapidly expiring.

On the Net:

<http://www.nzherald.co.nz/opinion/news/article.cfm?id=466&objectid=10571521>

May 11

The Knoxville News-Sentinel, Knoxville, Tennessee, on President Barack Obama's implementation of tax policy:

The administration of President Barack Obama certainly doesn't shy away from taking on tough challenges. It jumped in last week by announcing a far-reaching program to raise \$210 billion by cracking down on overseas tax avoidance and tax evasion. ...

Perhaps for tactical reasons the president began his drive for larger tax reform by taking on entities for whom the general public has little sympathy, multinational corporations that legally game the system to avoid taxes the White House says that because of various breaks and credits the effective tax rate on U.S.-based multinationals is 2.3 percent and wealthy individuals who evade taxes by hiding their money in offshore tax havens. ...

The biggest single change the president is proposing is to change the laws that allow businesses to take immediate deductions for investments in their overseas operations but defer paying taxes on the profits from those operations until the profits are repatriated to the U.S. An estimated \$700 billion in deferred profits is parked overseas. ...

Obama's overseas crackdown will require legislation, and here, he will learn an even larger lesson: Behind every provision of the U.S. tax code lurks a member of Congress. The lawmakers don't like the public to be reminded of this, but our tax laws are purely their handiwork.

The Internal Revenue Service only enforces them.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/ptuavj>

May 10

South Bend Tribune, South Bend, Indiana, on President Barack Obama's appearance at the University of Notre Dame:

No Headline In Original

Talking to one another, seeking common ground, never will resolve the differences between those who believe women should have the right to choose an abortion and those who believe abortion is murder. The gulf is just too wide and the feelings are too strong.

We do think, however, that those who disagree with President Barack Obama on abortion, and those who agree with him, can find common ground regarding his upcoming visit to the University of Notre Dame.

Obama was offered the honor of delivering the May 17 commencement address. He did Notre Dame the honor of accepting. For both these facts, we are pleased and especially so for the graduating class. Its members will be sent forth in life with the eloquent words of the leader of the free world. It will be a wonderful and memorable event for them. ...

All the same, strong feelings on this issue were to be expected. What wasn't expected and what is a very great shame is the conduct of people who have traveled to South Bend from other places with no purpose other than to make trouble and grab headlines. ...

No one can stop anti-abortion activist Randall Terry from vowing to turn the Notre Dame campus into a "political mud pit" and the commencement ceremony into a "circus." But we can, as a community, show our shared disdain for his words. This is a community where not everyone agrees. But it also is a community where people can disagree without threats or expressions of hatred.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/ot7c7y>

May 11

The Tribune-Chronicle, Warren, Ohio, on U.S. policy toward North Korea's nuclear ambitions:

North Korea probably will test another nuclear weapon soon, President Obama's coordinator for policy on weapons of mass destruction predicted Friday. There is no reason to doubt Obama aide Gary Samore's assessment particularly in view of the world community's failure to do anything meaningful to punish North Korea for its recent test firing of a medium-range missile.

At first glance, Samore's policy prescription for the United States does not sound appealing. "We'll just wait," he said in answer to a question about how Obama would respond to a new nuclear weapons test.

But Samore may have a good point. He explained that he believes a nuclear weapons test would convince other nations to support new sanctions against North Korea. He added that Chinese leaders are "very, very angry at the North Koreans."

We hope so. Because unless something is done to stop North Korea's steady march toward nuclear missile capability, that country soon will pose a threat to peace and perhaps to millions of lives.

Obama and his diplomats, in choosing the "just wait" strategy, need to work intensively behind the scenes to mobilize international anger at the threat from North Korean aggressiveness. Enlisting China in a serious campaign to stop Pyongyang's technological mobilization may well be the most promising avenue of action.

Beijing needs to be convinced that it is not in China's interests to allow North Korea to proceed with its weapons buildup.

On the Net:

<http://tiny.cc/2Y2Zh>

May 8

No Headline In Original

Los Angeles Times, on the swine flu response:

It looks like health authorities and the public can breathe a sigh of cautious relief (covering their mouths, we hope) as new information indicates that although the flu formerly known as swine spreads easily, its severity appears on par with that of most other flu viruses.

That's not to trivialize the H1N1 strain or any other; influenza kills an average of 36,000 Americans a year. That's all the more reason why the diminished alarm doesn't present government officials with an opportunity to relax. Instead, they should build on lessons learned and work on bridging gaps in the nation's public health network. ...

Where the nation's response most needs improvement is with long-term public policy. Legislation and public education campaigns should foster healthy individual actions having people stay home when they first start feeling sick, for instance, or getting them to wash their hands frequently. ...

The greatest danger would be complacency about the toll taken by flu. Epidemiologists warn that even if this outbreak proves milder than expected, the virus could return in a more dangerous form in the fall. Hopefully, by that time a vaccine will be available. Health authorities, meanwhile, should use the current sense of urgency to call for common-sense policies that will keep us all safer.

On the Net:

<http://tinyurl.com/pkjqnv>

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PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

US Fed News

July 1, 2009 Wednesday 3:30 PM EST

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Body

WASHINGTON, May 13 -- The U.S. Department of State's Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs issued the text of the following remarks:

AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: It's nice to see you, first of all. I know I've talked to some of you many times and some of you a few times, but I've always felt that your presence here in Washington, your reports from Washington were really important and that they're looked at that way back home and out in the region. I think this is a real quality group of journalists we have here, and it's always a pleasure to talk to you. And I apologize for not having done it all the time and about all the topics, but I tried to be out when I could. Second of all, as friends, some of you have asked me personally where I'm headed from here, and the answer in our system is I don't quite know for sure yet.

I have a couple opportunities that haven't quite settled yet, so I'm going to see how those work out. But it's time for me to move on. My successor's been nominated. He'll have his hearings tomorrow. I can't assume anything about our Senate, but I trust that Bob Blake is the kind of person that they also want to see in this job. And I'm sure he'll do a great job if he's confirmed by the Senate - that's something we can all look forward to. QUESTION: Richard, quickly - but you'll remain in government? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I expect I'll remain in the Foreign Service, and I'm just waiting to hear what the next assignment might be. And then finally, a couple remarks about the region since I am finishing up three years of working in this part of the world. I know we deal just day after day after day with the difficulties and the challenges and the bombs and earthquakes and the cyclones. Sometimes you can be overwhelmed by the number of tough things there are to deal with. I think it's often really important just to keep the big picture in mind and not just to see the difficulties and the challenges of this region, but also to see the incredible potential. It is important to keep in mind that everything that we do as the United States, everything that we do with governments, is designed to create new opportunities, new opportunities for the individuals who live in this part of the world, opportunities to get education, opportunities to participate in their government through democracy, opportunities to start businesses or import and export goods, and that we've been able to do a lot of that. We've had new democracies, new democratic elections in the region. We've overcome some difficult economic challenges together with the countries of the region. We've opened up new economic possibilities for people. We've expanded education. We've expanded the number of students coming here and the education opportunities in a place like Kyrgyzstan. And so that potential is there. And as much as we deal with the challenges, keeping in mind the enormous opportunity of this region and what we can all do to help people take advantage of that and countries take advantage of that is important. And the last thing I'd want to say is that we spent a lot of our time talking about the bad guys, talking about the terrorists, talking about the people who want to challenge democracy, people who want to hold countries back. But I think it's important to remember that there are a lot of people who want to move forward. It's important to remember that we're working with people who want to move forward; we're working with people who are getting organized and taking action against terrorists, so we've been watching closely - Prime Minister Gillani, for example, in Pakistan. He's worked out a political program to support military action against the terrorists. We've watched other parties join in that effort. We've seen people move forward through democratic

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

transitions and try to build up election commissions or build up independent justice systems that will support democracy. We've seen people explore new economic routes for their own countries, and that's why we've tried to open up reconstruction opportunity zones, assistance programs. If we really think about this as people that are trying to drag the region down and drag it backwards, it's also important to remember there are a lot of people who want to move forward. And the most inspiring thing, I think, in working in this region, is to see how many people there are who want to move - Muslim societies, big countries, small countries - in a positive direction. And the satisfaction is that I've been able to work with them and hopefully the United States has been able to contribute to those opportunities. That's enough for me. QUESTION: Richard - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Questions about news of the day, big picture, whatever. QUESTION: Richard, on Sri Lanka - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: In my 25 years of following South Asia-U.S. relations from Washington, you know, going back to the days when you were spokesman - you know, I can't remember when the U.S. has been so tough with its statements on the actions of the Sri Lankan Government. You know, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Mahinda Rajapaksa. Yesterday there were these two statements by the British foreign secretary and the Secretary once again. And you know, after the strong call from the Secretary - you know the external ministry in Sri Lanka puts out a statement that, you know, it was to laud them about how they are going after terrorists, et cetera. You know, the Sri Lankans don't seem to give a hoot about what the U.S. says anymore. Apparently, there doesn't seem to be any leverage. And privately, some Sri Lankans have told me, you know, we are getting aid from China and Iran, et cetera, we don't have to worry about the U.S., and who are the U.S. to tell us about collateral damage after what has happened in Iraq, Afghanistan, et cetera? What's happened in terms of the U.S. leverage on Sri Lanka? Is there no leverage? And I know the U.S. is very concerned about it. And part two of it is that, you know, the fact that - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I thought one was big enough. (Laughter.) QUESTION: Yeah. But the fact that Indian elections have been on, has there been sort of - has it precluded you all from working together with India in terms of the Sri Lankan situation? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Let me take part two first. QUESTION: Okay. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: No. We've been working very closely with India. The Secretary's had consultation with Indian counterparts. We've had visits of Indian diplomats. We've been able to confer closely with India. I myself have had phone calls just to keep in touch as we always do after we've done Co-Chairs' discussions. We've always informed India and conferred with India. And so we're very much working with India on the Sri Lankan situation, and it hasn't held them back as far as I can tell. Second of all, in terms of the United States and Sri Lanka, I know Sri Lanka gets assistance from different parts of the world, and sometimes they get business and investment from other parts of the world. But to have a prosperous economy, you need to be able to have business and investments with the entire world. I think the United States still plays a very important role on those issues. We play an important role on issues of democracy and international relations. And I do think we're still listened to. We've always seen Sri Lanka as a democracy. It has been a democracy. We've supported democracy in Sri Lanka and we've also expected Sri Lanka's leaders to live up to democratic values and standards. We have no grief whatsoever for the Tamil Tigers. We've condemned their terrorism. We've condemned the way they've been holding civilians, and we've made very clear they need to release the civilians and lay down their arms to a neutral third party if necessary. It's time for them to stop fighting. At the same time, we expect the government to meet the standards that one expects of a democracy. And in fact, we expect them to meet the standards that they've set themselves. When they say no heavy weapons, when they say no fire zone, when they say no aerial bombardments, when they say no major combat operations, we believe them. And frankly, it's a very strong disappointment to see that they haven't lived up to those things. They have failed to meet their own commitment. And so that's where, I think, a lot of our concern is. We do think it's important to go about this, the end of the conflict, the end of the terrorism, in a manner that doesn't sow any seeds of future conflict and in a manner that actually opens the door to future political arrangements on the island, where everybody on the island can live with peace and with some degree of autonomy - the kind of things that have been discussed in the past. We're certainly not holding them to any different standards. We're just expecting them to act like a democracy, to meet their own commitments, and to take a view that this has to be solved in a manner that opens up a political door to a stable set of political arrangements on the island. QUESTION: (Inaudible) the question about the elections in India, will this really come to an end? And U.S. Embassy officials have met with leaders of the BJP and that's led to some speculation in India. Now, would the U.S. admit that it would be comfortable - uncomfortable with a new government in India which might have allies that are not friendly with the U.S.? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We're - as you say, the election is not quite over yet, and therefore, I can beg off one more time - (laughter) - and say I'm not going to comment on an election that's still underway. We look forward to dealing with whatever government the Indian people choose and that - QUESTION:

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

And what kind of relation do you think the U.S. and India would have under the - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think - you know, we've had an extremely fast pace of growth of U.S.-India relations over the last 10, 12 years. It's happened under two different administrations, of two different parties, in two different countries. We've had Republicans and Democrats in the United States. We've had BJP and Congress-led governments in India that have carried this momentum forward, and I expect that to continue. I know certainly this Administration, the United States, wants to continue to work with India as a global partner, to work with India in ways that are meaningful to the Indian people. We look forward to having a new government in India that we can work with. And whoever the Indian people pick, it's going to be fine with us. QUESTION: But has the election put through to the Obama Administration, you know, setting up its relationship with India? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think, you know, there's a little bit of a timing difference. We don't expect people to have elections on our timetable, and we don't have elections on their timetables. So the fact is that, you know, when you look back next year, you'll see a new administration in Washington and a new administration in New Delhi taking over in the same period and looking, I think, together at how - how they can govern for the next couple of years, how they can work together for the next couple years. The horizon now for the U.S. and the Indian Governments is measured in years and gives us opportunities to really think big, and I hope both sides will think big. QUESTION: Even if the left comes to power? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We'll see who gets into the government and what they want to think of, what they want to do. Yes. QUESTION: Obama Administration, what are the issues that the new Administration would like to take up with the new Indian Government (inaudible)? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Well, there are some that's sort of come about naturally. If we look at the Obama's Administration's agenda and then you look at the fact that we all see India as a global partner, how do we work with India on global financial issues? And the President and the Prime Minister met in London at the G-20 meeting. How do we work with India on climate change? How do we work with India on international security and assistance issues? How do we work with India on Afghanistan, a priority for us, but also a priority for India? And then there are the issues where the United States and the Indian people are heavily involved with each other and where governments need to help out: education, families, visas, all those sorts of things. So there's a lot of that. And there's "what's our agenda", how do we set our own agenda, where can we really expand? And I think that's just the start with those things. You end up with two areas. One is the global issues where the United States and India deserve to be global partners in a lot of things, and the second is the grassroots issues where both the Indian Government and the United States Government want to make sure that we're doing things that are meaningful to the broad mass of the Indian people, and maybe agriculture, technology, energy issues. There are a lot of areas that we can cooperate on. QUESTION: But the Obama - with elections, if I can continue? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Okay. QUESTION: But the Obama Administration doesn't seem to be on the same level as the Bush Administration was with relations with India. In Pakistan, for example, we've gone in a few months where President Obama on the campaign trail said that he would bump Pakistan to now Congress perhaps debating about getting more aid without any conditions. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Oh, I think you're judging something after a couple months that deserves to be judged after a couple years. Just because we have been respectful of India during its period of elections, we haven't tried to set out on the same kind of agenda. But the fact that the President and Prime Minister Singh have already met, that we've already been very actively working with India on current issues and starting to look toward the future, I think is a good sign. QUESTION: Okay, sir. (Inaudible) to the border region, Pakistan-Afghanistan border region (inaudible). And I've got two questions. How do you see the American Government and the Obama Administration this time the Pakistan army is serious, particularly in the backdrop of the trilateral meetings and the strategy in place to take on militancy and terrorism in the region? And secondly, the tribesmen of Federally Administered Tribal Areas people, they don't trust Islamabad, and somehow the army, too. So how this is reflected in the U.S. strategy towards that region? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Well, I think you can look at it from the top and you can look at it from the bottom. From the top, I think we've seen a real strong commitment. We heard from President Zardari, as we heard from President Karzai, really strong commitments to go after terrorism in all its forms and to stop these people from killing Pakistanis and harming the country. We've also seen this week not only stronger military operations than before, but we've seen a coalescing of political support. And Prime Minister Gillani and some of the other party leaders have come together and said, you know, we're going to fight together. We're going to work with the military. We're going to fight together to clear Swat Valley and other areas of these militants, and we're going to go forward with the necessary assistance to people to take care of the people displaced by the fighting and start the rebuilding process. And the United States has announced another \$5 million for the displaced people, that's added to \$57 million that we had already. We are constantly out there and I think we'll be even more out there trying to help displaced people as the fighting

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

continues. That's the second level, you've got Prime Minister Gillani and the military really seriously taking on the fight and pulling together the political support in Pakistan. But I think also when you look at it at the sort of popular level, the individuals - over the last couple years I've seen dozens and dozens, hundreds of local Maliks and local leaders stand up and say, we want to be free of this menace. People in the Northwest Frontier stand up and say, "We want economic opportunity, we want schools, we want healthcare." And I think it's up to us to help them get it and to free them from this - the terror of the Taliban. I mean, these - Taliban goes into shuras of local Maliks and kills people. You know, anybody who stands up and says, "I want a different life for my family," is subject to coercion, if not death. We owe it to those people to try to help them, and that's why we go after this not only with big military operations, but we have economic assistance, road-building, education, trying to open up the reconstruction zones, give them economic opportunity. I work with the local government on things like police and maintaining order. Finally, as we look at military transformation, it's not just the army; it's the frontier corps, the frontier constabulary and the police. It's the local people who have local knowledge who can provide, in the long run, the best security. And we want to build their capabilities as well. QUESTION: Would you first - how do you grade the operation in Swat? How do you rate its effectiveness? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I don't grade operations. QUESTION: The second thing is how do you think this is (inaudible)? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I - first of all, it's too early for anybody to do that. Second of all, I'm not really the person to try to judge military operations. QUESTION: Yes. And just to follow up to that - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: - there was a marked difference in tone and language of the Administration about the Zardari government before his visit and after the visit. Why was that? What is your - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I've been working - we've been working with this government since last year when they came on board. We've helped them. They have faced some very difficult crises. Remember last year at this time, we were dealing with food shortages and fuel prices. And the food situation has eased quite a bit. The United States was able to help. Energy problems seem to be partially overcome by the drop in prices, but also showing some prospect of getting new energy sources. I think they've already dealt with a lot of issues. We'll continue to support the government, work with the government. It's an ongoing thing. We've heard a very strong commitment from them to fight terrorism, and we've supported that. QUESTION: Would you still characterize it as fragile, the government? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Any government - you know, every government's got to try to extend itself. There are certainly areas of the country where this government finds it hard to operate, and that's where we need to build their capability so that the government is more capable in a lot of areas where it doesn't operate fully now, and so that the government is more capable of delivering effective support and services to the population at large. Sir. QUESTION: Mr. Boucher, you have been engaged deeply with Pakistan on this issue (inaudible) last few years. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: Would you like to tell us what is (inaudible) any potential problem, this relationship? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think - well, I know the United States benefits from having a friend in Pakistan, from having not only a country that has fought more terrorists, stopped more al-Qaida, and, unfortunately, lost more people doing it than any other in the world. I think we also hold the vision that the Pakistani people have of a modern, open country with a prosperous economy. And we see that as a key factor, a long-term factor in stability; Pakistan's modernization and prosperity as a long-term factor in stability for the whole region. I think that's part of our commitment. It's not just to fight the terrorists, but to help work with Pakistan over the long term. And how does Pakistan benefit? I think Pakistan, first of all, benefits from ridding itself of this menace of terrorism. As you know, the first people to get killed have been Pakistanis. We've seen bombings in Pakistan. We've seen attacks in Pakistan. We've seen the fighting in Pakistan. The expansion of Taliban control, well, it affects the women and children, the girls who want to go to school, the people who want to live a normal life. Those are the people we're trying to help, the people that do have a different sense of the future. As Pakistan faces this threat, our job is to support them. And I think it's good to see that Pakistanis are facing the threat. QUESTION: Richard. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes, sir. QUESTION: I know that you are preoccupied with all the countries. I don't know whether you have enough time to observe Bangladesh. I hope you do. Anyway, you said in your opening remarks that the United States helped countries in the region to be on the path of democracy, and as you are aware, that Bangladesh recently had an election and (inaudible) democratic government in place. But in the last few months since this new administration took over, things have really begun to fall apart again. I mean, the - all the thugs and criminals masquerading as politicians, they are back, you know, out of jail. And one of them is the prime minister's own first cousin. You know, he's now a member of parliament, and he was convicted for corruption for (inaudible) sentence. And there is another alleged murderer, you know, who fled the country and now come - came back and had a picture taken with the army chief of staff, you know, (inaudible). So these kind of things have really upset many people and they're worried about the future of democracy in

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

Bangladesh. What do you think - in what way you helped, you know, the democracy to flourish? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: First of all, everybody recognizes that this was a better election in Bangladesh than anyone had seen in a long time. And everybody recognizes that the progress that was made during the caretaker government in rooting out corruption, improving elections, improving the judicial system, improving the civil service - that kind of progress needs to be maintained and continued. I don't think anybody thinks Bangladesh is perfect yet. None of us are perfect. But the kind of progress that we've seen in Bangladesh, I think everybody is committed to continuing working and to helping. We certainly do pay a lot of attention to Bangladesh. You see it in our aid numbers. You see it in the meetings we've had. I've been out to Bangladesh myself several times, including after the election. I met with the leader, Sheikh Hasina, several times, both in Bangladesh and elsewhere. I think the United States really does care about the evolution, the development of Bangladesh. We're big donors. We try to help improve the economy and healthcare systems and education systems. But we also try to see if we can help them improve the democracy and take steps that will improve the quality and stability of democracy in the long term. And that's where our real commitment is. QUESTION: What should people - excuse me, people really want from the United States in some way you can help so that the rule of law is established. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Absolutely true. I mean, that's very important to us. QUESTION: Because that's the only way that democracy can flourish. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: As we look around this region, in any of these countries, the best guarantors of democracy are the judiciary and independent election commissions and independent anti-corruption commissions, the pieces that really help protect democracy from abuses. And in every country, and particularly in Bangladesh, we work very closely with those institutions to try to help them become the long-term guarantors of democracy. QUESTION: Ambassador Boucher, during the course of your trilateral meetings, did you receive any assurances from the Pakistani Government about shifting their focus - the troops focus towards their western border? And are you satisfied with these assurances? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think what we heard from President Zardari, as from President Karzai, during the course of the meetings and the public events - you heard it as well - was a very strong commitment to stop the terrorists, to go after the groups that have been afflicting Pakistan, and to really deal with this problem in a resolute manner. What that means in terms of military moves, we'll have to see. But I think the commitment is there, and I think the action we're seeing on the ground supports that commitment. QUESTION: So is it fair to say you're still concerned that they don't see - they see India as an existential threat as opposed to - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think it's fair to say that we see the enormous threat, the urgency of the threat from the terrorist groups, and that they see it as well. Our commitment is to cooperate with them as they take on this threat. And we see them doing that. QUESTION: I have a couple of questions. One on bilateral. Did Kashmir come up during the trilateral or the bilateral between the U.S. and - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I wasn't in all the meetings, but this was a Pakistan-Afghanistan meeting, not devoted to anything else. QUESTION: Pakistan and U.S. meeting? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Well, Pakistan-Afghanistan-U.S. These meetings, they were devoted to the border issues and the terrorist problems. QUESTION: Okay. About Nepal, the present condition in Nepal, what's the assessment of the U.S., and do you think the monarchy was better off, or this is - how do you see the crisis to be resolved there? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Well, no, we don't think it was better off with a monarchy. We think we're better off having these different points of view worked out through a political process, and that it's important for Nepal to try to get - reform a government and get on with the big tasks. Remember, this is a constituent assembly to write a new constitution. There are big issues out there that we hope the maximum number of parties, maximum number of people, can get together and agree upon. This is not just simply governing from day to day. This is setting a foundation for the future course of the nation. And the more parties that can get together in that kind of structure, that can get together in a government or an assembly and work on those issues, the better it's going to be. We are out there now as we meet with the parties, sort of trying to encourage everybody to form a government and get on with the big work ahead. But it's much better - we're all better off now that this is playing itself out through the political process and not through some violent confrontations either between the monarchists and the rest of the parties or between the Maoists and the others. QUESTION: Excuse me. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We can come back. QUESTION: Yeah. First, thank you for doing this, for talking to us and, obviously, best of luck in whatever the future holds for you. A few things: for the Russians, I guess, the biggest problem that concerns them in Eurasia is the flow of drug from - the flow of drugs from Afghanistan. So can we expect that this problem will finally start being tackled seriously with a new military leadership that the Americans are about to install in Afghanistan? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The problem of narcotics in Afghanistan is a problem for all of us. The drugs flow north, the drugs flow south, the drugs flow south and then across into Iran and Turkey. So it's a problem for the whole region. It's a problem for Afghanistan. There has been progress. Last year we saw a 19 percent drop

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

in the number of hectares. This year will probably see another 20 or 30 percent drop in the number of hectares. We've seen in Afghanistan that more and more has - where there are areas under government control, there's less and less poppy, and so it's more and more concentrated. Where you have insurgency, you have poppy. The Taliban and the drug smugglers feed off each other. That's dangerous and still results in a horribly high crop. We work with all the countries of the region. We work with the Central Asians on drug control, border control. We work with the Russians in the region. We support the UN Information Center in Almaty. This takes an effort in Afghanistan and it takes a cooperative effort with the countries of the region. That, I am sure, is going to continue with all the new people in all the different spots in the - QUESTION: No, but specifically for the American military - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The American military have already adopted new rules of engagement related to poppy. Because there's this nexus, there's this intersection between poppy and Taliban, the military has to deal with both. But I think we also understand the fundamental way to get at this problem is to establish good governance and good government control around Afghanistan, that we've done that and it's worked, and we're going to continue to do that. Okay? QUESTION: Secondly, if I may - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Okay. QUESTION: The Central Asian part of Eurasia, would you say that you are leaving to your successor better relations with the 'Stans? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think we are. As I go around the region, as I think about what we've been able to do in the region, the United States has very positive relations with the countries of the region. We have worked very well with Kazakhstan all along, but we've expanded into more economic areas. We've seen a certain amount of political reform. We go into the OSCE year for Kazakhstan. We have a good and expanding relationship now with Turkmenistan. We're making progress with Uzbekistan, and I think looking for a lot of sort of ways we can move forward in a balanced way. I was just in Tajikistan not long ago. We think we've been helpful there, and we'll try to continue to support both humanitarian needs but also the process of reform. And of course, Kyrgyzstan is one of our partners in many, many ways, from education to other things. I think we have good relationships there. I think we can offer these countries a sense of opportunity and help the people of these countries find new outlets for their education, for their ideas, for their trade. And that's something that the United States brings to the region. I think it helps - QUESTION: Will you be leaving Manas? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We still have contacts and discussions, so I can't say at this point. QUESTION: It's an ongoing situation. And one last thing. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: I wanted to come back to the first question here. The question was really not about your holding other countries to the same standards, but holding yourselves to the same standards, about - let me ask you this way: What is the acceptable level of collateral damage? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Zero. QUESTION: And how does - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: And that applies to us as well. And that's why when something happens, like some of the incidents in Afghanistan, we understand that people are very upset. We understand the hardship that this creates for people, and we try to deal with it in as good a manner as we can. QUESTION: Yeah, but still at the same time, you keep saying - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I - QUESTION: - but we still retain the right to launch the rockets, to do the strikes, to do whatever we need to. How - its principle is one thing, but practice is different. Is that the situation? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: No, I don't think that's the situation. I think that the situation is that as we conduct military operations, we're conducting them against an enemy that intentionally puts civilians in harm's way. We're conducting them against an enemy that goes into villages and shoots people just to establish their control. We're not going to be like that. But we're going to have to fight that enemy. We're going to have to stop them from doing that. As we conduct operations, unfortunately, sometimes civilians get caught in the middle. Sometimes we make mistakes. We make every possible effort in every possible instance to avoid civilian casualties. And when they do occur, as sometimes they do, we now have new ways of working with the Afghans to try to take care of the victims and their families. We try to get the facts and we try to learn the lessons of every incident so that we can do better in the future. QUESTION: But in the process of - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes, it's - QUESTION: Ambassador Boucher, about economic assistance to Pakistan. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: The Administration has been urging Congress not to enforce strict conditions to the state. A provision in the House bill actually asked the Pakistani Government to ensure - government, military and ISI to ensure that groups that conduct terror strikes against India are not supported. Now the Senate bill does not include the same provision. Is the Administration looking at this as a strict condition? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The House and the Senate versions of this bill, I don't know how they'll be worked out. We've testified to some extent on the Hill about it. We accept that we and the Congress, and actually the Pakistani Government, have very similar goals, and we want to be able to report to them on progress towards meeting those goals. But we don't want restrictions to make it impossible to achieve the goals that we all share. QUESTION: But isn't that part of the - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: But on the fundamental - the substantive question that you ask,

