



Spring 2000
Vol. XII, No. 1
\$15. 00

Available in:
Arabic, English, Russian,
Spanish and Ukrainian

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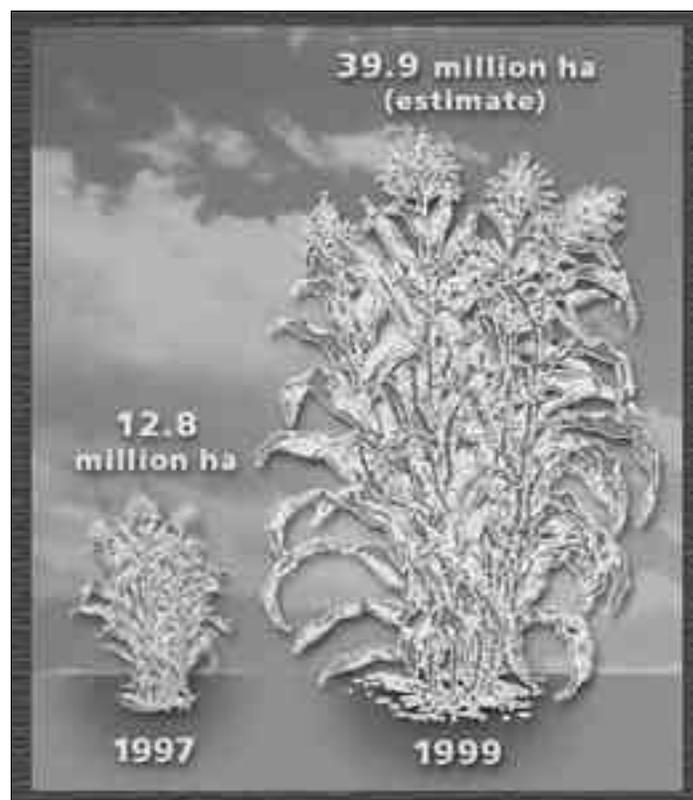
World Ecology Report

Critical Issues in Health and the Environment

Knowledge brings new choices. Education brings new knowledge.

SPECIAL FOCUS

Biosafety and Sustainable Development *Is the war over genetically modified food over or just beginning?*



Area planted with transgenic crops

SOURCE: UN-FAO, <http://www.fao.org>

and indicates the willingness of Governments to set adequate and transparent safety procedures in order to allow the community at large to be able to derive maximum advantage from biotechnology.

The Protocol will be open for signature at the Fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity to be held in Nairobi from 15 to 26 May 2000. The Protocol becomes binding ninety days after it has been ratified by the fiftieth party.

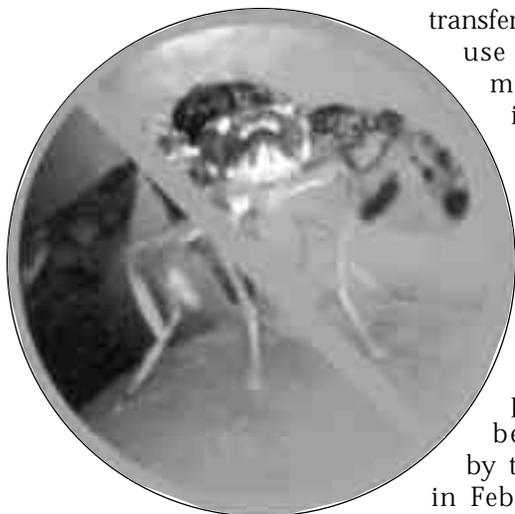
The Road after Rio

Since the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 1992), Governments have been discussing, at their highest level, the need for further development of internationally agreed principles on risk assessment and management of all aspects of biotechnology.

With this aim, the international community has been pursuing, through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