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

is it important for Pakistan to stop the groups that carry out terrorism in India? Absolutely. And there's never been any question in our mind that the threat to Pakistan from terrorism comes not just from groups that are fighting in Afghanistan or groups that are up in the tribal areas, but from the groups that attack India, that that presents a danger to Pakistan as well, and that they have been more and more carrying out attacks that endanger Pakistan domestically and in terms of its relationship. There's no differentiation. All the terrorists are bad and they all need to be stopped and eliminated. QUESTION: What about the provisions? Is there a strict provision? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The provision - well, I don't know. We'll have to see how the legislation works out. It's dangerous to try to comment on provisions that haven't been enacted at this point. Okay. QUESTION: On Pakistan? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: So what makes the Obama Administration so confident that its new Pak policy will work, given Pakistan's record? Is it confidence? Or is it just, you know, let's try it, what do we have to lose and new government here, new government there? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I think we're more confident in a couple ways. The first is that we have a government, indeed, a political structure in Pakistan that is trying to stop the terrorists, trying to eliminate terrorism, and trying to move the country forward. And we - as I said, we've heard that from President Zardari. We've seen it in Prime Minister Gillani's statements, but also in the support that other parties, including PML-N, have given to the effort. We've seen that in the effort that's actually being undertaken on the ground right now, not only a political one, but the military one. We have a serious effort going on and we agree with it. We're there to support it. We're there to support it and not only militarily, but also in economic and other ways that allow it to achieve its objectives. It's a tough fight. This problem was decades in the making. It's going to take a long time to get rid of it. But I think the fact is there are people that are very concerned and very dedicated to fighting it inside Pakistan, and we're going to support them. QUESTION: So - may I continue? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: President Zardari seemed to - when he was here, he said, Pakistan needs (inaudible), it needs more aid. Does this mean - was there a request made that the U.S. should ask India to pull back troops in its border with Pakistan in return for their support? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: How do you go from one to the other? QUESTION: (Inaudible.) AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The questions - the issues discussed were Pakistan and Afghanistan issues during a set of meetings. This was not a meeting about India. QUESTION: So this was not discussed at all? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: This was not a meeting about India. QUESTION: Ambassador, what was your most memorable personality or event to deal with during - I mean, I just want to - like, on a different track, would you want to - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: - share with us your (inaudible). QUESTION: Go down memory lane. (Laughter.) AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Look, we've done a lot of things, a lot of - QUESTION: The most challenging or - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We've done a lot of things with a lot of countries - QUESTION: - the worst challenge. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: - and people over these years. But I think in some ways, the most memorable person was Benazir Bhutto. And the worst challenge was when she was assassinated. I think that was a challenge for all of us in the region, not just in Pakistan, which suffered from this horrible, horrible crime. But it affected the destiny of the region, could have affected the destiny of the region in very terrible ways. And I think in the end, people pulled together, they worked together, Pakistan moved back to democracy. We got governments and military cooperating against terrorism in a new way, in a stronger way than ever before. And as horrible as the event was, people didn't let it destroy the future, and that was - that was good. QUESTION: Can I ask you - QUESTION: Ambassador? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: At the time that the Afghanistan-Pakistan policy review was completed, the Administration had talked about reaching out to more moderate elements in the Taliban. Is that something that you still believe is a viable option? Are there more moderate elements in the Taliban? Is this an active policy that will be pursued? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We didn't quite put it that way. We said we want to support an Afghan-led process of reconciliation, and - important for a number of reasons. One, it's Afghan-led. And two, it is reconciliation, which means people come back and join up with the government, accept a new order, accept the government structure. I think we've always seen this operating on a couple levels. You've got to let, you know, young men who might have gone to fight for - because of the paycheck who will want to come back and live in the village and farm. We've got to give them an opportunity to come back. Groups and tribes that were mad at the government for one reason or the other, they need a chance to come back. And even some groups and fighters who may want to come back. You find that, I think, everywhere, and we want those people to be reconciled. But there's going to be - I mean, let's face it, there's going to be a hard core of ideologues who are trying to take power and turn the country back to the stone age, and we're going to probably have to fight those people and that's why we're out there with troops to do that. QUESTION: And do you feel the Saudis could play a role (inaudible)? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The Saudis can maybe play a helpful role. They have offered. We haven't seen any serious intentions from the other side. But we'll see. I think what's

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

more important is that sort of lower level work has to go on. People have to be - the government has to extend itself and has to bring people in to support it. QUESTION: This is more of a general question, not only for South Asia but for the rest of the world - the rise of extremism everywhere is partly responsible for the failure of the mainstream traditional parties to deliver for their own people. And this paves the way for the indoctrination of all these kids who have no opportunities, you know, who suffer deprivation and that kind of thing. And you have been saying - I mean, not you, but the United States has been saying we have to take care of that, we have to focus on that. And to what extent do you think - and you are the people who actually formulate the policies, the politicians come and go. And you are there, you are there more or less permanently. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We're here to serve. We are public servants. QUESTION: Right, right. But - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We're not - QUESTION: No, I'm really being serious about this. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes, I know you're being serious about this. QUESTION: Right. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: And I - and basically, I agree with you. QUESTION: And now, again, when - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: - things have begun to fall apart in Pakistan, you said, oh, we have to give \$500 million more to the Pakistan military, you know. And also you are saying that we have to also take care of their economic problems. But those things don't really come up, you know, and people really get angry. The United States get more alienated from the - why this is - I mean, you are an intelligent man. I mean, everybody - I mean, you don't have to be a Harvard Ph.D. to understand this thing. And my country is also headed - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: - inexorably towards this kind of crisis, because of the same problem. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Okay. I agreed with you more at the beginning than I do now. (Laughter.) Look, you point out a very fundamental fact, that most people experience government in their day-to-day lives. They experience it in policemen, they experience it in local elections and local administration, they experience it in schools, in the healthcare system, and in economic basics, like, is there a road, is there electricity, is there some chance I can get a job? Okay? Government has to deliver, democracy has to deliver at that level to people to get real stability and for people to firmly reject extremism. The extremists offer some backward vision, but where government doesn't deliver, and there's extremist appeal and there's coercion, people may go to the wrong side. How do you make sure government can deliver? Well, a lot of our programs are exactly focused at that level. We're putting more and more money in Afghanistan into provincial and local governance. We're building roads, putting in small projects for electricity around the country. In Bangladesh, we're supporting the healthcare system. We're supporting local governance systems and grassroots democracy in a lot of places. In Central Asia - I was just out in Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - we're supporting water cooperatives, we're supporting local associations. I think a lot of what we do has to be committed to helping democracies deliver, and that's where people really find stability and they find their opportunities. MODERATOR: And this will be the last question. QUESTION: What is trade and transit agreement between Afghanistan and Pakistan, which (inaudible) signing that agreement (inaudible)? What - how do you think that will be useful in linking South Asia and Central Asia (inaudible)? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The first I ever heard about this potential link was really from political leaders in Pakistan, political leaders in Afghanistan, and political leaders in Central Asia. They've always seen the potential. And we've tried to work over the last few years on roads, this little - this bridge that we opened between Afghanistan, Tajikistan. It connects to, you know, the Ring Road, it connects to Pakistan, and it connects to a Japanese road and a Chinese road and an Asian Development Bank road. There's a road taking shape from Almaty to Karachi. There are electricity lines being linked up between Central Asia and Afghanistan and eventually Pakistan-South Asia. This is a real opportunity for people. Even as we've been fighting in this region, we've also been trying to create new economic opportunities like that for people. And transit trade is another thing. The problem now with getting fruit and goods and ideas from the Gulf to Central Asia is not so much the roads, it's the ability of trucks to cross borders, it's the ability of cargos to move day and night. It's the problems of corruption at customs posts. And we've tried with various instruments that we have to work with countries on those things. And if Pakistan and Afghanistan can produce a new - a modernized transit trade agreement, then they can open up more opportunities for themselves and for each other and for all the countries from India to Kazakhstan. And that's what we hope will happen. We're very pleased that they agreed to do that at their meetings in Washington. I think today at the regional economic conference in Islamabad, they were going to actually start their negotiations or have another session of discussions on that. I haven't gotten the report yet, but it's something that's very important, I think, not only for the two countries that benefit, but for everybody else in the region. QUESTION: Pakistan has been (inaudible) into the idea of using Pakistan for transit of goods from India into Afghanistan and vice versa. Do you think that will be coming up as part of the (inaudible)? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Well, I haven't studied this particular text very much, but I think they need to think about, in the long term, what are the benefits to Pakistan of being able to have the transit of goods from India to

PRESS ROUNDTABLE WITH SOUTH ASIAN MEDIA

Central Asia, of being the hub, of being the middleman, the seller, the whatever, that there are real economic benefits for Pakistan of taking on that role. And you don't want to push that trade somewhere else. You don't want to push that trade to other routes. You want to try to dominate that trade. QUESTION: (Inaudible.) After the Obama Administration came in, they had a few issues which has been bothering India, and then people (inaudible). One is the H-1B visas. A lot of people are going back from here. And the other one is also the same issues. The new tax laws that this Administration has proposed will force U.S. companies that are based in India, give a lot of employment to call centers, other things, they have to come back. Do you think - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: I don't think it's quite that drastic, and some of this will be worked out as we go through the legislative process. Again, you've got people reacting not just to the new Administration's policies and proposals, but they're reacting really as perhaps even more to the fundamental economic situation where, you know, India is still growing at, what, 5 to 6 percent. The United States is contracting for the moment. There are people going back to India, they get better jobs. It's understandable. It'll flow back and forth. The modern age, get on an airplane and, you know, you can get a job on the other side of the world. I don't think I would say that a lot of this movement right now is because of the legislation or the policy. I think more it's based on economic factors. QUESTION: One final thought on the - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Okay. QUESTION: - (inaudible) change in Afghanistan. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes. QUESTION: How is it going to affect the overall situation? Can it - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: The President and the White House, the Secretary of Defense, and others have spoken to this. I don't think there's any doubt that the commitment to policy is there by all the people who are going to be charged with carrying it out. And that applies to new people coming into the State Department as well as it applies to new people coming into the military commands. QUESTION: And as you wrap up, how hopeful are you about the whole region? AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: You know, I see one problem after another, and I realize that each of these problems is very, very difficult to deal with. But I, by character and knowledge, I guess - I mean, what I know of the region, I'm still optimistic, fundamentally optimistic, because I think the people in the region are committed, and they're committed to making things better every day. And if we can make things better every day, then I'm hopeful in the long run we can really see the kind of region emerge that we're looking for, which is a, you know, modern, stable, prosperous, open, trading set of societies that can work with each other and work with us. QUESTION: But as the saying goes - AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: We'll get there someday. QUESTION: - in the long run, we are all dead. AMBASSADOR BOUCHER: Yes, but the saying also goes that a journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. So let's make sure we take one every day. Okay, thank you. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

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Body

Secretary-General: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. It is a great pleasure to see you. I am sorry that I couldn't have a press conference with you last month, because of my very hectic schedule. I am pleased to have this monthly regular press conference today.

Yesterday, as you know, I briefed the General Assembly on the latest developments regarding the H1N1 epidemic.

As you know, this outbreak is yet another reminder that we live an interconnected world. A threat to one country is a threat to all, requiring a collective, global response.

I understand that the World Health Organization does not plan at this time to raise its alert level.

That said, there is still much that is not known about this new strain and the dangers it poses. We must therefore be prepared.

Whatever trajectory the current outbreak may take -- and so far we have been fortunate that its consequences have been relatively mild -- we have learned valuable lessons.

Our watchword in potential health crises, now and in the future, must be solidarity -- a global solidarity.

In this spirit, I will, therefore, be asking Governments in the coming weeks to:

First, reach agreement on sharing of samples of viral and other materials, as well as data on outbreaks, in line with the International Health Regulations;

Second, agree to establish coordinated long-term financing mechanisms for supporting poorer countries so that they are able to build their defences against global health threats;

Third, ensure that WHO has all the resources it needs, when it needs them; and

Fourth, reverse restrictions on trade and travel unless there is clear scientific evidence that it is necessary.

I will begin these discussions in earnest when I travel to Geneva later this month for the World Health Assembly.

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED
NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

I will also meet with donors, technical partners and the private sector, including pharmaceutical companies, to explore how all can contribute.

As I say, we still do not know how this particular health challenge will proceed and we must be prepared. As previous pandemics in the twentieth century showed, the situation can unfold in stages -- what begins as mild in the first stage might be less so in the next.

As we look forward, we must remain vigilant and alert to the warning signs. This will help ensure the proper response that benefits all the people of our world. And I am very pleased to sit together with Dr. David Nabarro who is working as a senior UN Coordinator for Influenza, and who will be very happy to answer any questions you may have after presenting my remarks.

Let me turn, here, to the Middle East.

This morning I transmitted to the President of the Security Council a summary of the report of the Board of Inquiry regarding incidents affecting United Nations personnel, premises and operations during the recent conflict in the Gaza Strip and southern Israel.

Let me emphasize from the outset the independent nature of this Board and its work.

I want to thank the chairman, Ian Martin, and its Members for concluding this inquiry. I recognize the difficulty of conducting investigations such as this one.

I wish to place on record my appreciation for the cooperation provided by the Government of Israel in the course of the Board's work. The Board also appreciated its reception by the Palestinian Authority and meetings with local authorities in Gaza.

I would emphasize that a Board of Inquiry is not a judicial body or court of law. It does not make legal findings and does not consider questions of legal liability.

My purpose in establishing this Board was to develop a clear record of the facts surrounding these serious incidents and their causes and to determine where responsibility might lie, bearing in mind the complexities of the overall situation.

As with all United Nations Boards of Inquiry, this report is an internal document.

It contains information shared with the Board in strict confidence. It also contains information whose disclosure could prejudice the security or proper conduct of the UN's operations.

For this reason, the Secretariat is releasing a summary of the Report for the purposes of sharing its findings with the Security Council and other bodies.

This summary is a faithful and objective reflection of the Board's full report. I fully respect complete independence of the Board's activities and assessments.

As to those matters that did not fall within the Board's terms of reference, it is not my intention to establish any further inquiry. I intend to address any other incidents relating to UN personnel on a case-by-case basis, and through dialogue with the Government of Israel.

The Government of Israel has informed me that it has reservations and objections to elements of the summary. At the same time, I am pleased that the Israeli Government has agreed to meet United Nations officials to address some of the Board's recommendations, in so far as it relates to Israel. It has further confirmed to me that it is eager to improve existing coordination mechanisms.

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED
NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

The plight of Palestinian civilians in Gaza is reflected in the report of the Board of Inquiry. We should keep in mind that Israeli civilians in southern Israel faced and continue to face indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other militant groups.

In a larger sense, the report reminds us that there has still been no progress on the critical elements that would secure long-term peace for the people of the region.

As I have said before, we need a durable ceasefire, which includes an end to arms smuggling, the opening of the crossings, recovery and reconstruction in Gaza, and steps toward Palestinian reconciliation.

More importantly, we need to give new momentum to the search for a resolution of the conflict in the Middle East. For this, direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations must resume, and the international community must engage.

I understand that US President [Barrack] Obama will meet Israeli President [Shimon] Peres today and Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President [Mahmoud] Abbas in the near future.

I also commend Russia for convening a special meeting on the Middle East in the Security Council on 11 May. I hope this will be an opportunity for the international community to reinvigorate the process.

Ladies and gentlemen, let me turn to other areas.

With respect to the crisis in Sri Lanka, I have been monitoring the situation daily. This morning, I spoke once again to President [Mahinda] Rajapaksa of Sri Lanka.

I called for a humanitarian pause in the fighting. This would allow more desperately needed aid, above all food and medicines, to get in. It will allow the UN to have access to the conflict zone to assess the situation properly. It will save lives.

I have urged the authorities to avoid the use of artillery and heavy weaponry in zones where civilians are especially at risk. I have also appealed to the LTTE [Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam] to let civilians go and stop forced recruitment. Above all, there is an urgent need for the two sides to bring the conflict to a peaceful and orderly end.

It is very important that the Government lay out the conditions under which this conflict can end without further bloodshed.

I repeat: Protecting civilians and respecting international humanitarian law must be priority one. The world is watching events closely, including for violations of international law.

On Nepal, let me add that I am seriously concerned about the political situation. I call for dialogue and consensus to preserve and enhance the gains made from the peace process.

Last but not least, the economic crisis is still with us. Following up on the G-20 Summit in London, we will support a Global Jobs Pact to generate decent work -- a mainstay of any global stimulus. We will also launch a UN Global Vulnerability Alert, an early warning system on the social fallout of the economic crisis.

Taken together, these issues provide a sobering reminder of the scale and velocity of change in our times.

We are living in an age when a credit crunch in one country can trigger the biggest global economic crisis in decades; when melting ice can threaten a tropical island; when an upheaval in one area can spread through a region and spill into the seas; when a cough in one corner can infect the world.

All of this cries out for global cooperation. We must harness power, purpose and principle to build a new multilateralism.

Thank you very much for your attention, and with that, I will be happy to take your questions.

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

Question: Secretary-General, thank you so much for this press conference. But we'd like to remind you, you still owe us one from last month. And on behalf of the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA) and our president, Giampaolo Pioli, I'd like to welcome you, sir.

My question is concerning the report that we received in the last half hour, or the summary of the report, concerning Gaza. The report states that [in] eight cases of the nine cases investigated, Israel did not implement sufficient effort and precaution to fulfil its responsibilities to protect property and personnel. In six cases, death and injury and damage was caused by the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), and in one case [damage to] the vehicle, the property, was also caused by IDF forces. However, many might describe your reaction to the report, or the summary of it, in the Middle East as "timid". There's no future inquiry. There's only case-by-case basis dialogue with Israel. There's no talk about compensation. Don't forget there's damage that the report itself estimates at \$10.4 [million] to United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and three quarters of a million [dollars] to the United Nations Office of the Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process [UNSCO]. There's no talk of compensation.

And I would like to remind you here, the report states that Israel, in many cases, the attacks happened after apologizing for the last attacks and promising, to take all precautions not to repeat it. So what gives you confidence that this dialogue, this time, will succeed? And what about the compensation for the damage and the lives of the people? I understand this is not a legal document and no legal action is anticipated by the United Nations. But the people in the Middle East expect more from the United Nations. Thank you, sir.

Secretary-General: You have covered a wide area of all the reports, without leaving any opportunities for other people, maybe, to raise questions.

As I said, I took the initiative of establishing a UN Headquarters Board of Inquiry to investigate the nine most serious incidents involving UN personnel and property. These have already been thoroughly investigated by the Board of Inquiry. It is my considered view that I can adequately address the remaining incidents involving the United Nations on a case-by-case basis, at the operational level. It is my full intention to do so.

On the other question about compensation: I intend to seek reparation or reimbursement of loss and damage incurred by the United Nations. As you know, I have been carefully reviewing these recommendations with a view to determining what course of action the United Nations and I, as the Secretary-General, should take in future, if any. As I said in my letter to the President of the Security Council and this morning to you, I do not consider it necessary for me to initiate any further formal inquiry in this regard, which are outside the terms of reference of this Board. But again, the Israeli Government, in our consultations, stated that they would engage with the United Nations Secretariat to address the Board's recommendations in so far as they relate to Israel. This has been quite a thorough investigation, and I hope you will understand all these situations. This Board's report is quite extensive and provides the factual circumstances surrounding all these incidents that have taken place.

Question: If I may follow up, the report states very clearly that many of the attacks also happened after assurances and dialogue and verbal and written communication by the United Nations. What gives you the confidence now that these things will not repeat in the future? Because you had assurances in the past?

Secretary-General: In fact, in the course of all these happenings, I was in the region. I immediately took action to talk to concerned ministers of the Israeli Government, including the Prime Minister and Defense Minister and Foreign Minister. They all assured me that this will not happen again and they would look into the cases. Unfortunately, after that, other incidents also took place. That, we have protested. And this has been looked into by the members of the Board of Inquiry. One of the recommendations states that there needs to be a much more effective and closer coordination mechanism to avoid all these kinds of happenings in the future.

Question: On the same topic, Secretary-General, there are media reports out there that you've personally worked over the last several days to somewhat water down the details contained in this Board of Inquiry report. Can you, will you, confirm or deny those reports? And if so -- if you worked in some way to prepare details of this report -- can you address why?

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

Secretary-General: This is an independent Board of Inquiry, even though I have appointed, established this Board of Inquiry. The nature and work of the Board of Inquiry is completely independent. And, therefore, I respect the independence and activities and findings of this Board of Inquiry. Therefore, I have no authority to edit or change or alter any recommendations and conclusions of this Board of Inquiry's judgement. However, because it contains some very sensitive information, then I decided to summarize, respecting the full integrity of this report and conclusions.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, although we do have maybe a lack of medical knowledge still on what's going on with this influenza -- swine flu or whatever it is to be politically correct, and go with the other name -- we do have some statistical data. And we also have some media knowledge. After all, we have the experience of our Joe Lauria, who made that quarantine story. There is also an extreme situation that's going on, that was developed in China, that all Mexicans were put in quarantine. And also, for example, in Croatia, a leading newspaper went and gave 100,000 masks as a gift to the possible Croatians who were going to get that influenza. So what would be your clear message? Should we stay on high alert? Or should we calm down, because the media went hyper? What is the clear message from you that you would offer?

Secretary-General: I will answer in general terms and I will ask Dr. David Nabarro to answer in more detail.

First of all, I'd like to voice appreciation to the role of media and journalism in, first of all, letting this information... disseminating it all throughout the world so that everybody, every country can be prepared for this virus. Whatever actions and measures individuals or a sovereign nation should take should be based on scientific evidence, as well as be in accordance with international humanitarian regulations. There may be some difference of levels of measures that each individual Government may take, according to where this happens and according to where people travel. But that is their own decision. What I'd like to emphasize is that the World Health Organization and international public health experts, in accordance with all these regulations, have provided guidelines. These guidelines should be respected.

Dr. Nabarro: I think you've said it very precisely. We want to be very clear that the World Health Organization is not recommending travel restrictions related to the outbreak of this novel influenza. The science and evidence available suggests that any effort to limit travel or to impose travel restrictions would have very little effect on stopping the virus from spreading. And it would also be extremely disruptive to the functioning of the world community. Of course, we have advice for individuals who are ill -- we ask them not to travel. And also we have advice for people who fall ill, if they travel, about the care that they should seek. We do notice that some countries have adopted measures that are significantly interfering with international traffic, such as detaining travellers and delaying them for a period of time. The situation is that countries do have a duty to explain to the World Health Organization the public health rationale for these measures because, under the International Health Regulations 2005, that is their obligation. I hope that answers your question on this specific issue.

Question: Secretary-General, what is your message to the world with that, your clear message to the world after all that you just heard here? And what is your message after these two extreme situations in China and the boosting of the circulation of the leading newspaper in Croatia by giving 100,000 masks for the people? So what's your message to the people?

Secretary-General: I have clearly stated my position yesterday in the General Assembly. And again, I stated it clearly, to be followed by Dr. Nabarro.

Question: You know my case. Simply, I came down with the flu. I travelled from an airport where there are 30 flights a day from Mexico. I simply wanted to get tested -- I was unable to. And my question to you is, what are the World Health Organization's guidelines about testing? The health authorities explained to me it's not necessary to test a lot, or even at all. They wanted to see where there was a small outbreak and control that. But I'd think that my experience and my story shows the problem may not be with the policy, but with explaining to the public, to people who are not expected -- because they are laymen -- to know these things. Do you think they're doing a good job -- the authorities -- to explain it? What is the policy on testing? And what about the public relations aspect of it?

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

Dr. Nabarro: Thank you very much indeed. In fact, I am familiar with your case, sir, that you fell ill and you believed that you might have Influenza A, and you tried to get yourself tested and it was difficult. And I think it's fair to say that it's not been easy to make sure that there is adequate capacity everywhere in the world for the tests to be done for this new virus. You would appreciate that you have to develop new testing capacity for a new virus. It's now clear that from a public health perspective it's not necessary for everybody to be tested, and so that is the situation right now. This is sufficiently mild a disease at present, that it is not absolutely essential for everybody who gets it to have the test. All we do ask is for people who are sick to keep themselves away from others if they can, and also that a high quality of personal hygiene is practiced. And I'm really glad to see that you're so well.

Question: But are the public officials doing a good enough job explaining what you've just said? To get out there in front?

Dr. Nabarro: We believe that the authorities here in this country are doing a fantastic job of public communication, and we also have a lot of confidence, of course, in what the World Health Organization is doing.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. On the release of the four Generals in Lebanon for insufficiency of evidence, since then the UN and the Lebanese judiciary is under attack and, yourself, you have been under attack by [Sheikh Hassan] Nasrallah. How much do you take seriously all the attacks, and are you ready to engage into full revision of the investigation?

Secretary-General: The release of the generals was a decision taken by the Special Tribunal for Lebanon, which is an independent body and whose work, I believe, is a positive contribution to the people of Lebanon. I would not comment on the decision of the Tribunal, which it takes independently. I would like to point out, however, that the generals, they were detained by the Lebanese authorities according to Lebanese law. The Tribunal has now taken their decision after it was officially established as of 1 March. Therefore, I respect the decision that has been taken.

Question: Just a follow-up, Mr. Secretary-General. Do you believe that the judiciary system in Lebanon was endangered by this decision taken by the international tribunal? And can you say, please, a word about the Israelis withdrawal from Ghajar?

Secretary-General: The Special Tribunal was established in accordance with a Security Council resolution for a specific purpose, for a specific case. Therefore, in terms of legal precedence, the decision should be respected. This is the purpose and principles of international law, as I understand them. Therefore, it has nothing to do with infringing upon the legal judicial system of Lebanon when the Special Tribunal for Lebanon has requested and decided to release the detained generals. So I hope there should be no misunderstandings in that regard.

About Ghajar, we have been working very intensively and closely on this issue. As you know, whenever I have been meeting with the Lebanese and Israeli authorities, this issue has always been discussed at my level and at other senior levels. The UNIFIL [UN Interim Force in Lebanon] has made a proposal and this has been accepted, agreed to by the Lebanese Government. Now, still we are awaiting the response from the Israeli Government. We have seen some reports of the new Israeli Administration on this issue, but we have not yet been able to do that. One of my senior advisors [Alain Le Roy] is going to visit Israel at this time to discuss this matter. I sincerely hope that this issue, Ghajar, will be resolved as soon as possible. But there is some encouraging atmosphere which has been created on this issue. I am going to work very hard on this matter with the new Administration of Israel.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, the US today submitted its proposal on climate change for a global warming treaty which you hope to get enacted in Copenhagen later this year. What is your feeling about the significance of this submission by the US, in terms of the likelihood of getting an agreement? Are you disappointed at all that there was no specific numerical goal contained in that [proposal] for the US to cut emissions by a certain date?

Secretary-General: In general, I am very encouraged by the very proactive and constructive and forthcoming position and attitude of the US Administration in addressing this climate change issue which is a global threat for which we must really "seal the deal" in Copenhagen in December. President Obama has made it quite clear, this is one of the priorities and they have taken the initiative by convening a Major Economies Forum last week, which was

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

again quite different from the past major economies meetings. We are encouraged. All these domestic measures which the US Government and Congress will take will be very important. Now what is important at this time for developed countries is to set a target for the midterm by 2020. I know that this is not sufficient still; there is some more to do by the United States Government, but this is a good step and I would encourage further that the United States take more concrete and more bold initiatives. The European Union has also taken leadership and, at the same time, major developing countries should also be ready to take some mitigation actions among themselves which may not necessarily be within the international framework, but nationally appropriate measures should be taken by them.

Question: My question is about the Gaza report. You said in your opening remarks that the Board of Inquiry is not a judicial body or a court of law and that it does not make any legal findings. But the second recommendation of the Board is that the UN should take appropriate action to seek accountability. You also mentioned that you are going to seek reparations, that is a separate recommendation. My question is what actions will be taken to seek accountability?

Secretary-General: As I said in my opening statement and my follow-up questions, at this time I do not see that it is necessary for me to establish any further inquiry on this issue. And whatever the cases there may be, where appropriate, I will take some action on a case-by-case basis on this.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, is the Secretariat or any of the UN bodies seeking to stop the use of children in armed conflict and tend to examine the extent of Hamas' alleged use of children as human shields in Gaza? I believe there was a petition that was going to be submitted to your Office asking for such an inquiry. Have you gotten such a petition and, if so, have you taken any action on it?

Secretary-General: As a matter of firm principle, it is a totally unacceptable situation to use children against any international humanitarian law. That must be eliminated wherever, whenever it may happen by any country, any group or any individuals. As you may remember, last week, I have appointed a Special Representative on violence against children and I have made quite a strong commitment to eliminate such intolerable and unacceptable human rights violations of children and women and all other persons particularly when it comes to children like child soldiers and children being used for forced labour and all other purposes; those practices must be eradicated. The United Nations has a firm commitment and we continue to do that.

Question: Just as a follow-up. Did you receive any petition, which I believe was supposed to be submitted by some human rights organizations, asking for a specific UN inquiry into Hamas' alleged use of children as human shields in Gaza?

Secretary-General: I am sure that my Special Adviser on children and armed conflict will look at this case, whatever complaints have been received.

Question: There has been a lot of focus about President Obama's first 100 days and I am curious to know your take on how relations between the United States and the UN had gone over the course of first 100-plus days. And perhaps you could be specific in some of the details.

Secretary-General: First of all that I am very happy to work with President Obama and his new team. They have shown great commitment and support for the United Nations. President Obama has shown strong commitment for multilateralism. This is very encouraging. I have had many opportunities of engaging with President Obama, including my own formal meeting at the White House in early March. I have been able to discuss many important issues with President Obama. And I am very much grateful for his strong commitment and support for the United Nations on all global issues. I sincerely hope that the United States will continue to exercise such leadership and participation in working together with the United Nations in addressing many global issues and many regional conflict issues.

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED
NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

Question: Because of the new relationship that you have with the Obama Administration, was there any pressure put on your office for you to water down the report that you were talking about on Gaza and to only issue a summary to the Security Council, robbing the Palestinian people of their day in the media, once again?

Secretary-General: First of all, I would like to categorically reject any impression, any word, called "watered down". I told you that this Board of Inquiry is independent. I respect the complete independence of this report. You may ask all our senior advisers who have been working on this. I do not have any authority to edit or change any wording on this conclusion and recommendations. You should have no doubt about that.

Question: Thank you, Mr. Secretary-General. You said in your statement that your busy schedule is hectic and you were not able to give a press conference last month, which is understandable. In fact, you have been very dynamic in the past five months, travelling to every continent, meeting Heads of States, attending meetings and, in general, advancing the cause of peace and development around the world and yet some of your critics, both inside of the UN and outside, say that you have been travelling too much and staying away from Headquarters for too long, letting decisions pile on your desk. What is your answer to these critics?

Secretary-General: I admit that recently I have travelled extensively away from Headquarters but in this era of communications, you should understand that wherever I may be staying there is absolutely no problem, no difficulty in communicating and consulting with our senior advisers or the Government leaders of any Member State. I have been receiving telephone calls any place in the world with any Government leaders or ministers, prime ministers and presidents. So, as far as performing my duties as Secretary-General, I do not see that there was any such gap. My physical absence from Headquarters had made it very difficult to meet you in person like this, as we are engaging and meeting my colleagues at the United Nations. I regret that I have been away, but you should also understand that I have been receiving many invitations and there are many such multilateral settings where my presence is essentially required. In many cases, I was the convener of multilateral meetings like the donor conference on Haiti, donor conference on Somalia, and I was invited by many multilateral summit places like Summit of the Americas, African Union meetings, League of Arab [States] summit meetings. All those are very important responsibilities of a Secretary-General. I hope you will understand this.

Question: How many countries did you visit since you took office, and how many miles did you fly, and how many days did you stay in the office, on average? I know you keep that data very updated, and you ask your staff to do so. And would it be wrong to say that you spent more time on the red carpets than in the office? And, if so, how can the UN Secretary-General strike the right balance between being the top world diplomat, and, on the other hand, exert your function as UN Secretariat top manager, and also being the guardian of the UN Charter?

Secretary-General: First of all, I haven't counted how many countries I have travelled to so far. But, as you know, sometimes I had to visit the same countries many times. Therefore, I have to count again how many countries, in terms of number of countries -- I'll let you know later. In terms of distance I have travelled, I have not calculated this year. But as of last year, I think I had travelled almost 450,000 km last year. This is about 13 times around the globe -- so that means I have been travelling more than one [time] around the globe every month. That has been quite hectic. Now, you have asked quite a pertinent question, how to strike a balance between being a top diplomat and being a Chief Administrative Officer -- that I try to balance and I spend quite a significant amount of time and energy on managing this Secretariat. As you may ask any senior officers; quite a significant amount of time I spend on managing, to make this Organization more reformed, to meet the expectations of the international community.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, I appreciate the number of calls you've made to the President of Sri Lanka. Some questions have arisen about the UN's objectivity and protection of civilians there. What people are saying is that, for example, the number of civilian casualties were compiled by the UN, but not released. Recently, there have been satellite photos that were taken by UNOSAT, but, unlike in Gaza and Sudan, weren't released. When UN staff were detained in IDP camps, nothing was said until the question arose here. NGOs were driven out of the northern part of the country and nothing was said. I guess what people have wondered is why in this conflict you didn't call for a ceasefire, only for a humanitarian pause. Mr. [Vijay] Nambiar went, and you said there was a commitment to a humanitarian assessment team. I don't mean to make a litany here, but why is this conflict different? Are you, in fact

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, 5 MAY 2009

calling for a ceasefire? If the Security Council can't discuss it, would you invoke Article 99? What's your view of civilians standing there getting bombed from the air? It seems like you're treating it differently than you have from the situation in Gaza certainly, and Darfur, on humanitarian grounds.

Secretary-General: Thank you very much for your question. It is very important and useful that the agenda -- this issue of Sri Lanka should always be kept as a high priority on the agenda of the international community. That is why I have been spending, again, quite a significant time in addressing this issue. This morning, I had a quite lengthy telephone call with President [Mahinda] Rajapaksa covering all the pending issues. The highest priority is on the humanitarian issues -- how we can protect the civilians still caught in the war zone. The situation is quite worrisome at this time, where we have not been able to see much progress in evacuating people trapped there. We have been trying to provide, through ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] and our UN Mission, to provide humanitarian assistance, but it is far [too] short to feed them. As far as UN staff detained, I was told this morning that all the people whose names have been provided by us have been released. This is what he told me this morning. That was encouraging. I have again and again urged him to allow the UN humanitarian team into the conflict zone, not only these IDP camps. John Holmes was able to visit the IDP camps and humanitarian teams were able to visit there. Since they are still confronting militarily, this is a very difficult situation, even for the Sri Lankan Government to ensure safety and security. While the Sri Lankan Government is allowing us to approach by ship through ICRC, my position was that it's not enough -- they should be able to land and deliver all humanitarian assistance and assess the exact situation; how many people are trapped and how the international community can help them evacuate safely to a safe zone. I am working on that, in close coordination with many members of the international community. As you know, already, many European leaders, foreign ministers also have visited -- some parliamentarians from Europe are going to visit. We will continue to do that until we can see the end of this, a resolution. I have made it quite clear to President Rajapaksa that the United Nations stands ready to provide any post-conflict facilitation.

Question: Have you thought about sending an envoy?

Secretary-General: That, we will discuss later on.

Question: Mr. Secretary-General, thank you. You spoke about crises in the Middle East, Sri Lanka, Nepal, but nothing about Pak-Afghan region, especially in Pakistan -- the rise of Taliban insurgency and the grave situation that prevails for peace, and with the Pakistan Army confronting the Taliban in Swat region now. Does the UN have any role in this situation, sir? And secondly, where does the inquiry commission on the Benazir Bhutto investigation stand?

Secretary-General: For your second question, we are still looking for a third member for this Bhutto Inquiry Commission. Unfortunately, we have not been able to find an appropriate person, who will work on that. I am working very hard to establish that Inquiry Commission as soon as possible. The United Nations has been very closely cooperating with the Pakistani Government in their very efforts to address these very difficult challenges. Recently I have appointed, as a Special Adviser on Pakistan, Mr. Jean Arnault, and he has been meeting in the Group of Friends for a Democratic Pakistan, which was held in Tokyo last month. We are working very closely with many countries in the world.

Question: How much chance do you have of seeing in September in New York the next G-20, organized under the big and more enthusiastic umbrella of the United Nations? What do you do to achieve that goal eventually?

Secretary-General: I am not in a position to tell you clearly what the status of this next meeting of the G-20 would be in September. In my understanding, at the time of the G-20 Summit in London was that there was a proposal to have a G-20 summit meeting in New York at the time of the General Assembly. Since then, there has not been any further consultation on this matter. But I think that there will be a G-20 summit meeting around that time, and I understand that the countries concerned are now discussing this matter.

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TRANSCRIPT OF PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY-GENERAL BAN KI-MOON AT UNITED
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GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

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Body

WASHINGTON, June 5 -- The U.S. Department of State issued the following foreign press center briefing:

MODERATOR: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome to the Washington Foreign Press Center, and I also welcome our colleagues in New York who are joining us today for a discussion on President Obama's speech in Cairo. We have with us today Vali Nasr, who is a Special Assistant to Ambassador Holbrooke, and we have Patrick Moon, who is the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for South Central Asian Affairs, Acting Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Jeffrey Feltman, and the Acting Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Glyn Davies, and Ambassador Johnnie Carson, who is the Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs. I'm going to ask each of our guests to make a few brief remarks and then we'll go into your questions. I would like Assistant Secretary Feltman to make the first remarks since he's just returned from Cairo in the early hours of this morning. MR.

FELTMAN: Sure. Thank you, Gordon. I had the privilege of being in the hall yesterday when President Obama delivered his speech to Muslims around the world. The atmosphere in the hall, as you probably saw in news coverage as well as (inaudible) was quite positive. The audience was extremely diverse ranging from Egyptian Government officials, Egyptian members of Parliament to representatives of Egyptian civil society, students, etc. And the response was extremely positive to the President's remarks. And there were a few themes that seemed to resonate in particular with the audience there in the hall in Cairo. Of course, the speech was directed to a much broader audience than was there at the hall, but it was interesting to see what seemed to resonate with the very broad spectrum of Egyptian society. The President's references to respect and honesty got a lot of attention both in the hall as well as in the meetings we had with civil society groups afterwards in Cairo yesterday. Of course, this follows with the President's themes in his inauguration speech, his Ankara speech, his Nowruz speech to Iran. The idea of partnership also seemed to have broad appeal, that we the United States will work with others, that the United States cannot impose solutions on others, should not impose solutions on others because others must make efforts, rule through consensus not coercion, and we will be there to be in partnership with them. The idea of rights and responsibilities was a theme throughout the President's speech as you saw yesterday. It's something that the Egyptian audience focused on, rights and responsibilities, vis-a-vis Iran, vis-a-vis Hamas, vis-a-vis the Arabs, the Israelis, the Palestinians. Of course, there was a large section of the speech - one of the seven themes - was the rejection of violent extremism and the rejection of violence as a means to an end. Finally, of course, being in Cairo the audience there talked a lot afterwards about the President's commitment to pursuing peace in the region and the fact that the President defined this as not only as something that he sees as best for the Israelis and Palestinians and the broader Arab world but something that's in the U.S. interest. Overall, again, the atmosphere in the hall yesterday in Cairo was extremely positive despite the fact that the audience in the hall was quite wide-ranging. MODERATOR: Thank you. Ambassador Carson. MR. CARSON: Sure. Thank you very much. I'm very pleased to be here this morning to report on African reaction to this as seen through the press and through our embassies. There was widespread interest throughout Sub-Saharan Africa about the President's speech not only

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

because of the President's father having been a Kenyan but also because one-third of the 800 million people who live in Sub-Saharan Africa today are of Muslim religion and faith, one-third. Some 11 of the 48 states in Sub-Saharan Africa have Muslim majority populations and three of the largest African states in three of the largest states in Africa have substantial Muslim populations. Nigeria, 150 million people - largest country in Africa - has a Muslim population of some 70 million people, which makes that population substantially larger than any Arab state in the Middle East. Ethiopia - population of roughly 70 million people - has a Muslim population of roughly 33 million which compares to the larger numbers that are in the Arab world. A great deal of interest across the continent. A very positive reaction to the President's message and themes. Of the four issues - four of - the President outlined several - seven themes toward the end of his speech. Four of those themes resonate very, very strongly throughout Africa. One is the call and respect for democracy. Many African countries are increasingly embracing democratic reform and respect for rule of law. This theme resonates with civil society and throughout Africa where democracy is taking deeper root. The President's talk about respect and rights and empowerment for women also resonates throughout the continent where African women are also trying to take their rightful role as responsible citizens in the development of their own countries becoming more active in both the political and economic life. The President's themes about economic opportunity are also important throughout Africa. Africa remains one of the poorest continents in the world and the need for more investment in that part of the world, particularly to jump-start the economy is important. His comments on economic empowerment, economic opportunity resonated around the continent. And then the fourth theme that was increasingly important to Africa is violent extremism. Although we associate with this many other parts of the world, Africa has also experienced violent extremism. We have seen it in the destruction of our embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam in August of 1998, the al-Qaeda terrorist attack against Israeli interests in Kenya in November of 2002, and we saw it on May 31 just several days ago when al-Qaeda in the Islamic lands of the Maghreb executed a British National who had been held hostage for some six months. Africans are also fighting against this extremism. The President's themes were applauded, respected. News coverage and media attention to this from South Africa up to Ethiopia and across to Abuja and Lagos, very intense and very interested. Africans are also interested in seeing how they could take advantage of some of the programs the President outlined, particularly the expansion of educational exchange programs with Muslims around the world, particularly in Africa. They were interested in seeing how they could benefit from the support to technological development and, of course, they were particularly interested when the President said that he was going to initiate centers for scientific excellence including in Africa. As I started to say, one-third of Africa's population in sub-Saharan (Africa) is Muslim. The interest was high in this speech. It was also very laudatory and they look forward to being a part of this new dialogue. MODERATOR: Mr. Moon, would you please. MR. MOON: Thank you. President Obama's speech (inaudible) the new beginnings for U.S. engaging with Muslim communities in South and Central Asia, and within the area we have marked several new beginnings through revitalized bilateral relationships in the region. Starting in particular with India where we have strengthened our relations with the government and the people of India over the last number of years and we look forward to working with the new government there. And of course, India has the second largest Muslim population in the world. We will be engaging with India next week when Under Secretary for Political Affairs William Burns travels to India for talks in New Delhi and Mumbai. He will be following up on the very successful elections there. The largest democracy in the world conducted a very smooth election, very little violence, and returned the Congress party to power. The return of democracy - democratic government through elections has also been marked in a new milestone in Bangladeshi history as well. And one of the issues the President highlighted in his speech yesterday was addressing women's rights, and he named Bangladesh, among other countries where we have seen Muslim-majority countries elect a woman to lead. I would note again - here as well that Bangladesh has about the fourth largest Muslim population in the world. Sri Lanka is another country where we look forward to new beginnings. The main focus has shifted from combat operations there with a defeat of the terrorist organization the LTTE, the Tamil fighters, and we're now focusing on humanitarian operations for those citizens which have been misplaced by the conflict. As Sri Lanka begins a new chapter in (inaudible) relations, we believe the U.S. can play a constructive role in fostering peace and reconciliation going forward. Just in terms of specific reactions in the region, South Asia has over a billion Muslim citizens, and the audiences - the reactions we've seen so far have positively received the speech. Many viewers in the areas we saw the speech appreciated the President's desire for engagement and dialogue between the U.S. and the Muslim world. In India, in a meeting today, a senior Indian official strongly praised the speech in a meeting with our Charge d'Affaires. It was carried - the speech was carried on several channels in India very widely. And the press - the American Press Center Program was packed with journalists and academics and featured a

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

post-speech panel, an audience interaction which was upbeat and appreciative. In Bangladesh, two TV stations carried the broadcast live and three others planned to carry it by tape over the weekend. So it will be - it has been and will be further widely received and viewed in Bangladesh. In Central Asia reactions were more low key. It was not carried live by many stations in Central Asia, but it was carried as American embassies did put on programs and it was seen in some countries by satellite televisions, which is not widely available in many of the countries.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Mr. Nasr. MR. NASR: Thank you very much. The - there is no doubt that is a very important speech, and it was perceived as such not only in Afghanistan-Pakistan region but across the Middle East. I think the very first points of reaction was that the clearness with which the amount that the President has invested in this engagement process beginning with his interviews and his speech in Ankara. But in this speech in particular I think one of the most important reactions is the understanding among Muslims everywhere of the seriousness of the President regarding this process. To build on what my colleagues said, I think the extent of empathy showed, the respect that he showed and the steps he took in his speech regarding the question of trust, building trust between the U.S. and the - and Muslims everywhere was - is quite important. And I also - another point of reaction is that it's very clear the President discussed some of the issues that are familiar and are ongoing but with a very new tone and with - in a very new context and that, again, has prominent in many of the reactions. Another point that was very clear from the speech and the reaction to it was the approach to Muslims everywhere as being members of the global community and being partners and being part of the process that the United States sees going forward. I think most important - from the reactions I've noted what is most important was the clarification of how the President and his administration see the world, how they see the Muslim world, how they view Islam, and how he sees also America's role in the world in dealing with the specific questions and issue areas that the United States is engaged in in the Middle East and South Asia, and also what he expects of Muslims and their governments in this process going forward in partnership with the United States. Now, in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, in particular what he says was germane in the sense that this is an important area of ongoing contact and engagement between the United States and the Muslim world that the U.S. is involved obviously in terms of a major effort in Afghanistan and now increasingly in Pakistan is in building a partnership with the government in those countries and confronting extremism. What the President said about extremism, how he defined extremism, how he separated extremism from the general religious beliefs of the population were very well received. And also issues he raised, which were not directly related to Afghanistan-Pakistan, particularly on issues of women's rights which has been an important issue on the ground given the Taliban's position in both Afghanistan and Pakistan and why that matters and should matter to the general population as well as issues of democracy were very important and well received particularly in Pakistan which only recently has come to a democratic process and is still trying to consolidate this (inaudible) there. The President's emphasis on that issue was seen as an important part of the partnership. And also the President's explanation about what the U.S. objectives and intentions are in Afghanistan and Pakistan were important in terms of clarifying engagement with Muslims everywhere at a time where the United States is also engaged in a conflict in that region.

MODERATOR: Mr. Davies. MR. DAVIES: Thank you very much. The Asia-Pacific region is the largest region in the world and so it's difficult to generalize about reactions from Japan all the way down to Australia, from Burma over to Northeast Asia. But in general the reactions were very much as described by the other members of the panel. Commentators and those that are embassies and consulates spoke to praised the candor, the sincerity, the tone of mutual respect of the President. I think it was across the region greatly appreciated that the President made a vow to speak the same truths both publicly and privately diplomatically. His use of Islamic readings and quotations from the Holy Koran I think resonated particularly well in the very large Muslim majority parts of the greater region and here, of course, I'm talking about Southeast Asia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Singapore, Philippines. And in particular, of course, because it's the largest Muslim majority country in the world, Indonesia, we paid a lot of attention to how Indonesians reacted. There were very, very positive early reactions. What was interesting was, of course, a strain of that from Indonesian commentators was, you know, why didn't he come here to give the speech, and when will he come to Indonesia? And I think in the press conference immediately after the speech or the press roundtable there was an Indonesian journalist and of course the first question he asked was "When are you coming to Indonesia?" And the President said he would hope to get there very quickly. I think the call for women's rights resonated very positively. One interesting comment from an Imam in Melbourne, Australia, who called the speech a Marshall Plan for improving U.S. relations with the Umrah (ph)*, which is the Muslim community of the world back again in Indonesia. I should note that the Secretary of State on her first trip anywhere in the world went, of course, to East Asia, traveled to Jakarta, and I think kind of the themes that she was talking about when she was in Jakarta that Indonesia is a

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

model of moderation, a new democratic country which is trying to take its pluralistic society and bring it together, forge it into a nation where all can co-exist peacefully. These types of themes that the President struck reinforced what the Secretary said. I might also mention a couple of other interesting quotes. There's the senior official of the Fiji Muslim League - so you're getting out into the middle of the Pacific Ocean - said I can say with great confidence we can trust this man. He may be Commander-in-Chief of the U.S. Armed Forces, but I see him as a peace maker. And interesting commentary from Singapore from Channel News Asia where it was claimed that President Obama has laid a golden bridge between the U.S. and the Muslim world. And then one young man in Surabaya at an event that we hosted there had a very interesting reaction. He said that he enjoyed the speech very much, but how can we, the young people of Asia - of Southeast Asia, turn the President's seven principles from words into actions. So even though many commentators were saying - and this was typical across the press and the public, these are nice words. Now we need to see more actions on the part of the United States. There was one young man who said, "How can I help make this happen?" So that's about it. MODERATOR: Okay, thank you. We'll go to your questions now. We have about 30 minutes. We'll also be inviting our colleagues in New York to ask questions. As we have such a wealth of wisdom and experience on the panel, I would please ask you to direct your question to a specific person, otherwise I will have to offer everyone the chance to respond and we might get one or two questions in that way. So please remember to direct your questions. Please, Joyce. QUESTION: Yes, hi. Thanks for doing this. Joyce Karam with Al Hayat Newspaper. My question is to Assistant Secretary Jeff Feltman. It's actually regarding the elections in Lebanon happening on Sunday. I wonder if you have any message to the Lebanese head of the elections. And what point will the U.S. administration stop the aid to Lebanon? I know you mentioned that the composition of the new government will be a parameter to decide that, but if you can elaborate a little bit on that. Is it if Hezbollah members or (inaudible) take the defense or the Foreign Ministry? MR. FELTMAN: Joyce, thanks. I'd like to start off addressing your question about Lebanese elections by going back to the speech yesterday if I may. The President's speech yesterday was, of course, not about Lebanese elections. It was a message about a new beginning with Muslims around the world. And as we've heard, the Muslim population is quite varied and spread across a large portion of the globe. But I also hope the Lebanese voters yesterday, whether they were Christian, Jews, Sunnis, Shia, I hope the Lebanese voters also listened quite carefully to the President's words. Again, they were not about Lebanese elections, but I think there were some important messages there for Lebanon as well as for others in the region and beyond. For example, one of your politicians I think is trying to suggest to Lebanese voters that the United States is fickle, the United States is not engaged. I think that the President's speech yesterday was very, very clear that the United States is committed to working with the Middle East. The United States is sincerely committed to achieving peace in the region that would benefit all the peoples in the region including the Lebanese. So I hope that the Lebanese voters heard that. One of the other messages that the President gave yesterday, of course, is the rejection of violent extremism, the rejection of using violence to try to achieve political goals. He said just simply it will not work. I hope that the Lebanese voters look at the platforms of some of the political parties and some of the political parties that are also malicious and think about this, that you have the President of the United States saying that we are committed to peace because it is in our interest that violence is not going to achieve those sorts of goals. These are messages that I hope the Lebanese voters take into account when they go to the polls on Sunday. Ultimately, it's the Lebanese voters who will decide who are the members of the next Lebanese Parliament. It's the Lebanese decision who are the members of the Lebanese Cabinets based on those elections. But it's the United States' decision to decide how to deal with that Cabinet based on what are those positions, what are the policies that that Cabinet is going to adopt. I would hope that a Lebanese Cabinet would take into account the President's words, the President's commitment, the involvement of the United States in the international community in providing assurances for Lebanese sovereignty and independence. MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. We have a questioner at the far - QUESTION: Wafaa Jabai, BBC. Actually, your question is for Mr. Feltman, too. I have two questions. First, on Iran, how do you see the Iranian decision not to broadcast the President's speech, not even a part of it? And the second one, about the Israeli reaction, we're talking about a positive reaction from them? What about the Israeli very negative reaction from the Israeli yesterday? Thank you. MR. FELTMAN: I hope that the Iranians were able to find access to the President's speech through other means. I'm sorry that it was not broadcast by some of the major media in Iran, but I hope that the Iranian people were able to hear the President's words, hear the President's message, hear the President's sincerity through other means because, you know, there are a variety of ways to get access to the President's speech yesterday because I think his message to the Iranian people, the Iranian Government, of course, was an important part of his message to the Muslim world more generally. His talk about rights and responsibilities was a

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

very strong message. He referred specifically to Iran's right to have peaceful civil nuclear energy as long as Iran lives up to its responsibilities as well under the Nonproliferation Treaty. Given how savvy the Iranians are in access to the Internet and other things, I'm fairly confident that Iranians who wanted to hear the President's words would have had access somehow. The Israeli reaction - there have been positive reactions from the government about the statements, but Israel has a very active democracy, very strong position of freedom of the press, freedom of speech, and you're going to see debate in Israel about what does this speech mean. I think that's natural. I think that's healthy. You're going to see debate elsewhere about what does this speech mean. Any particular audience may have said oh, I wish he said more about this particular issue, but it was a 55 minute speech. As the President said, you're not going to solve all the problems in one 55 minute speech. The President made a very strong message from Cairo, the heart of the Arab world, that the United States' friendship and alliance with Israel is unbreakable. I think that was something that Israeli commentators all picked up on that he picked that location to reaffirm the U.S. commitment to Israel. MODERATOR: Thank you. Question just here in the front. And then we'll - QUESTION: Thank you, sir. My name is Ben Bangoura with Africalog, and my question is to Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs having to do with the situation in Guinea. Two questions actually. As you may know, the country has been under military rule since December. But under international pressure, that military junta has agreed to hold elections in December. Do you think that election will go ahead? Otherwise, what political and economic support is your administration willing to provide? And that's the first question. And second question. There's a process I mean underway since yesterday having to do with narco-trafficking. If you have any comments? MR. CARSON: Yes. Thank you very much. Two very brief comments. We are extremely concerned about the coup d'etat that took place in Guinea Conakry. We strongly oppose military interventions and military coup d'etats. When they occur in Africa it is a setback for democracy, civil liberties and for the rule of law. We join the AU and other African sub-regional organizations in condemning the coup. And also we also have cut off any assistance outside of humanitarian aid to that government until there is a return to some form of democracy and constitutional rule. We will continue to encourage elections, free and fair, observed by international monitors. And we will continue to work with the AU and others who are encouraging the same steps. With respect to narco-trafficking, it has become an enormous problem throughout West Africa, particularly in the neighboring state of Guinea Bissau where we have seen just in the last 24 hours another senior political leader, a presidential aspirant, killed in that country. Several months ago both the President of Guinea Bissau and the Commander of the Army were both assassinated within a 24 hour period. Those deaths were alleged to have been related to narco-trafficking, money laundering and the problem of drugs in that area. West Africa is increasingly under pressure because of the growing influence of narco-trafficking and the use of ports and airports in that region by traffickers coming out of Central and Latin America. It is a upsetting and dangerous trend. We will continue to work with all those governments in the region to combat the spread and rapid rise of drug trafficking in West Africa. MODERATOR: Thank you, sir. I believe we had a question. Yes, in the back. QUESTION: Thank you. This is a question for Mr. Feltman. Christine Bergman, (inaudible) International Radio. Coming back to Iran and the reception of the President's speech there, do we have any reaction either from the public or the officials from Iran? And do you think the President's speech will have any impact on the upcoming Presidential election in Iran? Thank you. MR. FELTMAN: Thanks. I think you've probably seen some of the reactions from some of the Iranian leadership that says okay, fine, words are one thing but we want to see some action. In fact, they made a - the Iranian - some of the Iranian political leaders made a comment like that even before the speech was made. But you know, I - the Iranian leaders would have I think seen a theme of respect, of outreach that the President has emphasized since his inauguration. And as he said again yesterday, he's prepared to open dialogue, open channels to the Iranians without preconditions. However, there is a very time-sensitive subject on which we need to talk to the Iranians quite soon and that's the nuclear file, and he also made that quite clear yesterday. Of course, like Lebanon Iran faces elections in the near future where the Iranians will have the opportunity to elect their next President. I don't have enough insight to know if this - if a speech will influence the Iranian electorate, but we do look forward to an Iranian response to the P5+1 or the E3+3 offer to sit down as soon as possible. Thank you. MODERATOR: Thank you. And I would encourage you all to put all of our panelists to work here. We'll do one, two and three. New York, please, if you have a question, we haven't forgotten you. QUESTION: Yasmin Alamiri from the Saudi Press Agency. Actually, just a very quick question. How much did it factor in, do you think, that the President didn't go to Israel as part of this trip and he tacked on Saudi Arabia as a little surprise? Does that - and also there was some reaction after the speech to - I guess it was negative reaction to the fact that he had talked about women's rights with regard to wearing the hijab and it was somewhat seen as overstepping his boundaries, like he shouldn't have spoken about it. It's a very personal issue I know, and

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

especially in Egypt it's an issue of much contention. So was there any reaction in the region? Do you see that? MR. FELTMAN: On the latter part, I didn't see the reaction. Of course, he was talking about women's rights more generally. On specific issues also talking about issues in the United States, you know, that we're not going to have laws about what people should and shouldn't wear that that's people's freedom of choice. But I didn't hear any reaction to that, but again it's only - I just stepped off a plane frankly. So you may have heard - you may have seen things that I haven't seen having just stepped off a plane. In terms of, you know, the President's itinerary, the President's been in office a few months. He's not been able to go everywhere he wanted to go. Like my colleague, Glyn, noted the desire of Indonesia for him to go to Indonesia, he saw Prime Minister Netanyahu here recently. Our alliance with Israel, our friendship with Israel is, as he said, unbreakable. I would not simply over-analyze where he went on this trip. MODERATOR: Can I use my prerogative as a moderator? Vali, can I ask you for something on custom, religious practice and the President's remarks? MR. NASR: I think the President used the term the hijab to underscore the fact that the United States is not inherently opposed to Islam in the sense that even institutions of the U.S. Government have supported the rights of women to wear hijab in this country, and I think that was the extent of it. It was not meant to direct a comment at the Muslim world as to how women ought to dress in the Muslim world. It was rather underscoring the sincerity of the United States' statement which he was putting forward that the United States has no inherent opposition to Islam and he does not see Islam and America as exclusive as he put it. And the hijab was used as proof of that statement. MODERATOR: Thank you. Yes, the next question here in the center. QUESTION: Thank you. My name is Talha Musa from Ashara Al-Awsat Newspaper. Actually, my question is for you all because it's concerning the Muslim communities. President Obama said that the administration's intent to increase scholarship for students from Muslim communities. Could we get that you are going to facilitate issuing visa for Muslim students since the problem is the visa nothing except the visa? MODERATOR: Who would like to be the visa expert? I think actually I can address the (laughter). We'll take the question and get you an appropriate answer on student visas. But as you know, the visa process is not only one that is handled by our embassies around the world but is also something that has to be coordinated here with the Department of Homeland Security because it is a two-step process. Visas are issued by U.S. Embassies, but they are - people are allowed into the country by the Department of Homeland Security. So as the President has made the initiative, I have some degree of certainty that the organs of government will respond to the President's request. Yes, next question. QUESTION: Hi. My name is Zaher Imadi from Syrian Radio and T.V. My question to Secretary Feltman, obviously the - what the speech of President Obama implies and focused on is not only his desire or his administration's desire for more efforts towards peace in the Middle East but it is also, in my opinion, it reflects the world community's desire. And that is reflected in the UN Resolutions 242, 338 and also the Quartet and the Annapolis meetings. I mean this is a world desire. But we don't see any mentioning of these resolutions of the United Nations. I don't know if this is intentional or policy of the United States or it's just passing - just not (inaudible) information that this is a UN desire also to bring peace to - based on Madrid Conference, peace for land. The other question I have is that there is no mention - there is a lot of focus, of course, on Palestine, but there are other lands that are occupied also and need to be included in the talk about peace. For example, in Lebanon the city of Golan Heights, that is suffering under occupation. The people in there are really under great stress from the Israeli occupation. How would you address that, please? MR. FELTMAN: To answer the question, I would note that peace was one of seven themes yesterday in a 55 minute speech. Of course, it's a very important theme because it's so important to the people not only who are directly affected by the conflict, Israelis, Palestinians, Arabs, but it's also an issue for the broader international community, the broader Muslim world as you yourself noted. The President couldn't go into a lot of detail yesterday since he had other themes to cross, but he put down some important markers. The President has made it clear since he's come into office that he's committed to a comprehensive peace. Comprehensive means peace with all of the parties. That includes Syria. That includes Lebanon. It's not simply the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict. It's a comprehensive peace. On his second day in office he appointed Senator George Mitchell, a very able negotiator, senior statesman, in order to take on the pursuit of a comprehensive peace that includes all of the states and the peoples in the region. The President yesterday made reference to the fact that all states have obligations, obligations - that these obligations are incorporated in the Roadmap, for example. They're incorporated in Security Council Resolutions. All states have obligations. The President made that clear. But he also made it clear, and he was very diplomatic in how he put this, nobody should be passive here. People shouldn't wait for the United States to come and say this is the solution. It's in the United States' interest that there be a solution, but the United States needs to see all the parties in the region moving toward that solution. He made reference to the Arab Peace Initiative, which is an extremely important initiative that

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

was announced in Beirut in April 2002. It came out of then Prince Abdullah of Saudi Arabia's bold thinking. But he noted this isn't the end, this is the - Arab Peace Initiative is the beginning, that all parties in the region need to start working now toward that comprehensive peace that would benefit the regions, implement the Security Council Resolutions that you've mentioned. MODERATOR: We have time for, yes, two questions. We'll go here and here, and I think those will have to be our last two. QUESTION: Hisham Melham from Al-Arabiya. Now what happens next? What would you like to see as diplomats happening in the region beyond the hope that this historic speech should change or influence the political discourse in the region? Obviously, there were states in the region that were not comfortable with the speech, Iran, to a lesser extent Israel, non-state groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah. The President didn't engage in introspection, self-criticism. I don't expect these leaders to engage in introspection or self-criticism, but would you like to see them do? I think the President said we will meet you half-way. But what is required of these parties to meet the President half-way? Somebody mentioned everybody expects the President to bring in the solution to all of these problems. As diplomats, what are you going to do? I mean how do you think the speech will influence the engagement with Iran? How do you think the speech will be helpful or can be helpful to revive the Arab-Israeli Conflict? I mean this is essentially addressed to Ambassador Feltman but also to Professor Vali Nasr because although his portfolio is South Asia, but his Iranian expertise is - would probably be called upon here into play. MODERATOR: Well, I'll exercise my prerogative again as moderator and open it up to the panel and allow each to say how they would like to see this implemented in the regions on which they're expert. We can start with Mr. Nasr and we can go straight down the panel. We'll still get to the final question. MR. NASR: Well I think, first of all, there are different issue areas have different set of problems. For example, in Afghanistan and Pakistan we already have policies in place. And I think what this speech will do is help much more realize the idea of partnership on which our entire Afghanistan-Pakistan strategy is built on. You know, there's requirements of greater cooperation with governments in the region and also much more public support, particularly in Pakistan, for the U.S. effort. I think in the past perhaps this was one of the issues we had to - we had difficulty with. But if the Pakistani public, which is the case, watch the President, trusted what he said, appreciated what he said, there is much more likelihood that they would also trust and work with the U.S. policy, and that would make it much easier for us. I also think not just with Iran but with all of these issue areas, one of the problems we've had is that when you look at opinion polls in the Muslim world or in the Middle East and you saw very negative numbers particularly when it comes to the issue of trusting the United States, it makes it very difficult for allies or adversaries to take risks that are necessary for solving very complicated problems. And I think what the President has done, not just in this speech but also in Ankara, an interview with you, and his Nowruz message on YouTube, he has now I think built trust that he is serious about it. He's invested substantial amount of time in this and that he's changing the tenor of the discussion and that would make it much easier to then - for not just the United States but others also to come up with new policy initiatives that would allow us to solve this issue. I think the biggest gain is right now in establishing that room for everybody to maneuver. MODERATOR: Mr. Moon, Central Asia, Sub-continent moving forward? MR. MOON: Well, in Bangladesh certainly our objective is to strengthen political stability and democracy in that country. We need the main leaders in the country, which happen to be women, to commit themselves to a democratic future for Bangladesh. And with that, we believe that economic growth and prosperity will follow. In India, we're seeking to broaden and strengthen our bilateral relationship. As I said, we have certainly made great strides with India as it has opened up to the rest of the world and particularly to the West, and the new government gives every prospect of strengthening that trend. We want greater economic exchange with India. We want to see - to broaden the access for academic institutions in India. We want to improve our defense relationship with India. And while the Muslim population is a minority population, it is a very important part of the Indian political spectrum, and we will be working with all parts of the Indian political spectrum in strengthening this relationship. In Central Asia our main objectives are to promote democracy, respect for human rights, freedom of the press, and these are themes which are - which you see in the President's speech, and we are certainly working to reinforce those in our bilateral relationships with each of the five countries of Central Asia. MODERATOR: Thank you. Ambassador Feltman. MR. FELTMAN: I would go back to the theme that, you know, others have touched on. We talked about this with our Syrian colleagues, a partnership. The President has reached out in partnership respect and honesty. We would hope that this would be met with the spirit of partnership and not passivity, not simply people waiting saying, okay, we heard the words; now let's wait for the actions. No, this is a real partnership that the President is proposing, a sincere partnership. Work with us on these issues whether we're talking about advancing the status of women, whether we're talking about democracies, human rights, civil society, whether we're talking about peace, whether we're talking about comprehensive peace. Is the - be with us - be with us on this is sort of the message the

GLOBAL RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT OBAMA 'S SPEECH IN CAIRO

President is saying. We cannot impose a solution. We don't have all the answers but we do have some principles that we think that people across the world share. On peace, is it Hamas' way that's going to get to the comprehensive peace? Is it Hezbollah's way that's going to get to the comprehensive peace? The international community has said it's time for peace. The United States is on record as saying we want to move toward peace as urgently as we can. We hope that there are partners in the region that will work with us on these goals.

MODERATOR: Thank you. Mr. Davies. MR. DAVIES: Just I think very quickly for the Asia-Pacific, in particular Southeast Asia, the title of the President's speech was "A New Beginning." And what's fascinating about at least the Southeast Asian region is they've begun already a new beginning. Over the last generation they've begun to make changes, democratization, development, reconciliation of different aspects of society has already started. I spoke briefly about Indonesia. I cited the example of the student in Surabaya who said now what can he do. And this is exactly the kind of resonance, exactly the kind of response we're looking for. I would say that, and perhaps this is true in other regions of the world as well, I think what the United States would like to see is a debate, a conversation, consideration. I mean, yes, this is partly about America's relationship with the world, America's relationship in my case with Asia, Southeast Asia, but this is also about developing a conversation and exchange a debate about some of these principles that the President discussed. But in Asia, in Southeast Asia, we've seen great progress. We've seen it Malaysia against extremists, in the Philippines, in Timor, in Indonesia. I think this new beginning has already in that part of the world begun.

MODERATOR: Ambassador Carson. MR. CARSON: I'll be very brief and hopefully not too repetitive. I think in Africa, where the President already enjoys enormous respect and where the United States continues to enjoy high regard, that the President's words will encourage all of those who support and are fighting for greater democratization across the continent. We hope his words will inspire those who are seeking to promote economic development and greater opportunity. We hope his words will encourage greater opportunity and respect for women's rights and opportunities across the country. And we hope his words will also be heard by those in several parts of the continent who are engaged in conflict and who need to seek peaceful solutions to the answers to the problems that they face. His words and the trust that they inspire we hope will lead and serve as a catalyst to others to follow them not just listen to them, act on them not just applaud them.

MODERATOR: Even though that's a brilliant place to finish, I did promise one final question. QUESTION: Ai Awaji, Jiji Press Japanese News Wire. My question is for Mr. Davies. If the Secretary Steinberg is planning to travel to Japan, South Korea, China to discuss (inaudible) again, North Korea. And do you have a better sense now how to go about the nuclear situation? Are you considering tougher financial sanctions against North Korea? And also, do you have any updated information about the trial against two American journalists in North Korea? MR. DAVIES:

Well, let me start with the last question about the American journalists. We don't have anything further because, of course, there's been no diplomatic or press access granted to that trial. Our very excellent Swedish Protecting Power in Pyongyang, which is - these are diplomats who have worked around the clock to try to gain access to the two journalists and gain access to the trial was unable to do that. So we are at this point waiting to see what the results are of that. QUESTION: (Off mic) Do you know for a fact that the trial (inaudible)? MODERATOR:

Microphone. MR. DAVIES: Why don't you go ahead and repeat - she asked whether we know for a fact that the trial has happened. No, we don't. We haven't - there's no courtroom t.v. in North Korea. So we don't know if the trial has happened. Your broader question about Deputy Secretary of State Steinberg's mission, according to the reports we've received, it's been very successful. I think he wraps up today in Beijing, having visited all of the partner states with the exception of Russia. The action by North Korea is at the United Nations in New York, and I think I'll leave it to Ambassador Rice to comment on that. MODERATOR: Thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for attending. Thank you to our panelists. I have certainly enjoyed our discussion today. Thank you to our colleagues in New York, and good day. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

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UNITED NATIONS, June 26 -- The United Nations issued the following press release:

The sorrow and brutality of war continued to be felt by untold millions of civilians trapped by conflict or forced into flight, John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator told the Security Council today. Briefing the Council as it considered the protection of civilians in armed conflict, he said that, in the last 10 years, the subject had assumed a prominent place on the Council's agenda, as manifested by regular open debates, periodic reports of the Secretary-General and the four thematic Council resolutions on the issue. Regular meetings of the Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians and systematic application of the revised aide-memoire should further enhance the response to protection issues in a more comprehensive and systematic way. Yet the reality on the ground had not changed in the same way, he said, adding: "Lip service to the principles of international law is no substitute for real action." Much greater efforts were required to enhance compliance and accountability on the ground.

That meant compliance by all parties to conflict with the applicable laws, as well as the demands and decisions of the Council, and accountability on the part of individuals and parties that failed in those respects. Emphasizing that the Council had an important role to play in promoting systematic compliance with the law in situations on its agenda, he said that that entailed, among other things, the threat and application of targeted measures in cases of non-compliance and mandating commissions of inquiry where there were concerns about serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. However, the Council's concern could not be limited to those situations formally on its agenda. Even conflicts not perceived by all Council members as having implications for international peace and security could have a dramatic impact on the protection of civilians, thus warranting action. The Council must also be able to engage with and seek compliance by all parties to conflict, including non-State groups. To a large degree it was the absence of accountability that allowed violations of international law to thrive, he said. Addressing that culture of impunity would entail the adoption of national legislation for prosecuting genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of human rights law. It also extended to ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as full cooperation with the Court and similar mechanisms. During the ensuing debate, in which more than 40 delegations participated, speakers noted that, despite the progress made, civilians continued to be deliberately targeted. They stressed the need for all parties to conflict, including non-State armed groups, to respect international humanitarian law, distinguish between civilian and military groups, and provide safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid. They should also refrain from the use of excessive force and the use of prohibited weapons, such as white phosphorous and cluster munitions. Several speakers emphasized that the best protection of civilians came about through the prevention of conflicts by addressing their root causes, such as poverty, underdevelopment, injustice and social exclusion. The

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

representative of the United Kingdom stated that the Council must show greater readiness to engage at the prevention stage of conflicts, rather than the resolution stage. It must be more willing to take appropriate, early action. In order to sensitize non-State groups, there was a need to engage with them many speakers stressed. The representative of the Russian Federation cautioned, however, that contacts between humanitarian organizations and non-State armed groups could be established only with the consent of the relevant States, and must be approached with great caution, so as not to legitimize such armed groups. Many speakers addressed the concept of "responsibility to protect", first introduced in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit. The representative of Mexico said that far from being an abstract concept that responsibility took on its true value when facing crisis, cautioning that the Council should not be trapped in endless theoretical debate. Venezuela's representative noted, however, that some countries wanted the concept of responsibility to protect implemented without the required discussions. The General Assembly should discuss it first in order to arrive at a consensus interpretation. Numerous participants in the debate pointed out that civilian protection presupposed unimpeded and safe humanitarian access, condemning all restrictions on humanitarian access and attacks on humanitarian workers. People escaping from combat areas must be allowed safe transit. Days of tranquillity and sustained ceasefires were also important in that regard. New Zealand's representative added that the increasing incidence of intentional attacks on humanitarian workers in conflict zones was deeply disturbing. A related concern was the rising frequency of attacks on journalists, who were vital to the monitoring of conflicts and to ending impunity for serious crimes. Speakers also discussed the issue of impunity, emphasizing that the Council should refer the worst violations of international humanitarian law to the International Criminal Court. Austria's representative said the Council must ensure that violations were investigated and that there were consequences for non-compliance. Greater efforts were needed to strengthen national systems in order to ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice and victims granted effective redress. Echoing the sentiments of many other speakers, the representative of Norway said sexual violence and rape were often calculated tactics of war and should be treated as such. She asked the Council to use the most effective measures at its disposal, including targeted sanctions, to make clear that sexual violence was unacceptable and that perpetrators would be held accountable. Norway supported the referral of such crimes to the International Criminal Court. Other speakers participating in today's debate were the representatives of Croatia, Viet Nam, Japan, China, Costa Rica (on behalf of the Human Security Network), France, Libya, Uganda, United States, Burkina Faso, Turkey, Brazil, Qatar, Czech Republic (on behalf of the European Union), Israel, Colombia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Argentina, Canada, Syria, Peru, Australia, Jordan, Italy, Nicaragua, Morocco, Uruguay, Kenya, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Georgia, Guatemala and the Republic of Korea. Also delivering statements were the Permanent Observers of Palestine and the African Union. The meeting began at 10:10 a.m. and suspended at 1:25 p.m. Resuming at 3:10 p.m., it ended at 6:35 p.m. Background Before the Security Council was the report of the Secretary-General on the protection of civilians in armed conflict (document S/2009/277), which notes that, since the subject was placed on the Council's agenda 10 years ago, further efforts to strengthen the protection of civilians remains crucial as actions on the ground have not yet matched the progress in words and the development of international norms and standards. According to the report, old and new conflicts alike persist amid "sometimes appalling" levels of human suffering owing to the fundamental failure of the parties involved to respect fully their obligations to protect civilians. That failure demands a reinvigorated commitment by the Security Council, Member States and the United Nations to the protection of civilians and the promotion of respect for the principles of international humanitarian law, human rights law and refugee law, upon which the concept is founded. In practical terms, the report states, that commitment requires determined action to meet five core challenges: enhancing compliance with international law by parties to conflict, particularly in the conduct of hostilities; enhancing compliance with the law by non-State armed groups; enhancing protection through more effective and better resourced peacekeeping and other relevant missions; enhancing humanitarian access; and enhancing accountability for violations of the law. In his conclusion, the Secretary-General states that the last 10 years have provided a "tantalizing sense" of the potential of the civilian-protection agenda. "The task before us now is to take the necessary steps to fully realize that potential and meet the five core challenges identified in the present report," he adds, noting that the Council has the tools required to take forward the recommendations appearing throughout the report. The Secretary-General says that, in practice, that entails consistent application of the aide-memoire on the protection of civilians; regular meetings of the expert group on the issue prior to establishing or renewing peacekeeping mandates; consistent condemnation of violations of the law by all parties to conflict, without exception; ensuring compliance, including targeted measures, mandating

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

commissions of inquiry and referring situations to the International Criminal Court; and timely deployment of peacekeeping missions or additional temporary capacity with robust protection mandates. In conclusion, the Secretary-General states: "At the open debate in November, I would urge the Security Council and Member States to seize the opportunity of the tenth anniversary of the protection of civilians to reinvigorate their commitment to this agenda and, above all, to work with the United Nations and other relevant actors in a comprehensive and determined effort to make the protection of civilians more systematically and consistently a reality for all those caught or trapped in the conflicts of today, or those of tomorrow." Briefing JOHN HOLMES, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, said the sorrow and brutality of war continued to be felt by untold millions of civilians trapped by conflict or forced into flight. It was precisely against them and their rights and interests that armed force was so often used to devastating effect. In the last 10 years, protection of civilians in armed conflict had assumed a prominent place on the Council's agenda, as manifested by regular open debates, the Secretary-General's periodic reports and the four thematic Council resolutions on the protection of civilians. Most importantly, concern for the protection of civilians had increasingly permeated the Council's country-specific deliberations and decisions, he said. Regular meetings of the Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians and systematic application of the revised aide-memoire should further enhance the response to protection issues in a more comprehensive and systematic way. Yet the reality on the ground had not changed in the same way at all. "We cannot be remotely satisfied with the situation we see in so many parts of the world today. Lip service to the principles of international law is no substitute for real action," he said. Much greater efforts were required to enhance compliance and, for that matter, accountability on the ground. That meant compliance by all parties to conflict with the applicable law and the demands and decisions of the Council, as well as accountability on the part of individuals and parties that failed in those respects. The Secretary-General's report set out five core challenges in that regard, including enhancing compliance by parties to conflict with international humanitarian law and human rights law, with particular concern over the conduct of hostilities, he continued. The lack of compliance led not only to the death and injury of hundreds of civilians every week, but to the displacement of thousands more. While the weapons had finally fallen silent in Sri Lanka, civilian deaths in Somalia, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and elsewhere constantly reminded the international community of the urgent need for the parties to be much more scrupulous in their efforts to spare civilians from the effects of hostilities. In the Somali capital, Mogadishu, the eruption of renewed hostilities in May had been marked by the bombing of civilian areas and street battles, with little regard for the safety and security of the civilian population, he recalled. Since the first week of May, more than 200 civilians had been killed and over 800 wounded, while some 160,000 people had fled their homes. Elsewhere, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 261 civilians had been killed in May alone. Anti-Government elements remained responsible for the majority of those civilian deaths, through attacks on residential areas and schools, the use of improvised explosive devices and often targeted or otherwise reckless suicide attacks. He said that suicide attacks and bombs left in public places had become commonplace in such places as Iraq and Somalia as well, no longer eliciting the same degree of attention and outrage as they once had. Civilians continued to die in Afghanistan also as a result of the actions of pro-Government forces, particularly during air strikes. He welcomed recent statements by the incoming leadership of the United States and international armed forces in Afghanistan about the need to reduce civilian casualties, review the rules of engagement and ensure that they were strictly observed. "We will monitor such efforts closely, just as we continue to carefully monitor the situation of the civilian population in the North and South Kivu provinces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo." The choice of weapons was critical in minimizing and reducing the impact of hostilities on civilians, he said. Significant progress had been achieved in efforts to address the humanitarian impact of cluster munitions, with the adoption in 2008 of the Convention on Cluster Munitions. However, there was a broader concern about the indiscriminate and severe humanitarian impact of explosive weapons more generally, particularly when used in densely populated areas. Member States, in consultation with relevant United Nations agencies and other actors, should consider that issue further, including by addressing the widespread use of improvised explosive devices in densely populated areas. The Council had an important role to play in promoting systematic compliance with the law in situations on its agenda, he said. That entailed consistently condemning violations, without exception, and demanding compliance. It also included the threat and application of targeted measures in cases of non-compliance, requests for reports on violations and mandating commissions of inquiry where concerns existed about serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. But the Council's concern could not be limited to those situations formally on its agenda. Even conflicts not perceived by all

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

Council members to have implications for international peace and security could have a dramatic impact on the protection of civilians and could warrant Council action. He said the Council must also be able to engage and seek compliance by all parties to conflict, including non-State groups - the second of the five challenges identified in the Secretary-General's report. The simple yet brutal reality was that the failure to engage armed groups was always likely to mean more civilians killed and wounded. It was also essential for gaining access to people in need and for establishing a safe and secure environment in humanitarian activities were accepted and respected. Various initiatives could be pursued to that end, including training and special agreements or codes of conduct, through which groups could commit to compliance with their obligations. As a first step towards a more comprehensive approach to addressing the actions of non-State armed groups, the Council should convene an Arria Formula meeting to discuss the experiences of United Nations and non-Government actors in engaging armed groups, and to help identify additional measures to improve compliance. Regarding the inclusion of protection activities in the mandates of peacekeeping and other relevant missions, he said that, from Sierra Leone in the past, to present-day Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sudan, peacekeeping operations had made and continued to make important contributions to the safety and security of civilians. The challenge now was to maximize their impact by addressing the disconnection between mandates, intentions, expectations, interpretations and implementation capacity. He said it also meant providing clear and practical guidance to heads of missions and force commanders on implementing protection mandates, more systematic development of mission-specific protection strategies, and the spread of best-practice innovations. It also meant ensuring not only that protection was prioritized in decisions concerning the use of available capacity and resources, but more crucially still, that the capacity and resources provided were genuinely appropriate for the task of protecting civilians. Such issues would be addressed in the forthcoming independent study commissioned by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. As detailed in the annex to the report, access to conflict-affected populations was too often unsafe, not timely enough and too frequently impeded, he continued. Burdensome bureaucracy was one of the main constraints in that regard. In Gaza, for example, Israel's criteria for allowing the importation of goods into the territory remained unpredictable, and its decision in March to allow unrestricted entry for all foodstuffs from Government-approved sources remained unimplemented. In Sudan, the convening of the now-expanded High-Level Committee represented significant progress towards renewed cooperation on facilitating humanitarian action in Darfur. The Committee must now be replicated at the state level in Darfur. In Somalia, renewed hostilities in Mogadishu had recently led some humanitarian actors to cease their activities, including the provision of medical services, he said. It was critical that parties to conflict allow and facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in such circumstances, including through such operational measures as de-conflicting arrangements, days of tranquillity and humanitarian pauses. They must also allow safe passage for civilians seeking to flee zones of fighting. The most abhorrent constraint on access stemmed from violence against humanitarian operations and staff, which had steadily increased over the past decade, including a sharp rise in attacks affecting United Nations agencies since 2006. The year 2008 had been the worst on record for all humanitarian actors taken together, he said, stressing that such incidents would not disappear without concerted action. Humanitarian workers had been targeted for political reasons, while relief supplies and assets were viewed as soft targets for criminal exploitation. Critical in that regard was broadening the understanding and acceptance among State and non-State actors alike of the purpose of independent, neutral and impartial humanitarian action. He said the Council had an important role to play in that regard. Possible steps included calling on parties to allow and facilitate the provision of assistance and safe passage for civilians; concluding and implementing agreements to expedite the deployment of humanitarian staff and assets; and condemning systematically acts of violence targeting humanitarian workers. Above all, the Council should ensure that constraints on access had consequences for those who imposed them and not just those who suffered under them. That meant, for example, applying targeted sanctions against those obstructing access or perpetrating attacks against staff, and even being ready to refer situations involving prolonged and wilful impediment of relief or attacks against humanitarian workers to the International Criminal Court. To a large degree it was the absence of accountability and in many instances even the lack of any expectation of fear of accountability that allowed violations of international law to thrive, he said. Addressing that culture of impunity was the fifth challenge identified in the Secretary-General's report. Ensuring accountability began with training combatants on the law, issuing manuals, orders and instructions setting out their obligations and establishing effective disciplinary measures. It also entailed the adoption of national legislation for the prosecuting of genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and other serious violations of human rights law.

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

It also extended to ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, as well as full cooperation with the Court and similar mechanisms. For the Council, that meant insisting on cooperation and, if necessary, enforcing it through targeted sanctions. Accountability also meant reparations, he continued, urging the Council to call on States to establish, or itself to mandate in the relevant context, mechanisms to receive claims alleging violations of international law. Ultimately, the aim must be to enhance compliance and accountability, not just in respect of the law, but, crucially, in respect of the Council's demands and decisions. The Council's willingness and ability to uphold and enforce them would inevitably be the real test of its commitment to the protection of civilians. Statements RANKO VILOVIC(Croatia) expressed concern about the heavy toll that civilians in many conflicts continued to bear, in Sri Lanka, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Gaza, among other places. In situations where prevention had failed, national Governments must be held accountable for arresting and prosecuting those responsible for committing grave crimes, since the parties to an armed conflict bore the primary responsibility for protecting civilians. If Governments failed to fulfil their responsibility in that regard, recourse to the International Criminal Court could be considered. That was where the Council could play an important role. He said the mandates of many peacekeeping operations contained strong provisions on the protection of civilians. Since the missions often acted in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on the ground, more attention was needed in the implementation of those provisions, including on possible lessons learned from varying situations. Concerned about reported cases of Governments or armed groups denying access to humanitarian assistance, he strongly condemned attacks on humanitarian personnel and urged all parties to ensure their safety. There was also a need to intensify efforts to help the many civilians who ended up with disabilities, both physical and psychological, live a dignified life, especially during the delicate time of post-conflict peacebuilding. BUI THE GIANG (Viet Nam) expressed deep concern about the persistent and pervasive violations as well as the increasing, indiscriminate and excessive use of force against civilians in conflict situations. Disturbed by the growing number of civilian deaths and injuries, and their widespread displacement in most conflicts, Viet Nam feared that trend could provoke other widespread conflicts resulting from social tensions and other problems in host locations. He reiterated that the State must bear the primary responsibility for protecting civilians, with the United Nations system playing a critical role, particularly in mediation, peacekeeping operations and humanitarian and development assistance. There was also a need to enhance coordination among United Nations bodies and field missions in responding to the needs of civilians in armed conflict, not only in physical terms, but in political and socio-economic terms, as well. Dialogue with non-State armed groups must be carefully considered to avoid inadvertently legitimizing illegal or even internationally recognized terrorist groups, he said. In order to end impunity, in accordance with resolution 1674 (2006), Viet Nam supported implementation of both justice and reconciliation mechanisms, including national, international and "mixed" criminal courts and tribunals, and truth and reconciliation commissions, as appropriate. Yet, referring situations to the International Criminal Court or similar mechanisms should be considered on a case-by-case basis to avoid the risk of infringing on national sovereignty as a result of generalization. CLAUDE HELLER (Mexico) said the sheer number and complexity of contemporary conflicts and scant respect for the norms of international humanitarian law had increased the challenges facing the Council. Mexico was concerned that, in recent conflicts, the parties had made illegal and excessive use of force, and had used prohibited weapons, among other things. It was important in that regard to make a distinction between civilian and military targets. Concrete action was needed to address the use of cluster munitions and the easy availability of light weapons. Mexico called upon Member States that had not yet done so to ratify the conventions on cluster munitions and anti-personnel mines. As for the Council, it must commit itself to ensure that refugees and internally displaced persons could freely and securely return to their homes. It must also take all measures necessary against those who acted against the needs of civilians. Regarding Sri Lanka, he encouraged the Government to protect the civilian population and urged it to coordinate its efforts to evacuate trapped civilians with United Nations agencies. Serious humanitarian and human rights violations should be investigated by an independent body. The responsibility to protect was not an abstract concept, but took on its true value when facing crises. The Council should not be trapped into an endless theoretical debate. Violations of the basic norms and principles of international humanitarian law were war crimes and, if States lacked the capacity or willingness to prosecute them, the International Criminal Court had jurisdiction to do so. It was essential that the international community focus on preventing conflict and promoting an end to impunity. YUKIO TAKASU (Japan) said substantial progress had been made in the protection of civilians during armed

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

conflicts since the Council's first debate on the subject 10 years ago. The Council had produced a number of well-established normative frameworks, including the one laid out in resolution 1674 (2006). Japan welcomed the recent practice of convening meetings of the Expert Group to hear briefings from the Secretariat on up-to-date and detailed information about the protection of civilians, prior to consultations on the mandates of specific peacekeeping operations. What was important now was putting those established normative frameworks into practice. Expressing grave concerns about continuing civilian casualties all over the world, whether civilians, journalists or humanitarian workers, he emphasized that States bore the primary responsibility to enhance compliance with international law and to protect civilians. At the same time, the international community must address the serious impact that non-State groups were having. It was essential to ensure compliance with international humanitarian law. Protection of civilians should be a priority in any conflict situation, whether a civil war or an anti-terrorism operation. It was not easy to fight rebel groups or terrorist organizations and protect civilians, but both objectives must be pursued simultaneously to the fullest extent. LIU ZHENMIN (China) noted that, over the past decade, the international community had given increasing attention to the protection of civilians, yet large numbers of them continued to be harmed in armed conflicts. China was deeply concerned about threats to the lives and property of civilians, and urged all parties to conflict to respect international law and relevant Council resolutions. Given that the Council had the main responsibility for maintaining international peace and security, it should examine the protection of civilians in a comprehensive manner within the framework of tackling conflicts. However, the responsibility for protecting civilians lay primarily with national Governments, he stressed, adding that the international community could provide assistance, while exercising with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the countries concerned. In terms of fighting impunity, China was in favour of giving national courts a major role. The Council had an active part to play in advancing the cause of civilians in armed conflict, but China did not favour the use of sanctions, or threats to apply them, in every instance. National Governments had the right to take law-enforcement measures to fight terrorists and extremists in their territory, he said. Law-enforcement action in the fight against terrorism had nothing to do with armed conflict, and the international community should not interfere with national measures under the pretext of protecting civilians. There was a wide variety of causes behind each conflict, including poverty. The United Nations could also play an important role in mobilizing international resources for the provision of assistance to the nations concerned. JAIRO HERNANDEZ-MILIAN (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Human Security Network, said there had been an improvement in the protection of civilians 10 years after the subject had first been placed on the Council's agenda. There had also been significant progress at the country-specific level. Almost all peacekeeping missions now had protection mandates while multidimensional peacekeeping operations included capacity-building, security-sector reform and other tasks. Protecting civilians was not only a military task, he said, stressing that comprehensive strategies were the most effective in responding to security threats to civilian populations. Concerned about attacks against refugees, displaced persons and humanitarian workers, as well as the use of sexual violence as a tactic of war, he deplored the continued targeting of civilians and their use as human shields. All parties must abide by the principle of proportionality and distinguish between civilian and military targets. Maximum restraint should be used to minimize impacts on civilians. He said the Council should respond strongly, systematically and promptly to violations of international law, including through rapid and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance. There was also a need for more substantive interaction among the Council, the Secretariat, host countries and troop-contributing countries. It was fundamentally important to address constraints facing peacekeeping operations such as access to resources and training. Respect for and implementation of international humanitarian law was linked with the fight against impunity, he said, adding that ending impunity was part of a comprehensive approach to seeking peace and national reconciliation. Restoring the rule of law and security-sector reform were also key areas in which national systems should be supported by enhanced international assistance. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that, with regard to compliance with international humanitarian law, States should allow for more dialogue between humanitarian organizations and non-State armed groups. Special arrangements such as days of tranquillity and humanitarian corridors were crucial. Proposing a meeting under the Arria Formula to discuss the experiences of non-governmental organizations in dealing with non-State groups, he said the Council should make use of all the tools at its disposal, including punitive measures in situations such as Gaza and Sri Lanka. JEAN-MAURICE RIPERT (France), supporting the statement to be made on behalf of the European Union, said he was concerned about the situation in such countries as Sri Lanka and Afghanistan, adding that the Council could take stronger action in those situations. Among other tools at its disposal, the Council could include civilian-protection

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

mandates in peacekeeping operations. For instance, the protection of civilians was among the priorities for the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). However, responsibility to protect civilians lay first and foremost with national Governments. Welcoming the study commissioned by OCHA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, he said his country had participated in financing that project and hoped there would be a follow-up. Protection of civilians was a vital element of France's joint initiative with the United Kingdom on peacekeeping operations with complex mandates. The first progress report on the initiative would be presented in August. States must pursue and sanction those who violated international humanitarian and human rights law, he said, stressing the importance of security-sector and legal reform in that regard. Bodies of international law should be able to judge the most violent crimes. France called on all States to support the Rome Statute and the International Criminal Court. With the General Assembly preparing to debate the responsibility to protect, there was an urgent need to make that ambitious concept operational. ILYA I. ROGACHEV (Russian Federation) noted that, for 10 years now, the Council had been examining the question of protecting civilians in armed conflict, but civilians were still the majority of casualties. There was a need to refrain from selective approaches to violations of international humanitarian law and for strict observance of law-enforcement standards. It was necessary to condemn all such violations without exception. For example, the deaths of 150 civilians in May as a result of strikes by international forces in Afghanistan should be investigated carefully. It was the responsibility of all parties, including foreign forces, to protect civilians. Expressing concern about civilian deaths at the hands of private military and security companies, he said their share of responsibility should be borne by those who recruited them. Furthermore, contacts between humanitarian organizations and non-State armed groups could be established only with the consent of the relevant States, and must be approached with great caution so as not to legitimize such armed groups. It was unacceptable to consider such terrorist organizations as the Taliban and Al-Qaida as "armed opposition groups", as they could not be considered legitimate interlocutors on humanitarian issues. He reiterated the need to ensure unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel, noting that humanitarian work must be conducted on the basis of impartiality and neutrality. In that context, he drew attention to the situation in the Caucasus following the events of 2008, thanking the Secretary-General for a positive assessment of his country's actions in providing humanitarian assistance in the annex to his report. The Russian Federation was concerned that Georgia's legislation on so-called occupied territories was practically hindering humanitarian work in South Ossetia. THOMAS MAYR-HARTING (Austria) said his country was a fervent supporter of the civilian-protection agenda and stood ready to contribute to its implementation. The Council must pay systematic attention to protection concerns in its daily deliberations. He welcomed in that regard the establishment of the Expert Group, which had already demonstrated its usefulness. More consistent and comprehensive reporting on protection issues in the Secretary-General's reports would enable the Council to be more systematic regarding the protection of civilians. The question of enhancing civilian protection through peacekeeping operations had been identified as a major challenge, and several missions had been mandated to ensure physical protection. Austria looked forward to the findings and recommendations of the independent study commissioned by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and OCHA in that regard. Ensuring better compliance with international humanitarian law was another priority area, particularly in the case of non-State actors, he said. The Council must ensure that violations were investigated and that there were consequences for non-compliance. It should further support justice mechanisms and affirm its opposition to impunity. More efforts were needed to strengthen national systems in order to ensure that perpetrators were brought to justice and victims granted effective redress. The vulnerability of civilians in relation to the abundance of weapons, mainly small arms, also called for the Council's urgent attention. The Cluster Munitions Convention's provisions on victim assistance should become the new international standard. ABDURRAHMAN SHALGHAM (Libya) said that, in spite of the progress made, civilian casualties, including those resulting from foreign occupation, had not declined, and the Gaza Strip was a living example of that. The Israeli occupying authorities had conducted a military operation against Gaza using prohibited weapons such as white phosphorous and failing to distinguish between military and civilian targets. Schools, hospitals and United Nations buildings had been targeted. There had been similar situations in Iraq and Afghanistan, and in the Israel's 2006 aggression against Lebanon. However, the Council had not gone after the Israeli perpetrators of the crimes committed in Gaza because of the right to veto enjoyed by some Council members who wished the aggressor to be above the law. Calling for special attention to conflict prevention, he said it required coordinated efforts to deal with hunger, poverty and injustice affecting large populations around the world. The Council must be able to take balanced and transparent measures, eschewing double standards. Violations of international humanitarian law

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

must be prevented and the production of some weapons prohibited, especially cluster munitions. The Council must also apply strict measures for humanitarian access, which would require the opening of access points into Gaza by Israel to allow the free flow of individuals, goods and funds. RUHAKANA RUGUNDA (Uganda) said that, over the last 10 years, the Security Council had adopted several presidential statements and resolutions, paying specific attention to the protection of civilians. However, those decisions were of limited value, unless they translated into concrete improvements on the ground. The inclusion of protection activities in peacekeeping mandates, such as that of MONUC, was important, and the Council had also taken significant steps to improve the protection of women and children. It had endeavoured to enhance the protection of refugees and internally displaced persons by mandating peacekeeping operations to protect camps and sites against attacks and supporting the disarmament and separation of combatants. He pointed out, however, that there was a need for a common understanding of what peacekeeping missions should be mandated to do or not do, to answer questions about the appropriate degree of robustness for modern missions, what other peacebuilding tasks should be undertaken by peacekeepers and for how long. The proliferation or fragmentation of non-State armed groups had contributed to the asymmetric nature of conflict, as seen in such trouble spots as Somalia, with profound negative effects on civilians. While armed groups were bound by international humanitarian law, for some of them, like the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), attacks against civilians were a deliberate strategy, he said, emphasizing the necessity for that to stop. It was critically important that Member States support, or at least not impede, efforts by other parties, such as religious leaders and civil society organizations, to engage armed groups in order to seek increased protection for civilians. When such efforts failed, alternative means must be considered, which should not be limited to demands for compliance and condemnation. He said mandates should include clear guidelines as to what missions could and should do to protect civilians, but such guidance should be informed by realistic assessments, in consultation with other stakeholders, including regional organizations and countries of the conflict-affected region. Currently, there was a disconnection between expectations, mandates, interpretation and real implementation capacity due to such omissions. However, that must take place within a broader policy framework, including where State armed forces were perpetrating violations against civilians. The protection of civilians did not stop with the end of hostilities, as they needed humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation and reconstruction. SUSAN RICE (United States) said that the Secretary-General's report cited many encouraging developments, as well as challenges, and the Council should review his recommendations carefully in order to improve the protection of civilians during armed conflict. Protection must be a core principle in all peacekeeping operations. In Afghanistan, the international coalition continued to fight the Taliban and Al-Qaida while causing as few civilian casualties as possible. The United States deeply regretted every civilian death and would continue to review its rules of engagement while making the reduction of civilian casualties a priority. All nations must abide by international humanitarian law, she said, adding that her country was committed, together with the international community, to defeating violence, consistent with its values, legal obligations and ideals. All nations had a responsibility to protect their civilian populations, and United Nations Member States had a responsibility to protect when individual countries were unable or unwilling to do so. The Council had taken that into account in Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Ending impunity for violations was also essential. International and hybrid tribunals had been successful in prosecuting those guilty of many violations, but in order truly to end impunity, functioning national judicial systems were very important. Special note must be taken of the most vulnerable groups, including women and children, she continued, emphasizing the importance of redoubling efforts to address sexual violence. The United States looked forward to the report on the implementation of the resolution on women, peace and security, the provisions of which must be implemented. There must be clear consequences for such crimes. Regarding the continuing recruitment of children, the Secretary-General's recommendations on humanitarian access would be useful in ensuring their well-being. More robust mandates were needed to ensure the protection of civilians, but they must be clearly defined. Missions also required the means to implement them. The United States looked forward to the OCHA-Department of Peacekeeping Operations study on how best to put the guidelines for protecting civilians into practice. MICHEL KAFANDO (Burkina Faso) said that, despite recommendations for the protection of civilians, they continued to be the most targeted victims in armed conflict, in disregard of international humanitarian law, Council resolutions, several treaties and the responsibility to protect. All parties, including non-State actors, had an obligation to respect the Geneva Conventions and their Protocols, and those groups should be fully aware of their responsibilities. It was therefore important to establish dialogue with them, without legitimizing their presence. It was also important that the Council include robust civilian-protection mandates in peacekeeping missions. Protection of civilians

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

presupposed unimpeded humanitarian access, he said, condemning all restrictions on humanitarian access. Civilian protection was a collective responsibility which demanded of all actors the political resolve to carry it out, with States having the primary responsibility in that regard. The creation of national mechanisms for receiving complaints and independent judicial systems could contribute to the fight against impunity. Subregional, regional and international organizations should also take on their responsibilities while scrupulously respecting the sovereignty of States. The Council should contribute to strengthening the rule of law while referring some cases to such mechanisms as the International Criminal Court. Burkina Faso encouraged all States to consider adopting an arms trade treaty. Further, the Council must ensure enforcement of arms embargoes and other sanctions. PHILIP PARHAM (United Kingdom) said the Council should be ready to address flagrant violations against civilians, noting that civilians in Burma were caught up in the conflict between the Government and ethnic groups, and calling on the Burmese Government to begin an inclusive political dialogue. In Sri Lanka, the priority was to ensure that the needs of the displaced were met. Efforts were also needed to ensure steady progress in the political process and in establishing accountability. The United Kingdom deeply regretted the killing of civilians by military action in Afghanistan, but assured Council members that there were strict procedures in place to minimize civilian casualties and to investigate them if they did occur. He said the Council must find new and better tools to ensure that international humanitarian law was enforced fully during conflicts. International accountability measures to combat impunity should also include referral to the International Criminal Court. The United Kingdom supported the convening of an Arria Formula meeting to engage non-State groups. Commending the outstanding protection work by United Nations personnel in the field, he said it provided many excellent examples which should be reflected in country reports. Improving information was an inherent part of the joint initiative by France and the United Kingdom on mission mandates. There was a disconnection between the language contained in peacekeeping mandates and the actual work in the field. The Council must show greater readiness to engage at the prevention stage of conflicts, rather than the resolution stage. It must be more willing to take appropriate, early action. Council President BAKI LKIN (Turkey), speaking in his national capacity, said the Council's credibility was at stake as it faced the challenge of stopping the killing of civilians and reversing the alarming trend. The Secretary-General's report demonstrated the magnitude of the task of ensuring the effective protection of civilians during conflict. That should be a collective and multidimensional effort with the primary responsibility resting first and foremost with States. The entire international community also had a responsibility to protect civilians. Unless handled carefully, the sensitive issue of non-State armed groups carried the risk of undermining or weakening ongoing efforts to protect civilians, he warned. Given the ambiguity of that term, there was a need for extreme care in dealing with such groups, particularly since many terrorist organizations attempted to abuse the term and what it entailed in order to gain international attention and support. Combating terrorism was the right and obligation of every State. International and non-governmental organizations in particular should be vigilant in conducting their work in conflict areas, and not allow themselves to be exploited by such groups. It was through the strengthening of the rule of law, human rights, democracy and good governance that the international community could expect long-term, lasting protection of civilians. REGINA DUNLOP (Brazil) said the Council should use appropriate and non-selective instruments provided for in the United Nations Charter to end gross violations of international humanitarian law associated with civilian casualties. Among them, the instruments set forth in Chapter VI should be given careful consideration as a means to stimulate the peaceful settlement of disputes. When Chapter VII became necessary and sanctions emerged as a potentially effective tool, they should be specific and targeted, so as not to impose further suffering on affected populations. When a peacekeeping mission was established, it might be necessary and even morally imperative to give it a clear mandate to help protect civilians, she said. Brazil fully recognized the increasing importance of that task in peacekeeping and concurred with the Secretary-General's view that it was not exclusively military in nature. Rather, it was and must be multifaceted. Brazil favoured a comprehensive approach that sought to address, alongside security concerns, the underlying political, economic and even cultural factors of armed conflict and violence against civilians. Another key element for success was cooperation with national authorities, given the primary responsibility of host Governments to protect their own populations. A challenging aspect was compliance with international humanitarian law by non-State actors, she continued, adding that her delegation recognized the benefits of such dialogue as a way to obtain guarantees for the security of humanitarian personnel and access to populations in need of assistance. It was essential that the humanitarian purposes of such dialogue be entirely clear to all participants, and that the principles of independence, neutrality, impartiality and humanity be fully observed at all times. Those principles were critically important in addressing such issues as safe and timely

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

access to those in need. Enhanced cooperation and coordination of humanitarian actors with States was also important, she said, noting that States could also contribute to the safety of humanitarian actors by educating their agents on the purposes and benefits of humanitarian assistance, as well as on the need to ensure the safety and security of all involved in its delivery. It was fit to recall in that connection the General Assembly's 2008 decision to establish a World Humanitarian Day on 19 August. Hopefully it would help raise awareness of the importance of humanitarian activities and therefore have a positive impact on the safety and security of United Nations and associated personnel. NASSIR ABDULAZIZ AL-NASSER (Qatar) said all efforts to protect civilians, including the inclusion of protection provisions in peacekeeping mandates and plans to face up to all forms of violence, would be meaningless unless the decisions were translated into concrete action. Protection of civilians was a multifaceted issue, and it was important to ensure adherence to international law, including provisions on foreign occupation. Qatar condemned all targeting of civilians in armed conflict and under foreign occupation, as well as all acts of retaliation against civilians. In the Middle East region, more than 1,000 Palestinian civilians had lost their lives during the Israeli onslaught on Gaza, which had also led to vast damage to infrastructure and schools operated by the United Nations, in violation of international law. Underscoring the importance of documenting the obstruction of humanitarian access during and after the crisis, he said that, under international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, primary responsibility lay with the parties to the conflict and the occupying party to protect persons under their authority and meet their basic needs. In the Middle East, the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip were suffering under restrictions imposed on the importation of humanitarian supplies, which were subjected to unjustified standards and procedures. In fact, Israel was still denying the entry of basic construction materials for the rehabilitation of infrastructure destroyed during its aggression, imposing restrictions on traffic at the border crossings and clearly hampering humanitarian operations and efforts for early recovery. He said the obstruction of humanitarian operations by the occupying Power in Gaza had also disrupted education -- a fundamental human right. The Council should instruct its various organs to make a priority of the right to education in areas affected by armed conflict and foreign occupation, and focus on that issue in its own future deliberations. He also emphasized the importance of ensuring accountability for violations of international law, saying that the dilemma always resided in non-enforcement and double standards. Continued impunity frustrated victims and fuelled their desire for revenge, he said, adding that it also allowed perpetrators to feel that they were above the law, ultimately encouraging them to commit further violations. Qatar stressed the importance of action by the Council for the implementation of the recommendations of the United Nations fact-finding panel investigating a series of Israeli attacks on United Nations facilities and staff in the Gaza Strip, including schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). There was also an urgent need to examine one of the recommendations on conducting a thorough and unbiased investigation of all violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza. The Council should shoulder its obligation to protect civilians in armed conflict and impose respect for the instruments of international law and Security Council resolutions. MARTIN PALOUS (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed firm support for the work of the Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians, saying its potential should be used fully. The Council should give further practical relevance to its own aide-memoire, which should be translated into concrete improvements in protecting civilians on the ground. There was a need for close coordination and meaningful positive synergies on civilian-protection policies within the framework of United Nations activities in other key areas, such as human rights, gender equity, children in armed conflict, rule of law, small arms and light weapons, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, and security-sector reform. It was crucially important to put the concept of responsibility to protect into operation and the European Union called for its full implementation by the Council and the General Assembly, he said, stressing that the Council must react to the changing nature of threats to international peace and security. He called on all parties to conflicts to ensure civilians were protected and in compliance with international humanitarian and human rights law. The European Union strongly encouraged the Governments concerned to fully protect internally displaced persons and children affected by armed conflict. All violations of human rights and international humanitarian law should be investigated and those responsible held to account. Urging the Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to redouble its efforts to transform relevant Council resolutions into results in the field, he also strongly supported enhancing the role of women in protection issues, in accordance with Council resolutions 1325 (2000) and 1820 (2008). The Council should make clear that any assault on civilians, including genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, were totally unacceptable. He encouraged all States to fully support the International Criminal Court by acceding to the Rome Statute and cooperating with the

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

Court. The European Union was dedicated to systematically considering human rights, gender and children affected by armed conflict when planning and conducting its European Security and Defence Policy missions and operations. He stressed the importance of enhanced European Union-United Nations cooperation in civilian protection where the two organizations had missions deployed side by side, as in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. KIRSTY GRAHAM (New Zealand) said the 26-year-long conflict in Sri Lanka had cost the lives of many of its people and her country had joined others in condemning the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) attacks on the civilian population. However, it had also been concerned about reports of Government forces using heavy artillery in areas with a dense civilian population. She also expressed concern for the safety of internally displaced persons. New Zealand strongly supported the inclusion of civilian-protection activities in peacekeeping mandates, but called for improvements in their clarity and specificity. Little progress had been made in developing the necessary capacities and doctrines that should accompany civilian-protection mandates. She said the increasing incidence of intentional attacks on humanitarian workers in conflict zones was deeply disturbing, and urged parties to armed conflict to respect international humanitarian law, particularly the duty to respect and protect humanitarian assistance personnel. A related concern was the rising frequency of attacks on journalists, who were vital to the monitoring of conflicts and ending impunity for serious crimes. It was imperative for the protection of civilians that impunity was ended, and New Zealand supported the International Criminal Court in that regard. DANIEL CARMON (Israel) said the Secretary-General's report contained a number of deficiencies and inaccuracies. It did not acknowledge the actions of the Hamas terrorist organization against Israeli civilians and did not note that the southern part of the country had been subjected to a ceaseless barrage of rockets and mortars for eight years. In the old terrorist tradition, Hamas deliberately targeted Israeli civilians. While clear evidence existed of its cruel misuse of civilian infrastructure, contrary to the most basic humanitarian values, the report shied away from addressing that practice in an appropriate manner. He said the report ambitiously verged on drawing judicial conclusions concerning international humanitarian law, although the mandate, expertise and procedure upon which they were based were unclear. It did not mention Israel's extraordinary efforts to avoid civilian casualties. The report was fundamentally flawed for its omissions, errors and selective use of language. It failed to address the actions of non-State parties who had made a mockery of the concept of civilian protection. Israel hoped such misrepresentations would not be repeated, and that futile politicized semantics, wrong accusations and deliberate omissions would be avoided in the future. "For Israelis - as victims of terrorism - the protection of civilians is not a theoretical exercise; it is a reality that we have been grappling with for over 60 years," he said. "It is unfortunate that terrorism, on a daily basis, presents us with the dilemma arising from the need to uphold human rights while protecting civilians on all sides." Israel expected substantial improvements in future reports so that the international community could engage in a relevant, accurate and in-depth debate on that important issue. CLAUDIA BLUM (Colombia) said all States and other relevant actors must give central priority to the protection of civilians, as well as strict observance of international humanitarian law and norms in that field. Colombia had prioritized, through its democratic security policy, the strategic objective of strengthening and guaranteeing the rule of law throughout its territory. The consolidation of that policy had enabled the creation of more solid conditions for stronger protection of the people and enjoyment of their rights. Those actions went hand in hand with a comprehensive policy on human rights and international humanitarian law, aimed at ensuring proper punishment for violations, including for members of the public forces of the State. Since 2002, more than 51,000 members of illegal armed groups had been demobilized and the fight against drug trafficking, the financial source of violence and terror, was also a national priority. She expressed support for the Secretary-General's call to States that were not yet parties to the Convention against Anti-personnel Mines to ratify that instrument without delay, noting that her country would host the Second Review Conference of the Ottawa Convention from 30 November to 4 December. Colombia also agreed with the Secretary-General regarding the urgent need to implement controls for the eradication of the illicit trade in small arms as an essential prerequisite for better civilian protection. Colombia would continue to promote that issue in the Assembly and expected the Security Council to emphasize the importance of adopting effective measures in that field. Condemning attacks against humanitarian personnel, she emphasized the primary responsibility of States to provide and coordinate humanitarian assistance within their territories. Colombia also recognized the importance of international cooperation and facilitation of humanitarian access, in accordance with international norms. The Government was the main provider of humanitarian assistance and, on his recent visit to Colombia, Under-Secretary-General Holmes had verified progress in that regard. Progress in security was reflected in improved access and enhanced safety for humanitarian staff throughout the country. It was also essential that

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

States comply fully with their international obligations to protect refugees. MIRSADA COLAKOVIC (Bosnia and Herzegovina) said that, given its own painful experience, her country always recognized the need for strict compliance with international humanitarian law. The international community must strengthen mechanisms to enhance compliance by State, as well as non-State actors. Bosnia and Herzegovina was committed to the provisions of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Combating impunity was a factor in preventing violent acts against civilians, she said, welcoming the adoption of the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which her country had signed in December. That Convention would serve as an indispensable legal instrument in contributing to the protection of civilians during armed conflict. Bosnia and Herzegovina supported the work of the Expert Group on the Protection of Civilians. She reiterated the importance of regional and subregional organizations in conflict resolution, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and conflict prevention. Bearing in mind that most conflicts today were not international, regional and subregional approaches would lead to more workable and lasting solutions. Bosnia and Herzegovina invited competent United Nations agencies to work closely with regional organizations in that regard. CHRISTIAN WENAWESER (Liechtenstein) said that, among the core principles of international humanitarian law was the distinction between combatants and non-combatants, the proportionality of the use of force and the requirement to take all feasible measures to minimize civilian casualties. Repeated violations of those rules, as in Sri Lanka and Gaza, warranted a clear response from the Council. Where national accountability mechanisms failed, it should establish commissions of inquiry and, in the most serious cases, consider referral to the International Criminal Court. He said the Council must, where necessary, call on parties to conflict to remove all unwarranted impediments to humanitarian access. The Council had a particular obligation to protect United Nations staff and to ensure there was no impunity for attacks on humanitarian and peacekeeping personnel, which constituted a war crime. Protection of civilians must be an inherent task for all peacekeeping missions and Liechtenstein welcomed the development of mission-specific inclusive strategies and plans of action, particularly regarding acts of sexual violence. The Council's clear guidance on how to protect civilians from such acts would be useful to force commanders, who currently provided protection on an ad-hoc basis and under a flexible interpretation of their vague mandates. RIYAD MANSOUR, Permanent Observer for Palestine, said his people were all too familiar with the international community's failure to guarantee the protection accorded to them under international law. For more than four decades, the Palestinian people had endured appalling levels of human suffering at the hands of Israel, the occupying Power. The protection of peoples under foreign occupation must be a priority undertaking of the United Nations, in particular the Security Council, which had clear responsibilities in that regard. The international community's repeated inability to hold Israel accountable for its violations and war crimes had regrettably reinforced that country's impunity and lawlessness. Never had the absence of protection for the Palestinian civilian population been more evident than during Israel's three-week aggression against the Gaza Strip, he said. More than 1,400 Palestinians had been killed in the Israeli onslaught, the overwhelming majority of them civilians, including hundreds of women and children. Civilian areas and objects, including United Nations schools where civilians were known to be sheltering from the violence, had been directly targeted by the occupying Power. Among countless other violations, Israel had also attacked humanitarian personnel and clearly-marked ambulances, destroyed the infrastructure and obstructed humanitarian access. Those actions constituted not only serious, systematic violations of international law, but many of them amounted to war crimes, for which accountability must be pursued. Several independent inquiries and investigations into Israel's military aggression against Gaza had clearly confirmed that Israel had committed grave breaches of international law, as it continued to do with its ongoing blockade of the enclave. He called for serious steps to pursue accountability and justice for Israel's crimes against the Palestinian civilian population. The international community, including the Council, must follow up on the findings and recommendations from United Nations-related investigations, including the Board of Inquiry and the investigation being undertaken by the Human Rights Council's fact-finding commission. At the same time, urgent measures must be undertaken to end Israel's unlawful blockade of Gaza. As long as Israel continued to breach its obligations towards the Palestinian civilian population, the Council must act to uphold its Charter responsibilities to ensure compliance with international law and United Nations resolutions. HEIDI GRAU (Switzerland) welcomed systematic efforts by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the United Nations and certain non-governmental organizations that were committed to ensuring that armed groups respected their obligations with regard to civilians. On the other hand, it was important to clarify applicable international law regarding the operations of other non-State actors in armed conflict, such as private military and security companies. Switzerland, in collaboration with ICRC, had taken an initiative which had resulted in the Montreux

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

Document last year. Turning to the fight against impunity, she welcomed the recommendations asking Member States to take measures at the national level to ensure that international crimes did not go unpunished. Switzerland particularly welcomed the recommendations that the Council do everything within its power to ensure full cooperation of States with the International Criminal Court. It was essential that investigations were carried out on alleged violations of international humanitarian law in every armed conflict, regardless of the perpetrator. The Council should systematically demand reports on such allegations and consider the creation of commissions of inquiry. In that connection, she recalled the existence of an international fact-finding commission established by the First Additional Protocol to the Geneva Conventions, encouraging the Council to give a mandate to that body, rather than appointing ad hoc commissions of inquiry. She also welcomed the establishment of the Group of Experts on protection of civilians and supported the recommendation calling for it to meet prior to the establishment or renewal of peacekeeping mandates. On access, she said her Government had launched concrete projects designed to improve humanitarian access with the aim of providing national authorities, international organizations and humanitarian actors in the field with practical instruments. Those instruments were now being prepared and should be presented at the meeting on access due to take place at the beginning of 2010 in Switzerland. JORGE ARGUELLO (Argentina) said that, in accordance with international humanitarian law, the protection of civilians was a legal obligation of parties to a conflict from which they were not relieved, even if the counterpart acted in breach of it. As for non-State armed groups, it was clear that article 3 common to the four 1949 Geneva Conventions contained specific obligations that also applied to non-State parties. The inclusion of protection activities in United Nations mandates was very important for granting access for humanitarian assistance. There was a need to develop clear mandates that provided the necessary resources. Guaranteeing humanitarian access was an important aspect of civilian protection, he said, adding that people escaping from combat areas must be allowed safe transit. Argentina attached the utmost importance to the role of justice, due to its none-too-distant past. Individuals having committed war crimes, genocide or crimes against humanity must be held criminally accountable. In that regard, the International Criminal Court did not replace national justice, but operated when it was not in operation. Ensuring accountability for such crimes under the national system was not only an obligation of States but also a way to help alleviate part of the perceived tension between the quest for justice and the search for peace. JOHN MCNEE (Canada) said 10 years of experience showed that the language surrounding Council resolutions on civilian protection did not automatically translate into clear mandates and operations on the ground. To bridge that gap, it must be translated into practical field-based guidance for military and civilian actors, including civilian police. Those entrusted with protection must have the knowledge and training effectively to fulfil that role, with particular sensitivity to vulnerable groups such as women and children. Canada was pleased to have co-sponsored a recent conference to examine the role of military peacekeepers in addressing sexual violence, which had resulted in an inventory of good practices. Noting the need to work together to assign appropriate accountabilities in order to ensure implementation of mandated tasks, he applauded the commitment of OCHA and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to more effectively make operational the protection of civilians in peacekeeping mandates. Among other things, Canada also welcomed a recent Department of Peacekeeping Operations high-level seminar on robust peacekeeping and looked forward to the upcoming OCHA-Department of Peacekeeping Operations lessons-learned study. It was important to prevent gaps in coordination between peacekeeping operations and civilian agencies with a critical role in protecting civilians. Full, safe and unhindered access to populations in need must be provided. Welcoming OCHA's efforts to better monitor access constraints and report to the Council, he said timely and credible information and analysis were crucial in developing effective responses. When issues of access were brought to the Council's attention, follow-up was vital. The Council must be willing to draw consistently upon key tools at its disposal, including fact-finding missions, good offices, envoys, monitoring missions and preventive deployments, when civilians were at risk. It must also monitor its own resolutions and provide back-up for missions, as necessary. The Secretariat also had a role. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, field visits by the Experts Group could provide the Council with key information. On accountability, he said national authorities were responsible for exercising jurisdiction over those responsible for crimes against civilians, including humanitarian workers. When there was unwillingness to do so, the Council and the broader United Nations membership had a role to play. Canada had been pleased to participate in the process leading to the Montreux Document -- a non-binding document intended to clarify international law as it pertained to private military and security companies. The compendium of good practices was an important guide for Member States in their relations with private security providers. BASHAR JA'AFARI (Syria) said the striking paradox was

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

the ever-widening gap between agreements and practices on the ground. Ten years had elapsed since the Council had begun debating civilian protection. When the Council had taken up the matter in January, the world had seen a brutal and flagrant aggression by Israel against Gaza. Despite repeated demands by the Security Council and the international community, however, Israel had escalated its aggression, targeting the unarmed civilian population of Palestine. Prohibition of movement, impeding the delivery of international aid, settlement activities and the demolition of homes were among Israel's oppressive practices in violation of international law. Its actions represented a deliberate violation of international humanitarian and human rights law, as well as other international norms. The Council had condemned all violations against civilians and called on all parties concerned to end such practices, he said. It had also recognized the needs of civilians under foreign occupation, underlining the responsibility of the occupying Power in that regard. It had also insisted on the need for safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid to those in need, while also underlining the need to end impunity. The Secretary-General, in his most recent report, had expressed grave concern about the high number of casualties in Gaza and the significant damage to property and infrastructure. Yet Israel persisted in its policies, which perpetuated the suffering of civilians in Gaza. He said the report of the investigation team dispatched by the Secretary-General documented Israeli violations, including the use of white phosphorous and damage to UNRWA premises. All those practices represented war crimes, and the Security Council should implement the recommendations of the investigation and hold those responsible accountable. The Council should explain whether Israel had implemented its demands. Syria wished to know why double standards were applied and why Israel was exempt from fulfilling its obligations. Were Palestinians not considered to be civilians like others around the world? To give credibility to today's debate, the Council should also exert pressure on Israel to uphold the rights of Syrian citizens in the occupied Syrian Golan, he added, describing a series of unlawful Israeli actions there. LUIS ENRIQUE CHAVEZ (Peru), noting that the Expert Group had substantively promoted the treatment of issues relating to civilian protection in the Council, said its work was reflected in several resolutions. The Group needed to focus especially on cases that had not yet been resolved, despite numerous efforts. While the United Nations had been working to provide real protection to civilians, it was nonetheless alarming that the situation prevailing in 1999 was not substantively different from the current situation. There were still violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in various conflicts, with civilians, particularly women and children, as victims. The Council must handle effectively the complete implementation of resolutions 1296 (2000) and 1674 (2006), including the responsibility of all Member States to protect civilians in armed conflict. Expressing support for programmes and policies promoting the prevention of violence, he called for implementation of resolution 1325 (2000) so that grave cases of sexual violence could be referred to the International Criminal Court. There was a need to implement measures that would contribute substantially to civilian protection, including respect for international humanitarian law; the promotion of compliance, particularly on the part of non-State groups; broadening access for humanitarian workers; and ensuring accountability where the law was broken. In the post-conflict period there was a need for action to strengthen institutions, the rule of law and stable economic conditions. That could combat poverty and social exclusion, which were often at the root of conflicts. GARY QUINLAN (Australia) said the question of humanitarian access remained a critical challenge for the Council and Member States. The latter needed to increase their efforts to address constraint to humanitarian access and there was a clear need to streamline bureaucratic procedures in that regard, which could add to the costs and reduce the effectiveness of humanitarian operations. It was also important for all parties, including non-State actors, to cooperate with humanitarian organizations to establish arrangements that would allow the safe passage of humanitarian workers and relief items to affected populations. Another issue was the inclusion of civilian-protection tasks in peacekeeping mandates. Guidelines and training to that end could help mission personnel understand how to effectively implement their protection mandates. He said the Council must be more willing to consider country situations in which civilians were at risk. Past experience had demonstrated that the Council accepted its responsibility to address the protection needs of civilians in such countries as Afghanistan, Sudan and Timor-Leste. However, there was a need for greater consistency in the Council's approach, as too often it appeared unwilling to address the plight of civilians in many internal armed conflicts. Chapters VI, VII and VIII of the Charter provided the Council with adequate tools to make a difference, including targeted measures, international criminal justice mechanisms and authorization for the use of force. What was lacking, at times, was the Council's political resolve to use those tools to protect civilians. MOHAMMED F. AL-ALLAF (Jordan), endorsing the recommendations made by Costa Rica on behalf of the Human Security Network, said that over the years, the Council had developed the main concepts on civilian protection, but a number of challenges still needed to be

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

addressed. They included the need to strengthen respect for international law by parties to conflict, including non-State groups; strengthening protection; facilitating humanitarian access; and ensuring accountability. In the case of Gaza, the international community had failed to apply the main principles of protection, he said, pointing out that the suffering of Palestinian civilians in that territory continued even after the end of the conflict owing to restrictions imposed by Israel, which continued to prevent access for humanitarian aid and construction materials to rebuild infrastructure. There should be no discriminatory or targeted attacks on civilians. International humanitarian law determined the treatment of civilians not taking part in hostilities. In the case of foreign occupation, the victims were always civilians. Reaffirming that peacekeeping mandates should incorporate civilian protection, he said his country was satisfied that the report proposed that peacekeeping missions support countries hosting missions in order to create a climate of security. Success in protecting civilians required clarity in the mandates adopted by the Council, support from the standpoint of resources, training and operational concepts. The components of peacekeeping operations in support of civilians should not always be military in nature. Jordan welcomed the input of the Expert Group. GIAN LORENZO CORNADO (Italy) said women and children bore the main brunt of sexual violence when used as a tactic of war. Council resolution 1820 (2008) clearly stated that that was a matter of international peace and security. Parties to conflict must therefore immediately and effectively put an end to sexual violence and take special measures to protect women and children. Civilian protection should continue to be part of peacekeeping mandates and peacekeepers should be properly trained and equipped. The concept of "robust peacekeeping" was not making its way in the Secretariat's assessments and Council debates, he said, adding that his country supported the inclusion of civilian-protection clauses in peacekeeping mandates. International criminal jurisdiction should be viewed increasingly as a complementary instrument in the suppression of international crimes. The protection of civilians required further efforts to prevent the destabilizing accumulation of conventional weapons, he said, noting that his country was working for a legally binding arms trade treaty. Italy was in the forefront of the fight against illicit trafficking in small arms and light weapons. The responsibility to protect implied that sovereignty brought special responsibilities and that Governments must protect their own populations. Only when a Government was unable or unwilling to do so should the international community intervene. JAIME HERMIDA CASTILLO (Nicaragua) said civilian protection should not be manipulated with a view to interfering in strictly internal affairs of States. Unfortunately, there were many examples of such interference in the history of Nicaragua and Latin America. The Council had been selective in applying the main principles of protection, for example in the case of Palestine. The application of double standards inevitably undermined the Council's reputation, leading to despair on the part of the people involved. Regarding the activities of multinational coalitions or forces, it was important to develop mechanisms for monitoring them so that the euphemistic use of the term "collateral damage" disappeared from the news and justice could be applied. Regarding the protection of civilians, it must be accomplished in accordance with the Charter and the guiding principles of peacekeeping, which included the consent of the host State. Civilian protection could not be assured in a sustainable manner without a peace process involving the participation of all parties and enjoying the support of the countries concerned. Peacekeeping missions should cooperate closely with the countries concerned and support them in protecting civilians, he said. The painstaking work of the Fifth Committee (Administrative and Budgetary), which had concluded its work yesterday, should serve as a lesson: it should be clear that if mandates voted on by the Council were to be implemented, it was important to provide the missions concerned with all the resources required. They should include funds for training and increasing the capacity of host countries. Political crises that degenerated into armed conflict could not be resolved without tackling the root causes and promoting sustainable development. Only then would civilian populations be safe. LOTFI BOUCHAARA (Morocco) said the existence of conflicts could be explained by many factors, among them the sometimes active, direct or indirect involvement of States in the region. That was why the problem of good neighbourliness often constituted the key to any lasting solutions to ensure the protection of civilians. The worsening of intra-State conflicts and armed rebellions was often caused by poverty and underdevelopment. Fuelled by illicit trafficking in weapons and drugs, such conflicts often forced the displacement of civilians. Civilian protection required integrated efforts, available resources, and clear and feasible mandates. Priority should be given to the political process itself. One word spelt out the best guarantee for the protection of civilians: peace. He said the instruments for civilian protection were reflected in the Geneva Conventions and other international instruments, as well as Council resolutions. Despite the availability of those tools, however, the Palestinians continued to suffer enormously. The people of Gaza had been subjected to violence, in violation of international humanitarian law, a situation which was being exacerbated by a blockade which deprived them of their most basic

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

rights. Light weapons were another factor contributing to the victimization of civilians, particularly in Africa. Morocco therefore supported the development of international regulations for their importation and export. Countries hosting refugees must give all possible support to efforts by the international community to facilitate their free repatriation, while also carrying out a transparent census of refugee populations, he said. That approach to the protection of civilians should be preventive and must tackle the main causes of armed conflict. Such a preventive approach must include sustainable development, poverty eradication, good governance and the promotion of democracy. JOSE LUIS CANCELA (Uruguay) said civilian protection should be addressed comprehensively, including through peacekeeping, promotion of the rule of law, political stability, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, post-conflict reconstruction, and social and economic development. Women and children required special protection and, despite efforts undertaken, a lot of work remained to ensure their protection. There was a need for greater attention to the reintegration of victims of grave violations, particularly victims of abuse and sexual exploitation. Violations of clear obligations under international law, particularly against women and children, should be referred to the International Criminal Court. He said any humanitarian response must be sustainable and take the development perspective into account. Enhancing protection through more effective and better resourced peacekeeping constituted one of the five core challenges identified in the Secretary-General's report. The incorporation of protection activities into peacekeeping mandates was among the most significant of Council actions to that end. Wider support for such mandates would create a deeper commitment among all actors involved in their implementation. Troop-contributing countries whose task it was to implement them on the ground had very limited possibilities for participating in the decision-making process. There was a need for clear guidelines, emanating from realistic and achievable mandates, and for appropriate resources. ZACHARY MUBURI-MUITA (Kenya) said that, while words had not matched actions on the ground, some achievement had been realized in the area of protection of civilians in armed conflict. A few remaining challenges included civilian protection mandates. Those mandates, used for some missions, remained largely undefined. The Council must offer clear guidelines that underlined the importance of a comprehensive approach involving all components of a mission. Available capacity and resources must also be ensured. Also, humanitarian access was a fundamental prerequisite for life-saving assistance. A secure environment must be provided to allow humanitarian workers access to civilians in need, including displaced persons. He said sexual violence had turned into a tool of warfare. While adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) had been a step in the right direction, a lot was still required to enhance its implementation. There was a need to create "a culture of protection" in which Governments fulfil their responsibilities, armed groups respect the norms of international law and the private sector recognizes the impact of its commitments to countries in conflict. The Council, the entire United Nations, as well as regional and international organizations were urged to act in a swift and decisive manner when civilians were threatened in armed conflicts. MOHAMMAD ERFANI AYOOB (Afghanistan), noting that the Taliban and their allies showed an increasingly blatant disregard for human life in his country, said that in the first five months of 2009, UNAMA had counted 800 civilian deaths. The Taliban had also stepped up its use of assassinations, human shields, school attacks, kidnappings and threats against those accused of "cooperating" with the Government or the international community. When civilians became victims, however unintentionally, it undermined the people's faith in the Government. The best hope for the Afghan people was the continuing support of the international community, and Afghans were more aware of that than anyone. Without international assistance and the international military presence, they would not have escaped the repression and brutality of the Taliban era and would not now have a better future in sight. The safety of each person and preventing of deaths of innocent civilians were critically important for the Government of Afghanistan, which had raised that issue repeatedly with its friends and allies, he said. Afghans should be made to feel that their safety was at the centre of attention. He applauded the decisions by the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to improve the rules of engagement in populated areas, minimize the use of air bombardment, and make human security a priority. In addition, it was highly important that the international community do more on the professional training and equipping of the growing Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police so that the Government could take over more - and eventually full - responsibility for the protection of its citizens. The main goal of the Government and its allies was to fight terrorism and bring about a better future for the Afghan people. SURESH CHANDRA (Sri Lanka) said the Secretary-General's report suffered from selectivity of language and situations in dealing with different countries. The situation in Sri Lanka, to which the report referred "with considerable factual inaccuracy in some places", was one where a terrorist group had taken a large number of civilians hostages and used them as human shields. The children of those civilians had been forcibly conscripted,

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

suicide attacks had been launched on civilians, adults had been used for forced labour and a large portion of the food and medicines delivered to the civilians had been forcibly taken by the terrorists. It was necessary to recognize the extraordinary challenges and new situations that constantly confronted elected Governments in dealing with such unrelenting groups, he said. Sri Lanka's recent experience showed how non-State actors in civilian garb used schools and hospitals for terrorist operations and deceived the world by blurring the distinction between civilian and military targets. Non-State actors paid scant attention to international norms and did not feel bound by any legal framework. As in most conflicts, especially those involving ruthless and unrelenting terrorist groups such as LTTE, the ending of the conflict had inevitably cost the loss of lives, property and national wealth, he said. However, the Government was gratified that, due to the professionalism of its soldiers, there had been no cataclysmic scenario as some had predicted. It was important to recognize that the efforts of the security forces had succeeded in bringing to safety hundreds of thousands of civilians from a terrible hostage situation. Addressing the issue of illicit arms, which contributed to the spread of violence and terrorism, he said that while measures could be imposed on States legitimately engaged in protecting their civilian population from terrorists, albeit selectively, non-State actors such as terrorist groups had relatively easy access to illicit weapons. There was also a need to recognize the legitimate role of the military in civilian protection. The United Nations and other humanitarian agencies must support and assist Governments, and in doing so, be sensitive to the ground realities, including respect for the sovereignty of States. The principle of unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel must be respected, but it could not disregard the State's responsibility to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel, he said, stressing that terrorists did not distinguish between military and humanitarian personnel in their attacks. Another inevitable consequence of armed conflict was internal displacement, which armed groups used to exploit civilian populations, sometimes by hiding among them. Unfortunately, those ground realities were not considered by those who looked at civilian protection in isolation and applied generalizations, regardless of specific circumstances, he said. "The challenges facing us are primarily of a practical nature, requiring more international cooperation and greater coordination between the United Nations bodies and Member States," he added. The Government of Sri Lanka reiterated that the framework that the Secretary-General and the President of Sri Lanka had agreed upon would be the basis for continued cooperation in the post-conflict period. MARTY M. NATALEGAWA (Indonesia) said civilians in armed conflict required immediate and unhindered humanitarian assistance to alleviate their suffering, and it was extremely deplorable that irresponsible acts against relief workers, humanitarian aid convoys and others engaged in humanitarian assistance to civilians continued to take place. All parties to armed conflicts should adhere to international law, including the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and its Optional Protocol. For Indonesia, the best protection from armed conflict was in its prevention, he continued, urging the Council to spare no efforts in that area. The Council's efforts to protect civilians merited wide support from regional and international actors alike. By the same token, the Council should lend its full support to the efforts of regional organizations in addressing dire humanitarian situations. To attain that objective, it was important to promote "the culture of protection" through regional and international organizations. In the conduct of hostilities, the parties should do everything feasible to protect civilians and civilian objects, he said. All the efforts to protect civilians must be founded on the tenets of human rights, security and development -- the three pillars of the United Nations. Those three principles should be reflected in the next report of the Secretary-General, in commemoration of the tenth anniversary in November of the Council's having placed civilian protection on its agenda. The anniversary should also serve to maintain the momentum by strengthening the United Nations system, with Member States and other stakeholders working in a coordinated, coherent and comprehensive manner. ALEXANDER LOMAIA (Georgia) recalled that, last year, the citizens of his country had suffered a massive foreign military invasion, followed by the occupation of up to 20 per cent of its territory. More than 130,000 citizens had been forced from their homes in a move branded "ethnic cleansing" by a major European intergovernmental body. That horror continued. Dozens of villages inside the occupied territory had been deliberately destroyed and tens of thousands of displaced Georgians were being prevented from returning to their homes. That policy represented the third wave of ethnic cleansing, the first two having been carried out in Abkhazia, where 400,000 citizens of the pre-war population had either been killed or expelled. He said the Russian occupying forces had blocked access of humanitarian aid to the occupied territories, another breach of international humanitarian law. That humanitarian blockade had resulted in the turning of the occupied territory into a "black hole", where people were deprived of basic human rights. The Government of Georgia, as well as the whole international community, regretted the termination of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) due to the sole negative Russian vote.

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

The termination of that mandate was meant to reduce the level of protection in occupied Abkhazia and to create another obstacle to the safe and dignified return of internally displaced persons and refugees. To better address their needs, the presence of UNHCR, OCHA, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and other agencies should be enhanced inside the occupied territories of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali Region/South Ossetia. GERT ROSENTHAL (Guatemala) said there was no doubt as to the importance of all the actions of the past decade, but the Secretary-General's report revealed that the situation confronting civilians in current conflicts was depressingly similar to that prevailing in 1999. Progress was relative, unless met with substantial improvements on the ground. With regard to the five core challenges identified in the report, Guatemala wished to offer its firm support to that invigorated commitment and to be a part of the proposed culture of protection. In seeking to ensure compliance, international efforts should not be limited to ensuring respect for legal obligations, but should also address the need to strengthen existing international law, he continued. To promote compliance by non-State parties, outreach activities were needed to sensitize armed groups, as well as civil society, to the need to uphold the highest respect for civilians and international law. Enhanced protection would depend on a broad scope of actions by the Council. Supporting a multidimensional approach to all aspects of civilian protection through thematic, country-specific and group-specific considerations, he said its effectiveness would depend on such external factors as the allocation of adequate resources, the number of people on the ground, logistics and capacity. Guatemala welcomed the annex to the report, which contained an analysis of restrictions to humanitarian access, and hoped its recommendations would soon turn into concrete measures. Regarding accountability for violations, it was important to remember that the Council was not a juridical body. Therefore, it should resort to enhancing international cooperation and mutual legal assistance for criminal matters, as recommended in the report. In conclusion, he emphasized that primary responsibility for the protection of civilians fell to States, but they were equally responsible for seeking international assistance when they could not fulfil that basic duty. In the coming years, both the General Assembly and the Security Council would have a prominent role to play in making that concept operational, while also continuing to improve the United Nations assistance structure. The Council, and the international community as a whole, would be judged according to their capacity to protect the most vulnerable. MONA JUUL (Norway) said the many violations of humanitarian law over the last few years, particularly with regard to the protection of civilians, was a cause for grave concern. There was an urgent need to strengthen respect for international humanitarian law. A key concern was securing access for humanitarian assistance to those in need. It was also necessary to ensure that those who violated international humanitarian law were held accountable. Promoting respect for international humanitarian law required engaging non-State actors. In that regard, Norway supported the holding of an Arrias Formula meeting to discuss the experiences of United Nations and non-governmental actors in engaging armed groups. Noting that sexual violence and rape occurred every single day in armed conflict, she said those acts were often calculated tactics of war and should be treated as such. The systematic use of rape had rightly been recognized as a war crime by both the Council and the International Criminal Court. The adoption of resolution 1820 (2008) had ended the debate on whether or not sexual violence belonged on the Council agenda. Asking the Council to use the most effective measures at its disposal, including targeted sanction, to make clear that sexual violence was unacceptable and that perpetrators would be held accountable, she expressed support for referring such crimes to the International Criminal Court and considering sanctions against Member States and non-State actors that perpetrated them. PARK IN-KOOK (Republic of Korea) said no violators of international humanitarian law should go unpunished. When it was clearly established that there was no escape for a violator, compliance with international law would be enhanced accordingly. Civilian protection was the primary responsibility of the parties to armed conflict and, in that connection, the Republic of Korea fully endorsed the Secretary-General's emphasis on accountability for mass atrocities, as well as the responsibility of States to prosecute those suspected of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. Recognizing the responsibility of States, the Republic of Korea also wished to emphasize that the role of the International Criminal Court should be respected. The proliferation and fragmentation of non-State armed groups also deserved special attention. Sexual violence against women and girls was one of the most horrible forms of violence against civilians and must be stopped, he said, stressing also the importance of timely, safe and unhindered humanitarian access as a cardinal rule that should always be assured. Humanitarian response should be driven exclusively by the humanitarian needs of the affected populations, irrespective of any political grounds. Preventing access would only increase unnecessary civilian casualties, and non-State actors employing such a tactic should be held accountable. Efforts to protect civilians should be an integral part of all peacekeeping missions. The Republic of Korea welcomed

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

the Council's intention to include clear guidelines on civilian protection in peacekeeping mandates, and expected continuing efforts by the Council to define and elaborate protection mandates, strategies and plans of action. JORGE VALERO (Venezuela), noting that armed conflicts were characterized by a multiplicity of factors requiring a comprehensive approach, said the relevant United Nations organs must develop prevention strategies to safeguard peace and protect civilians. They must deal with such causes of armed conflicts as poverty, interventions by commercial companies, and the wishes of some countries for domination. Venezuela had the responsibility to protect civilians displaced by the internal conflict in Colombia, many of whom had settled down in Venezuela and been integrated, while others had returned to Colombia. They had been treated in strict compliance with international law and human rights. That had not been the fate of many other peoples in the world, including the Palestinian people, he said. The events in Gaza should not go unpunished, as that would encourage the perverse practice of selecting civilians as military targets. Such practices must be the subject of the severest consideration by the Council and the "impunity syndrome" must be addressed. The detention of children and women by parties to conflict in order to obtain information was another violation of the rights of civilians. Primary responsibility for the protection of civilians resided with States, and the international community could play a constructive role in support of national efforts, always with respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of States. Some countries wished to see the concept of responsibility to protect implemented without the required discussions. The General Assembly, however, should discuss the concept and provide a consensus interpretation. ALICE AGHENE BIT MUNGWA, Senior Political Affairs Adviser in the Office of the Permanent Observer of the African Union to the United Nations, outlined the Union's efforts to protect civilians in conflict, saying that, since its inception, the Union had established a major policy framework towards that end. The African Union Peace and Security Council, the African Standby Force and early warning system were among the structures that had provisions in place for the protection of civilians. The principles for comprehensive post-conflict recovery had also been set out by the Union. African States were fully committed to playing their role in conflict settlement, and she called on the Council to continue lending its support to those efforts. She described the Union's vigorous system of special representatives and envoys to prevent conflict escalation. Following the efforts of the African Union, with support of the Security Council, there was renewed hope among millions of civilians on the continent. She was pleased with the emphasis placed on the protection of women and children today, as it was one of the Union's priorities, as was the protection of youth in situations of conflict. All of the Union's components were focusing on addressing attacks against civilians in conflict, working with other actors in conducting fact-finding missions, and providing support for various peace initiatives. Welcoming the Council's work to improve the protection of civilians, she said that, sadly, despite the progress, serious gaps remained in the implementation in the field. Over the past 10 years, extensive violence and death had been visited upon innocent civilians in Somalia, for example. She thanked the Council for its efforts to address that conflict and called for continued support for the Union as it sought to prevent further escalation of that conflict. She appreciated the United Nations support package for the African Union Mission in Somalia. The Union was also in the process of establishing a mechanism to address the plight of internally displaced persons across the continent, and it had enhanced its early conflict resolution mechanisms. In conclusion, she emphasized the importance of enhancing cooperation towards the protection of civilians, which needed to support and complement national efforts, taking into account the situation on the ground. She hoped today's debate would inspire the Council to enhance support for the peace efforts of organizations such as the African Union. She also reiterated the need to address the issue of illegal circulation of small arms and light weapons, which exacerbated the situation of civilians in armed conflict. VLADIMIR ZHEGLOV (Russian Federation), reacting to the statement by the representative of Georgia, said that it had been Georgia itself that had unleashed aggression against the people of South Ossetia, which had resulted in massive human rights violations. Hundreds of peoples had been killed and wounded, and tens of thousands had been displaced. There was evidence of deliberate targeting of civilians. The Georgian people had also been a victim of the policies of the President and feared the authorities' repression, as illustrated by the fact that some 2,000 citizens of Georgia had asked to be registered as refugees in Russia. He said there was no truth to allegations that the Russian Federation was occupying South Ossetia, or that there had been no humanitarian access to South Ossetia. It was the Georgian leadership that was, in fact, trying to hinder humanitarian assistance to South Ossetia. The crimes of the Georgian army should be properly evaluated. Over the past two decades, the Georgian leadership had unleashed aggression against civilians and had committed many acts that could be classified as crimes. Mr. HOLMES, responding to comments, welcomed the clear commitment to civilian protection expressed by the speakers, as well as the acknowledgement of the need to do much more in that

DESPITE PROGRESS, CIVILIANS CONTINUE TO BEAR BRUNT OF CONFLICT, SAYS UNDER-
SECRETARY-GENERAL IN BRIEFING TO SECURITY COUNCIL

regard. The commitment to the Secretary-General's recommendations and statements looking forward to the OCHA-DPKO report were heartening. Turning to points of particular significance, he noted the concern expressed about the inclusion of particular situations in the report, as well as explanations that they should be seen as law enforcement or anti-terrorism operations. He said that among the markers of armed conflict were involvement of organized parties and intensity and duration of conflict. The situations mentioned in the report had, indeed, been marked by prolonged and intense engagement of armed forces, as well as population displacement and civilian casualties. The motives did not affect that determination. Responding to comments by the representative of Sri Lanka, he said that such a determination or inclusion in the report should not be seen as a judgement or a questioning of the entitlement of States to address terrorism, nor did it equate the parties in any way. The report was attempting to take account of the situation on the ground, while stressing the need to ensure respect for national sovereignty and the principles of independence, impartiality and neutrality. Once the dispute reached the threshold of conflict, however, it must comply with international law. He said he took seriously the points made by the representative of Israel, while not necessarily agreeing with them. The short paragraph referred to could not be deemed to be comprehensive. He went on to state that, while the report did not mention the rocket attacks against southern Israel, both he and the Secretary-General had condemned them. As for the conduct of Hamas during the conflict, he was not in a position to verify the group's alleged use of human shields, but that information had raised serious concerns. The inquiry by the Human Rights Council was intended to clarify that issue, and it was regrettable that Israel had so far been unwilling to participate in that inquiry. A number of speakers had expressed support for dialogue with non-State actors and the idea of an Arria formula meeting, he said, noting that others, on the other hand, had stressed the need to avoid legitimizing such groups. The truth of the matter, however, was that it was, indeed, necessary to engage with those groups to improve the situation of civilians. And finally, he noted the numerous calls for improved reporting and more assessment and monitoring of the Council's mandate to improve civilian protection. For more information please contact: Sarabjit Jagirdar, Email:- htsyndication@hindustantimes.com

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HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

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The Human Rights Council this afternoon heard the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to health present their reports. It also listened to a statement by the Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka and concluded its interactive dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, and the Special Rapporteur on the right to education.

Mahinda Samarasinghe, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka, said Sri Lanka was going through a process of renewal and hope for the first time in decades. Resettlement of the displaced was a primary obligation. Sri Lanka was facing several challenges - apart from the provision of humanitarian relief services to the displaced in temporary accommodation facilities, there was de-mining, restoration of civil administration, infrastructure development, provision of a means of economic survival through livelihood development and the restoration of popular political institutions. Sri Lanka would continue to engage with members of the Council in a spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation.

Leandro Despouy, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, said after six years of intensive work, he intended to put forward some thinking on the very valuable experience, contributions received, and enormous challenges still remaining in the field of justice facing the Human Rights Council. His general report outlined certain activities carried out since the last report, giving details and many factors affecting the conduct of judges. Some progress had been made in the development of international justice, and there were still some problems regarding a lack of cooperation by some States. Some aspects could strengthen the independence of judges, while some could jeopardise it. Best practices for appointing judges strengthened their impartiality, as did security of tenure. Some factors jeopardised their independence, such as temporary appointments. Threats and intimidation also affected their independence as well as threatening State institutions. There should be sufficient funding for judicial authorities in order to lead to the proper carrying out of their functions.

Frank La Rue, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, said his report focused on limitations to the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the safety and protection of journalists and media professionals in conflict zones, which continued to be a serious concern; and

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

implementing the right of access to information in situations of extreme poverty, which illustrated some important obstacles for the promotion of freedom and expression for all. In addition his report also focused on the difficult question of how to implement the right to freedom of expression in situations of extreme poverty. He tried to highlight how limitations in the provisions of economic, social and cultural rights had a profound effect on civil and political rights, particularly with regard to freedom of expression. Unfortunately, all over the world poverty remained a key obstacle that prevented that the principle of free speech be transformed into a concrete reality and a form of participation.

Anand Grover, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, said his report analysed the effect of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and Free Trade Agreements on the right to health, especially access to medicines. He intended to focus on the importance of accountability, the need for monitoring the implementation of health related policies, the role of health indicators, and issues relating to maternal mortality. Improving access to medicines could save 10 million lives a year, 4 million in Africa and South East Asia. Patents created monopolies, limited competition and allowed patentees to establish high prices. Higher standards of patent protection, by reducing the number of patents granted easily, could facilitate competition to lower prices of medicines.

Guatemala, Russian Federation, Honduras and the Maldives spoke as concerned countries.

During the interactive dialogue on the independence of lawyers and judges, freedom of expression and the right to health, speakers raised issues on, among others, the report on freedom of expression which totally ignored mentioning the important amendment of the mandate to report on instances in which the abuse of the right of freedom of expression constituted an act of racial or religious discrimination and that the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers did not include certain factors that had an impact on the impartial functioning of the tribunals, such as a manipulative press inciting hatred. The right to freedom of opinion and expression, like any other freedom, was not absolute and had its limitations. Defamation of religions was a contemporary challenge that sought to undermine the democratic and multicultural fibre of many western societies. A speaker asked, with regard to the issue of intellectual property rights, if there had been any further developments in elaborating global guidelines for patenting, for example further expanding on the requirement for a tangible inventive step, so as to prevent the possible evergreening of existing patents.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue were Cuba, Egypt on behalf of the African Group, Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Czech Republic on behalf of the European Union.

At the beginning of the afternoon, the Council concluded its interactive dialogue with John Ruggie, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Jorge Bustamante, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; and Vernor Munoz, the Special Rapporteur on the right to education.

During the interactive dialogue on their reports, speakers welcomed the focus on children in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. Migration had particular ramifications on the well-being and future development of the child. Protecting the rights of children and the right to family unity must not be forgotten in drafting migration policies. The relationship between human rights and business was of paramount importance and ought to be addressed. There was a need to elaborate a legally-binding instrument on the human rights responsibilities of transnational corporations. The migration phenomenon had particular characteristics in the region of the Americas. The main challenges faced by migrant workers included an inflexible migrant registration system, routine exploitation at work by employers and lack of effective access to labour rights protection mechanisms.

Speaking in the interactive dialogue were Sri Lanka, Indonesia, European Commission, Senegal, Spain, France, Ghana and Palestine. Also speaking were the following national human rights organizations: the International Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions, the National Human Rights Commission of Malaysia and the National Human Rights Commission of Mexico took the floor. The following non-governmental organizations also took the floor: Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Arab Commission for Human Rights,

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

in a joint statement with Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples - MRAP, Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, General Federation of Iraqi Women, Europe-Third World Centre, in a joint statement with Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples - MRAP, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - WILPF, Human Rights Advocates, North-South XXI, and International Commission of Jurists.

Thailand spoke in a right of reply.

The Council is scheduled to meet on Wednesday, 3 June in back-to-back meetings from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. It will conclude its interactive dialogue on the independence of judges and lawyers, freedom of expression, and the right to health, following which it will hold interactive dialogues with the Special Rapporteurs on summary executions and violence against women and hear an update by the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, followed by a general debate.

Statement by Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka

MAHINDA SAMARASINGHE, Minister of Disaster Management and Human Rights of Sri Lanka, said Sri Lanka was going through a process of renewal and hope for the first time in decades. Sri Lanka had marched out of the tunnel into the bright light of a new era. As Sri Lanka looked forward to a new beginning as one united people in one undivided land, it faced many challenges. Resettlement of the displaced was a primary obligation - internally-displaced persons had undergone great suffering, being driven out before the conflict and being held as hostages by an increasingly desperate group of terrorists. Ultimately, the Government forces won the day, albeit at the cost of heavy casualties among the ranks of ground troops due to being constrained to the use of only light weaponry. The Government was successful in resolving the largest hostage situation the world had seen in recent times, liberating its people from the clutches of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), and it would now work hard to give them the future they deserved.

Sri Lanka was facing several challenges - apart from the provision of humanitarian relief services to the displaced in temporary accommodation facilities, there was de-mining, restoration of civil administration, infrastructure development, provision of a means of economic survival through livelihood development and the restoration of popular political institutions. The Government would continue with its efforts to weed out terrorists who had infiltrated the ranks of the displaced and the civilian population. At a juncture when Sri Lanka was justifiably proud of its achievements, it was disappointed that a Special Session of the Council was convened to discuss the human rights situation in the country. This was unnecessary. Efforts, if they were to be successful, must be complemented by the efforts of the friends of Sri Lanka, especially the United Nations and the humanitarian agencies.

Sri Lanka had already made gains in caring for those affected by the conflict, and was working towards incremental realisation and maintenance of international standards in the provision of humanitarian assistance. The Government was taking several initiatives to fast-track post-war peace building and development processes. In the field of human rights protection and promotion, the Government was working on the development of a national action plan for the promotion of human rights along the lines envisaged by the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. The substantive content of the Plan was derived from Sri Lanka's engagement with the Human Rights Council last May, when it participated in the Universal Periodic Review, and also on its interactions with special procedures and mechanisms of the Human Rights Council. Sri Lanka would continue to engage with members of the Council in a spirit of constructive dialogue and cooperation.

Interactive Dialogue with Special Mechanisms on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations, Migrants and Education

GUSTI AGUNG WESAKA PUJA (Indonesia) said that Indonesia was of the view that migration had particular ramifications on the well-being and future development of the child. There was a risk that various forms of exploitation and trafficking might adversely affect the well-being and future development of the child, especially of the unaccompanied child. Indonesia would thus concur with the Special Rapporteur's recommendations that best practices should be shared and bilateral and multilateral strategies needed to be developed in order to protect the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

interest and rights of migrant children. There were various international instruments that could be applied for the protection of the rights of children, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Human Rights Council Resolution 9/5. Indonesia asked the Special Rapporteur how child migrant policies could be mainstreamed and the child-rights approach could be used to better protect women and girls? As to the report on the right to education, Indonesia asked whether the Special Rapporteur did not consider that it would be difficult for countries to enforce educational standards in prisons given the complexities of managing prison systems and the expenditures needed to fund such educational strategies? Did the Special Rapporteur agree that it should be the right of national legislature and public opinion to determine what educational norms should be applicable as regards to education in prison?

JOELLE HIVONNET, of the European Commission, said the European Commission was closely following the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises and welcomed the seriousness and commitment with which Mr. Ruggie undertook this mandate. The Commission was exploring ways to help the implementation of the framework proposed by Mr. Ruggie at the regional European Union level. In this regard, two new studies were recently mandated by the Commission on the legal framework for human rights and the environment applicable to European Union companies acting abroad, and on a further study to look at concrete examples of European companies supply chain practices. The Commission asked how could the specific "protect, respect and remedy" policy framework defined in Mr. Ruggie's report be made operational in the work of political regional integration organizations. And which activities at the regional level did he intend to undertake in the implementation of his mandate in the coming months?

BABACAR CARLOS MBAYE (Senegal) said with regards to the human rights of migrants, the report of the Special Rapporteur was a new confirmation of the importance of respecting the human rights and fundamental freedoms of migrants, whatever their status. The migration of children, which was the main focus of the report, was a phenomenon whose size was difficult to measure, largely due to the lack of reliable data. This made it difficult to draw up an appropriate migratory policy with regards to the realities on the ground, and thus there should be a policy to help countries to put in place an efficient data-gathering system to follow up migratory fluxes. The protection of child rights during the migratory cycle was also of concern, and was maybe not adequately covered at the international level through the existing instruments on child rights. Senegal was ready to receive the visit of the Special Rapporteur and would cooperate fully with him.

PABLO GOMEZ DE OLEA BUSTINZA (Spain) said that for foreign unaccompanied children, it was in the best interest of the child that the child be returned to his or her family. Without doubt, this concept of family reunification must be understood in its broadest terms, also including the return to the country of origin, either in his family or in a facility in the spirit of the article 9/1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. As experience with minors had shown, it was fundamental to count on the implication and support of the authorities of the country of origin, as diplomatic missions and consulates had to provide the most extensive protection and attention to their minor citizens if they were unaccompanied in another country, working together with the authorities in the respective country.

MARIE-ANNA LEBOVITS (France) thanked the three mandate holders for their reports, and in particular thanked the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for his report on human rights and transnational corporations. France fully shared Mr. Ruggie's analysis that the economic crisis demonstrated a need to focus on social and economic rights. France was prepared to support him in the recommendations made in this regard. The Special Representative emphasized the need for transparency and of due diligence of businesses towards their subsidiaries which coincided with France's policy in that context. A good deal had been done at the legislative level. Procedures for registering complaints and compensation procedures for persons whose rights had been violated were also approved by France. To ensure that existing provisions be better known was also welcomed. In all of his work, the Special Representative could count on France's support; however, one single issue remained of concern, with respect to almost all the references made in his report, France said most if not all came from English speaking countries, there was only one French speaking country, and he asked Mr. Ruggie if he thought that perhaps his future work should focus on other places, such as Latin America and European countries?

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

MERCY YVONNE AMOAH (Ghana) said with regards to the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, this sought to respond to the mandate, and Ghana shared the view that the relationship between human rights and business was of paramount importance and ought to be addressed. Ghana had noted the problems and short-comings of the legal paradigm regarding the duty to protect, including the unsettled issue of extraterritoriality, where businesses violated human rights outside the jurisdiction and control of a national system. This was a matter of interest for many developing countries, and practical systems should be established to fulfil the responsibilities of all, including businesses, to respect the rights of others. Both Governments and businesses should review and rethink their practices in order to find a solution. The Special Representative should react to the African Group's proposal on the need to elaborate a legally-binding instrument on the human rights responsibilities of transnational corporations.

IMAD ZUHAIRI (Palestine) said the report by the Special Rapporteur on the right to education drew attention to groups traditionally marginalized and discriminated against in education, including people in detention. Palestine expressed its regret that there was no mention of the Palestinian situation in the present report whereas the occupation and all what was called security measures threatened the most vulnerable in their access to their basic rights, especially the right to education. In most of Israeli prisons, such as Telmond prison or Ramle prison, Palestinian juvenile prisoners were denied the right to pursue their education by the prison authority, as opposed to Israeli juvenile criminal prisoners who were able to continue their education, in complete denial of the 1997 Israeli Court decision that allowed education for Palestinian juvenile detainees. Palestine asked the Special Rapporteur if he considered that the occupation should be given special attention. If so, why was this not reflected in the report, regarding the grave breaches of human rights law it caused?

MYRIAM MONTRAT, of the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights, welcomed the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations. The report specifically referred to the role of National Human Rights Institutions with regard to effective remedies. The role of National Human Rights Institutions could be in fact observed in all three pillars of the "protect, respect and remedy framework", and their role in human rights and business dispute resolution mechanisms was a developing one. Roles varied greatly depending on the statutory mandate and resources of National Human Rights Institutions, and the national context in which they operated. The International Coordinating Committee supported a more explicit integration of a gender perspective in the framework, and a strengthened consultation process with developing country institutions and stakeholders.

ABU SAMAH ASIAH, of National Human Rights Institution of Malaysia, said with regards to the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education to Malaysia, the National Human Rights Institution of Malaysia had repeatedly urged the Government to withdraw its reservations to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The Institution was pleased that the Government was intensifying efforts to improve enrolment rates for education by making primary education compulsory, although the emphasis on academic performance and the continued collection of hidden fees were still prohibitive. Special attention should be paid to learning problems among the indigenous population and children with disabilities. The Institution had embarked on several educational programmes aimed at inculcating the human rights culture among teachers, lecturers, students, enforcement agencies and non-governmental organizations since 2000.

KATHARINA ROSE, of Mexican National Human Rights Commission, said that for the Mexican National Human Rights Commission, actions to protect human rights, especially those of migrant workers and their families, were of great importance, since the Commission recognized that migration procedures must guarantee and protect human rights of migrants. In this manner, and acknowledging that the migration phenomenon had particular characteristics in the region of the Americas, the Mexican National Human Rights Commission had signed a series of collaboration agreements with different National Human Rights Institutions of Central America aimed at protecting the human rights of migrants and their families. Migrants suffered countless abuses which took two forms: the first one had to do with the violations of human rights of foreign migrants who passed through Mexico to reach the United States or who decided to stay in that country; while the second one dealt with Mexicans who crossed over the border to the

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

United States and returned to Mexico. The Mexican Commission reiterated its commitment to defend the fundamental principle of international coexistence.

PATRIZIA SCANELLA, of Amnesty International welcomed the focus on children in the report of the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. Protecting the rights of children and the right to family unity must not be forgotten in drafting migration policies. Amnesty International was concerned that irregular migrants were routinely held in detention in Mexico prior to deportation. Irregular migrants were particularly vulnerable to abuses while in transit by both officials and criminal gangs. Measures taken by the Government so far were insufficient. Mr. Bustamante was asked if he planned any follow-up to determine whether there had been any developments in the investigation or prosecution of the cases of abuse of migrants and threats against migrants' defenders cited in his report on Mexico, including those where the involvement of State officials was alleged.

JULIE DE RIVERO, of Human Rights Watch, said there were an estimated two to four million migrant workers living in Thailand. The main challenges faced by these workers included an inflexible migrant registration system, routine exploitation at work by employers and lack of effective access to labour rights protection mechanisms. Of particular concern were the rights of migrants disabled as a result of workplace accidents. The Special Rapporteur should initiate urgent correspondence with the Government on cases of exploitation and systematic discrimination of migrant workers. The Special Rapporteur should also explain whether he was considering requesting a visit to the country.

ABDEL WAHAB HANI, of Arab Commission for Human Rights, in a joint statement with Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples - MRAP, drew the Council's attention to the situation of irregular foreigners, namely those in detention centres. Men, women, sometimes whole families that were fleeing poverty and tyranny were often detained in detention centres in circumstance that flagrantly violated their human rights. Detention centres were today outsourced to third countries. The Arab Commission for Human Rights had asked the Council to create a new agenda item concerning the rights of persons in detention centres. The Special Rapporteur should attach greater importance to the ratification of the International Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers. He should also call for the ratification of the relevant UNESCO Convention concerning the elimination of discrimination in the field of education.

RACHEL BRETT, of Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers), welcomed the report on the right to education of persons in detention. It was impressive and encouraging to see the unusually high response rate of States to the Special Rapporteur's questionnaire - 45 States from all regions - which demonstrated that the Special Rapporteur had indeed identified an issue of broad concern. The report referred to the number of prisoners who had learning difficulties or disabilities. Could the Special Rapporteur expand on this finding and, in particular, if there were indications of the reasons for this? For example, was there any indication that people in this group were more likely to end up in prison because the criminal justice system did not enable them to defend themselves adequately?

JULIE GROMELLON, of International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, of International Federation of Human Rights Leagues, said the International Federation welcomed the emphasis in the report of the Special Rapporteur on transnational corporations on the State duty to protect, and would like to insist on the need to recognise the extraterritorial dimension of the duty to protect of States vis- -vis activities undertaken abroad by businesses incorporated in their jurisdiction. Such a duty formed part of States' obligations under international law, notably their obligations to international assistance and cooperation. There was a need to raise awareness among developing country negotiators on the risks such agreements could generate on their ability to discharge their human rights obligations. Corporations had the responsibility to respect all human rights at all times.

ENTESAR ARIBI, of General Federation of Iraqi Women, asked whether the Special Rapporteur on the right to education was familiar with the situation in Iraq and whether Iraqi prisoners could use that right. The persons that were imprisoned for many years during the last wars in Iraq did not get any education at all. Many children were not able to go to school because they were in prisons that gave them no possibility to do so. This happened after the invasion. The invasion had interfered in all areas of life and had led to the destruction of the education system

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

which used to be one of the best as the United Nations had stated. It was necessary for the Human Rights Council to study the human rights system in Iraq and a Special Rapporteur had to be appointed.

MALIK OZDEN, of Europe-Third World Centre, in a joint statement with Movement against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples - MRAP, and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom - WILPF, said that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations was right in saying that the existing means and certain measures taken by Governments were insufficient or far from meeting the challenges posed today by this problem. Furthermore, noted in the report was that States had the obligation to protect any encroachment on its people's rights, including from business. However, the report lacked emphasis on binding norms and follow-up mechanisms. It was more urgent than ever before to adopt binding norms to transnational corporations with follow-up mechanisms as was recommended six years before.

AMOL MEHRA, of Human Rights Advocates, said there were critical deficiencies within the Special Representative's Framework that left human rights subject to abuse. Responsibilities referred solely to moral obligations rather than binding law, and thus articulated no legal obligations upon corporations outside of a call for due diligence. It also failed to consider situations where States could not or would not enact domestic regulation protecting human rights. Regulating legal obligations to States alone provided for complex regulatory systems, where corporate operations were subject to differing legal standards. These aforementioned deficiencies severely undermined the Framework's utility - for human rights to be protected and for victims to effectively seek redress, corporations must be seen to owe more than respect for human rights, but must be obligated to ensure their protection through consistent and clear legal standards.

LILY AUROVILLIAN, of North South XXI, said that while North South XXI welcomed the attention paid by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations to the UN Global Compact, it was concerned that his instrument was not legally binding. Moreover, this instrument had been ineffective in ensuring that States regulated the activities of commercial bodies in a manner that ensued respect for international human rights law. North South XXI urged the Special Representative to cooperate with all States to ensure that they understood and implemented their legal obligation to control the activities of transnational corporations when they infringed upon basic human rights. It also urged the Special Representative to call on States to contemplate a legally binding instrument establishing States duties to ensure human rights in situations where transnational corporations were involved in their countries.

LUKAS MACHON, of the International Commission of Jurists, said between 6 and 10 of May 2009 the Italian authorities intercepted in international waters some 500 migrants, who were trying to reach Italy in small boats, and escorted them back to Libya. Of concern was that these operations took place without taking due account of Italy's obligations in relation to potential asylum-seekers or others who may not be transferred to Libya for reasons of non-refoulement. The Geneva Convention relating to the status of refugees, to which Italy was a party, prohibited the expulsion or return of a refugee or asylum-seeker "in any manner whatsoever" without reference to his or her entrance onto the territory of the State. What was the Special Rapporteur's view of the situation of forced return by Italy of boats carrying migrants and potential asylum seekers, from international waters and his views on Italy's obligations in this regard?

Concluding Remarks by Special Mechanisms on Human Rights and Transnational Corporations, Migrants and Education

JOHN RUGGIE, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises, said he wished to reinforce that it was exceedingly important not to shift the protection of human rights abuses away from States. Whatever responsibilities corporations had were independent responsibilities, and not in competition with those of States. The framework that had been presented on "protect, respect, and remedy" was meant to engage dynamically. On non-judicial remedies: these were not a substitute for judicial remedy, they were a separate tool, and had their own separate utility. The non-judicial part was preventive, not a substitute. Non-judicial remedies were a useful instrument in any context, even when regulatory legal

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

institutions were well developed. There were examples of non-judicial grievance mechanisms, but these were mixed - there were none at the corporate level.

On responsible contracting and investment agreements, the investment agreement issue was an example of how States sometimes unwittingly tied their own hands and constrained themselves from implementing their human rights obligations or implementing programmes without fear of being taken to international arbitration. There was a great need to add greater precision in the drafting of these agreements, in order to provide investor protection at the same time as making sure that the States' bona fide objectives on matters including human rights were not unduly constrained. Work was being done to elaborate a model agreement in this regard. Guidance on appropriate ways for companies to behave in conflict areas was also being elaborated.

The mandate had been represented at a range of international events and processes, and the contributions of all States towards pushing the mandate forward were appreciated. With regards to a legal instrument, the Representative's focus had been mainly on content to this date. The Council would be the body to decide on whether there should be a legal process, but this was not the job of the Representative.

JORGE BUSTAMANTE, Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, in his concluding remarks, said that the international community was facing serious times of increasing vulnerability of migrants. They were reaching the worst time for the defense and protection of the human rights of migrants. This was therefore the best time to reflect on the lack of ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Migrant Workers, since the most important countries of destination had not done so. The international community would be facing a situation in which it would have to do everything all over again in terms of migrants and the economic crisis was indicating that the worst was yet to come.

VERNOR MUNOZ VILLALOBOS, Special Rapporteur on the right to education, in concluding remarks, said he was grateful for the remarks made by several non-governmental organizations. Education was not alien to the context of persons held in detention; it was existing penitentiary systems which were allergic to education which had a negative effect on education for those persons. The human rights agenda was far from bringing about education in penitentiaries. Legal provisions needed to be enacted to have this happen as well as specific public policies. Best practices were related to the level of initiative taken by prison authorities before a longstanding State policy was to come about. Combating the stigmatizing of prisoners once released from prisons was necessary. Very often prisons were small and the percentage of dangerous prisoners was also very small, it was necessary for one to persuade officials to bring education to prisons. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization was trying to do so.

No one but the prisoners themselves knew what they needed. The effectiveness of programmes would depend on how much input was made by the prisoners themselves. There were alternatives to imprisonment, the subject of imprisonment needed to be focused on and bring this issue of universities as well. With regard to Palestine, this subject was included in previous reports. Finally, on monitoring policies in prisons, the Rapporteur said this needed to involve all universal procedures, such as the Committee against Torture and national human rights entities. Mr. Munoz stressed that he was ready to assist any request for assistance in helping to monitor prison systems.

Documents on Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Freedom of Opinion and Expression and on the Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers (A/HRC/11/41 and Add.1-3) which includes a description of the Special Rapporteur's activities between May 2008 and March 2009, including country visits conducted during this period and an analysis of parameters necessary to effectively guarantee the independence of judges. The report further indicates the main recent developments in the area of international justice by looking at developments in the different cases before the International Criminal Court and recent judgments of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia and the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as well as progress made by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Court of Cambodia. Furthermore, the report refers to the Special Tribunal for Lebanon and the institution of proceedings by Belgium

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

before the International Court of Justice concerning the case of the former President of Chad, Hissene Habre. In conclusions and recommendations, the Special Rapporteur focuses on measures to be taken by Member States to strengthen the independence of judges, in both its individual and institutional dimensions. The Special Rapporteur is also of the opinion that time has come to approve a comprehensive set of principles in order to ensure and further the independence of the judiciary.

A first addendum gives an account of communications transmitted by the Special Rapporteur between 16 March 2008 and 15 March 2009, as well as replies received from Governments between 1 May 2008 and 10 May 2009, and observations of the Special Rapporteur, where appropriate.

Addendum two is the report of the Special Rapporteur's mission to the Russian Federation from 19 to 29 May 2008. In it he notes that important reforms have been implemented in the Russian Federation since 1993, particularly the adoption of new legislation governing judicial proceedings and the significant improvement of working conditions of the judiciary. These steps prove the willingness to introduce a court system where the judge wields the guiding role. The Special Rapporteur also demonstrates that important concerns remain about the practical implementation of equal access to the courts and the fact that a large number of judicial decisions are not implemented. He also points to the insufficient level of transparency in the selection process of judges and the implementation of disciplinary measures. Political and other interference has regrettably damaged the image of the justice system in the eyes of the population. However, the recent reform aimed at separating the functions of investigation and prosecution has the potential to attribute a stronger guiding role to judges and to achieve a more effective and balanced system between the parties in judicial proceedings.

Addendum three, which contains findings from the Special Rapporteur's country visit to Guatemala, is available in Spanish only.

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression (A/HRC/11/4 and Add.1-3), which focuses on the new mandate holder's main vision and priorities for the mandate. It reviews the terms of reference of the mandate and describes the working methods of the Special Rapporteur. The report also includes a brief account of the main activities undertaken by the Special Rapporteur since the beginning of his tenure in August 2008, including an analysis of communication trends in that period. The Special Rapporteur also makes preliminary reflections on the issue of limitations to the right to freedom of opinion and expression. He also focuses on the right of access to information in situations of extreme poverty, and the safety and protection of media professionals, including the protection of journalists working in conflict zones. In recommendations, the Special Rapporteur says that rights to information and freedom of expression should be encouraged at all levels and urges Governments to deregulate the communications and media environment to allow free and fair information to flow more effectively to civil society. He urges Governments and State institutions to provide support and an assurance that all acts of violence against journalists are fully investigated.

A first addendum contains the summary of communications sent by the previous Special Rapporteur from 1 January to 1 August 2008 and thereafter by the current Special Rapporteur until 31 December 2008, including replies received thereto from Governments by 15 February 2009.

A second addendum includes a report completed by the former Special Rapporteur, Ambeyi Ligabo, on a country visit he undertook to Honduras from 26 to 30 November 2007. The purpose of his visit was to collect information in order to assess the exercise of the right to freedom of opinion and expression in the country. In the report, the Special Rapporteur analyses the attacks and threats against journalists and other media professionals. He also refers to the problem of impunity that persists in cases of attacks and threats against journalists and other professionals. He further examines the problem resulting from the absence of a framework encouraging diversity in the media and the concentration of media ownership in the hands of a few. The Special Rapporteur discusses the offences against honour covered by the Criminal Code, and gives a number of examples of journalists and other media professionals who have been prosecuted for such offences.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

The third addendum includes a report outlining the findings of the Special Rapporteur following an official country visit to the Republic of the Maldives from 1 to 5 March 2009. In the report the Special Rapporteur analyses the situation of freedom of expression in the Maldives and the recent reforms in the country along with some of the challenges faced by the new Government in achieving democratic reform. In recommendations the Special Rapporteur commends the Government's decision to develop private media and encourages it to maintain plurality and diversity to guarantee freedom of expression.

The Council has before it the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (A/HRC/11/12 and Add.1-2) which briefly reflects on the activities of and issues of particular interest to the Special Rapporteur which took up his duties on 1 August 2008. The first chapter of the report explains the relation between the right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, specifically in regard to access to medicines, and intellectual property rights. Chapter II is devoted to the Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and TRIPS flexibilities. The Special Rapporteur explores the way in which flexibilities have been used and incorporated into national patent laws of developing and least-developed countries. Chapter III analyses free trade agreements and the effect of TRIPS, plus requirements on access to medicines. In conclusion, the Special Rapporteur notes that the framework of the right to health makes it clear that medicines must be available, accessible, acceptable, and of good quality to reach ailing populations without discrimination throughout the world. As has been evident, TRIPS and Free Trade Agreements have had an adverse impact on prices and availability of medicines, making it difficult for countries to comply with their obligations to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to health.

Addendum one contains summaries of communications sent by the Special Rapporteur to States, responses received from States, observations of the Special Rapporteur, and follow-up communications and activities relating to earlier communications, from the period of 2 December 2007 to 15 March 2009 and replies received for the period of 1 February 2008 to 1 May 2009. A number of the communications contained in the report were sent and received by the former Special Rapporteur, Mr. Paul Hunt, prior to the end of his mandate on 31 July 2008.

Addendum two is a report on the Special Rapporteur's visit in June 2008 to the headquarters of GlaxoSmithKline, one of the world's leading research-based pharmaceutical companies, for substantive interviews with the company's senior management. In previous reports the Special Rapporteur had examined States' responsibilities in relation to access to medicines. However, enhancing access to medicines is a shared responsibility. The Millennium Development Goals recognize that pharmaceutical companies have a responsibility to improve access to medicines. In the present report, the Special Rapporteur outlines the responsibilities of pharmaceutical companies, including innovator, generic and biotechnology companies, with regard to the right to health in relation to access to medicines. Besides highlighting some good practices, the Special Rapporteur outlines some of the obstacles impeding the company's attempts to improve access, such as failing health systems, and makes numerous recommendations addressed to GlaxoSmithKline, pharmaceutical companies in general, States and others. In conclusions, the Special Rapporteur notes that the status of innovator companies would be immeasurably enhanced if they did not see, and treat, patents as their "crown jewels". Companies must grasp, and publicly recognize, their critically important social function and right-to-health responsibilities. They must demonstrably do everything possible, within a viable business model, to fulfil their social function and human rights responsibilities. Presently, this is not happening. If it were to happen, it would not only greatly enhance companies' status but also pressurize States, generic manufacturers and others to provide the environment that companies need if they are to enter into arrangements, such as commercial voluntary licences, that enhance access to medicines for all.

Presentation of Reports on Independence of Judges and Lawyers, Freedom of Opinion and Expression and on the Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health

LEANDRO DESPOUY, Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers, said after six years of intensive work, he intended to put forward some thinking on the very valuable experience, contributions received, and enormous challenges still remaining in the field of justice facing the Human Rights Council. His general report outlined certain activities carried out since the last report, gave details and many factors affecting the conduct of judges. Some progress had been made in the development of international justice, and there were still some

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

problems regarding a lack of cooperation by some States, such as Sudan. Some aspects could strengthen the independence of judges, while some could jeopardise it. Best practices for appointing judges strengthened their impartiality, as did security of tenure. Some factors jeopardised their independence, such as temporary appointments. Threats and intimidation also affected their independence as well as threatening State institutions. There should be sufficient funding for judicial authorities in order to lead to the proper carrying out of their functions.

A mission had been carried out to the Russian Federation to examine the progress of judicial reform since 1993, with a substantial improvement for the conditions of work of the judiciary. However, there was a low level of transparency in the selection and discipline process of judges. The Soviet system had still not been left behind. It was no longer the Prosecutor that was responsible for investigation but a State Ministry, and it was regrettable that there was a certain amount of interference, tarnishing the image of the system. The authorities had been asked to carry out a rapid investigation of many grave human rights violations.

A second mission had been carried out to Guatemala in two stages - the second visit to investigate the changes made following recommendations. Guatemala was still a country with extremely high levels of violence and poverty, and all were aware that impunity was one of the most serious issues that the country had to face. With regards to criminal investigation, this was often hampered by officials who received pay-backs from organised crime.

Another disturbing situation was in Fiji, where the President had set aside the Constitution and declared a situation of emergency, all Courts had been dissolved and all decisions repealed. The international community should pay attention to the serious deterioration of the situation in Fiji following the 2006 coup d'etat because of the absence of the rule of law and the general situation in the country.

After six years, the situation of judges was a high-risk situation generally across the world. The division of powers was the basis of democracy, and the independence of judges was thus a very important part of this. International solidarity should ensure that judges were supported - efforts should be made to clarify the criminal attack against the United Nations in Baghdad in 2004, and a Commission of Eminent Experts should be established in this regard. The tragic situation of those detained in Guantanamo showed the violations of the international conventions, and this detention centre should be closed immediately, with the incarcerated judged according to international precepts, with the establishment of responsibilities for those who carried out practices violating the international texts.

FRANCK LA RUE, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, said that he chose to focus on three key issues within his mandate: the question of limitations to the right to freedom of opinion and expression, which had generated a number of discussions in international fora recently; the safety and protection of journalists and media professionals in conflict zones, which continued to be a serious concern; and implementing the right of access to information in situations of extreme poverty, which illustrated some of the important obstacles for the promotion of freedom and expression for all. He was convinced that the Durban Review Conference marked the beginning of a new era in the international fight against racism and for the promotion of human rights in general. Mr. La Rue expressed his full support to the outcome document of the Durban Review Conference and called on all States, including those that did not attend the Conference, to implement its provisions. In particular, he highlighted some central provisions of the document which represented the basis for a new international consensus on freedom of expression: the right to freedom of opinion and expression constituted one of the essential foundations of a democratic, pluralistic society; any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constituted incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence should be prohibited by law; and States should resolve to fully and effectively prohibit advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred.

Mr. La Rue said that his report also focused on the difficult question of how to implement the right to freedom of expression in situations of extreme poverty. In particular, he tried to highlight how limitations in the provisions of economic, social and cultural rights had a profound effect on civil and political rights, particularly with regard to the freedom of expression. Unfortunately, all over the world poverty remained a key obstacle that prevented that the principle of free speech be transformed into a concrete reality and a form of participation. The poor and more

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

vulnerable segments of the populations remained excluded from the media and from access to communication, thus facing ever higher barriers for the full exercise of their right to impart and also to receive information.

One of the key manifestations of the impact of poverty on freedom of expression was the growing digital divide, the gap between the information-rich and the information-poor. Whereas globalization had been providing ever increasing facilities for communications and the sharing of information, unfortunately those benefits had so far been restricted to a privileged minority. Poor people had been increasingly marginalized and unable to access such technologies, which further hindered their ability to participate in their national development programmes and to join the information society. This was not a problem restricted to the South. Vulnerable groups living in developed countries, such as migrants, minorities and indigenous peoples, had unfortunately been some of the key victims of the digital divide. Access to forms of communication was today a necessary element to implement the right to development.

On the mission of his predecessor to Honduras, he highlighted a number of positive steps taken by the Government in implementing the right to freedom of opinion and expression. At the same time, he made a number of concrete recommendations to the Government, including the need to combat impunity for perpetrators of crimes against journalists and media professionals; the need to transform defamation offences into civil actions; and the need for specific programmes of protection for journalists.

On his mission to the Maldives in March 2009, Mr. La Rue said he had highlighted the positive developments in the Maldives since the reform agenda was put in place in 2006 and commended the steps taken by the Government to implement a series of reforms to consolidate democracy in the country. He also put forward some recommendations, including the question of public consultations with the population. He made specific recommendations concerning the media reform package, public broadcasting, access to information, the decriminalization of defamation offences, telecommunications, Internet, civil service and freedom of expression and religion.

ANAND GROVER, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, said today he was presenting his first thematic report, which analysed the effect of the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights and Free Trade Agreements on the right to health, especially access to medicines, as well as Paul Hunt's report on his mission to GlaxoSmithKline. He intended to ensure the continuity of the mandate and would focus on the importance of accountability, the need for monitoring the implementation of health related policies, the role of health indicators, and issues relating to maternal mortality. However, the right to health was vast, and there were a number of other challenges and issues that he hoped he would be able to address. He planned to apply lessons learned from HIV/AIDS field, where he spent the last 20 years, to the right to health more broadly. Experience had proven the importance of involving rights-holders themselves in decision-making and that meant ensuring that he involved them in his work as Special Rapporteur.

Nearly 2 billion people lacked access to essential medicines, and massive inequalities remained regarding access to health services and medicines around the world, which was partly due to high costs. Improving access to medicines could save 10 million lives a year, 4 million in Africa and South East Asia, stressed Mr. Grover. Patents created monopolies, limited competition and allowed patentees to establish high prices. While product patents conferred absolute monopolies, process patents led to relative monopolies. In this regard, when patents were used to limit competition, they could significantly impact on access to medicines. Higher standards of patent protection, by reducing the number of patents granted easily, could facilitate competition to lower prices of medicines. Of particular concern was that the supply of generic medicines was now in doubt as countries that were the generic producers had become the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights compliant and had to introduce product patents. It was recommended that, within the context of the right to health, developing countries and least developed countries should be enabled to use the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights flexibilities by introducing national laws that incorporated the flexibility to make full use of the transition periods; defined the criteria of patentability, among other things.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

Another issue addressed in the report was the impact of a number of Free Trade Agreements, bilateral investment treaties, and other trade agreements on access to medicines, noted the Special Rapporteur. These agreements were usually negotiated with little transparency or participation from the public and those who were likely to be affected, and often established the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights-plus provisions, which undermined the safeguards and flexibilities that developing countries sought to preserve under the Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights.

With regard to the report of his predecessor, Paul Hunt, on his mission to GlaxoSmithKline, Mr. Grover said the Special Rapporteur, Paul Hunt noted GlaxoSmithKline had taken positive steps - they reduced some prices for anti-retrovirals, and were devoting more attention to neglected diseases. The report aimed to emphasize the right to health responsibilities of pharmaceutical companies, particularly by drawing upon the analysis of policies ensured by GlaxoSmithKline. Further noted by the Special Rapporteur was that because access to medicines was a shared responsibility, whether or not a pharmaceutical company was able to fully discharge all its rights-to-health responsibilities would sometimes depend upon State donors and others fulfilling their human rights responsibilities.

Statements by Concerned Countries

CARLOS RAMIRO MARTINEZ ALVARADO (Guatemala), speaking as a concerned country, said the suggestions made by the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers were very helpful. Certain paragraphs in the first report and the report on follow-up made reference to short-comings in the process of selection and appointment to the judicial body which should be changed to prevent politicisation and the influence of external factors, since a more transparent process based on objective criteria guaranteeing independence and impartiality had been installed. This was one point. Another recent development was the signing of the national agreement for security by the three State authorities, including the Prosecutor for Human Rights. A Road Map would be submitted to put this agreement into effect. On the fight against impunity, significant progress had been made following the signing of agreements and the strengthening of the public prosecutor's office. Inter-institutional investigation teams had been set up, identifying national laws which hampered the administration of justice, enabling the relevant national institutions to be changed, as well as promoting other laws to enhance the functioning of the system.

DMITRY RUDKIN (Russian Federation), speaking as a concerned country, said that the visit of the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges was indeed timely as the Russian system entered into a new era. Currently, a mechanism for the implementation of court decisions, including foreign court decisions, was being established. Regarding other mechanisms to combat corruption, Russia said that the Duma was considering legislative changes. Administrative justice was by far not the only means to combat corruption; the Russian President had presented a number of comprehensive measures in that regard. With regard to the conclusions pertaining to Chechnya, Russia said that an administrative court had been set up and a jury court would soon be established as well. All Government branches were looking forward to further the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur. Russia wanted to fully support the Special Rapporteur and to strengthen his mandate. In particular, Russia emphasized that the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges of lawyers had been working well together with the Government and this was an example of how to carry out a mandate of a Special Rapporteur.

J. DELMER URBIZO (Honduras), speaking as a concerned country on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of freedom of opinion and expression, said that the Special Rapporteur paid a visit to Honduras in 2007, which was a clear demonstration of the Government's commitment to cooperate with the United Nations and all its mechanisms to promote human rights. In Honduras there was no legal provision which had arbitrary restrictions on the freedom of expression or opinion. The Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court in April 2005 and the Inter-American Human Rights Committee declared unconstitutional the heading of non-respect or contempt. There had been cases of threats or aggression against journalists, which were the result of the victims' activities; however, according to information gathered from courts, no one had been convicted for such acts. With regard to information concerning bills for the decriminalization of crimes against honour, these cases could only be prosecuted through private actions. This was done through a special procedure, and also allowed for the parties concerned to reach agreement before procedures via a mediator. The Government was working arduously to

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

collaborate in all fields and made special efforts to abide by the recommendations that came out of the Council and other United Nations mechanisms.

SHAZRA ABDUL SATTAR (Maldives), speaking as a concerned country, said the Government of the Maldives was committed to effectively implementing the recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression in a sustainable manner. The Maldives was taking huge strides towards protecting and promoting human rights in the country and strengthening national legal frameworks to enhance the role of the media and provide better safeguards to ensure media and press freedom. It was in line with this commitment that the new Constitution granted everyone the right to freedom of thought and the freedom to communicate opinions and expression. The current challenge for the Maldives was to change the mindset of the media and communication workers to ensure that they were aware of their rights and responsibilities in relation to the freedom of expression.

Interactive Dialogue

JUAN ANTONIO FERNANDEZ PALACIOS (Cuba) said that Cuba wished that the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers had included certain factors that had an impact on the impartial functioning of the tribunals, such as a manipulative press inciting hatred. This and other factors, including a vengeful attitude of the Government of the United States, occurred in the case of the five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters that were imprisoned in the United States and whose detention had been declared arbitrary by the Working Group on arbitrary detention. Cuba would like the Special Rapporteur to share his views on that case with the Council. Regarding freedom of expression, Cuba said that this was a complex and delicate issue. However, Cuba wanted to alert the Special Rapporteur that some of his interlocutors in certain regional mechanisms had doubtful reputations. In connection with extreme poverty, Cuba appreciated many conclusions of the Special Rapporteur and said that it would have been useful to elaborate on the basic premises to access to information in situations of extreme poverty; the guarantee of the right to education notoriously affected in such situations. In Cuba, there was a clear link between access to education and participation in political life and access to information.

AMR ROSHDY HASSAN (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the African Group, said it was with disappointment that the African Group received the first report of Mr. La Rue. The Group was surprised to see that the report totally ignored mentioning the important amendment of the mandate proposed by the African Group and supported by the Council, requesting the Special Rapporteur to report on instances in which the abuse of the right of freedom of expression constituted an act of racial or religious discrimination. Reference to this amendment appeared later, separate from the mandate and without any indication of the intention of the Special Rapporteur to fulfil this requirement. It was noteworthy, as well, that the report did not only ignore mentioning this important element while listing the mandate, it also failed to report on the cases of racial and religious incitement against migrants and their families under the pretext of freedom of expression. Furthermore, the report made unjustifiable emphasis on the relation between freedom of expression and extreme poverty. Such emphasis insinuated that abuses to freedom of expression were restricted to situations of extreme poverty. The African Group registered its opposition to this approach.

ZAMIR AKRAM (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, said the Organization of the Islamic Conference attached great importance to the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. Like any other freedom, it was not absolute and had its limitations - the principle of threshold and limits was well established in the international human rights instruments, non-adherence to which led to unwanted friction, intolerance, and violence in all societies. The report under discussion squarely focused on the promotional aspect of the right, and had avoided reporting on the misuse and abuse of the freedom, instances of which were in abundance, and it was therefore not in conformity with the mandate and spirit of resolution 7/36. The Special Rapporteur had made the case that free speech was a requirement and not an impediment for tolerance - tolerance was a two-way street. Defamation of religions was a contemporary challenge that sought to undermine the democratic and multicultural fibre of many western societies. This was the time to squarely address unfounded fears of revisionism so as to avoid greater threats of the clash of civilisations and cultures. The Organization of the Islamic Conference therefore wished to convey its strong reservation to the report, in particular its rejection of paragraphs one to five and twenty-four, and advised the Special Rapporteur to henceforth strictly adhere to his mandate and the code of conduct.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL HEARS PRESENTATION OF REPORTS ON INDEPENDENCE OF JUDGES AND LAWYERS, FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION, AND ON HEALTH

VERONIKA STROMSIKOVA (Czech Republic), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed appreciation to all three Special Rapporteurs for their comprehensive reports. With regard to the issue of intellectual property rights, had there been any further developments in elaborating global guidelines for patenting, for example further expanding on the requirement for a tangible inventive step, so as to prevent the possible evergreening of existing patents. The European Union welcomed and followed with great interest the elaboration of parameters necessary to ensure the effective guarantees for the independence of judges. The European Union believe that the Council could make good use of such parameters as a check-list in the Universal Periodic Review, and the European Union would appreciate the Special Rapporteur's concrete ideas on how to make the best possible use of this tool as a reference and channel the examination of these parameters in the work of the Council. The European Union was deeply concerned about the current situation in Burma/Myanmar and the political trial of Daw Ang Suu Kyi. Could the Special Rapporteur tell the European Union whether he planned to request a visit to Burma/Myanmar to assess the independence of judges and lawyers there?

Right of Reply

NETITHORN PRADITSARN (Thailand), speaking in a right of reply, said that with regard to the statement made by Human Rights Watch, the concerns had been noted, but at the same time the efforts taken by the Government of Thailand had not been reflected and should not be forgotten in this regard. In Thailand migrant workers were valued members of society, and as such the Government had put into place policies to regularize them. The measures taken by the Government entitled migrant workers to basic health insurance. Moreover, according to the social security laws, migrant workers were eligible for basic medical treatment from hospitals as well as access to education. The Labour Protection Act provided legal channels for migrants to bring complaints against their employers forward. Thailand took allegations of human rights abuses seriously. All allegations would be seriously and expediently brought forward in compliance with Thai law.

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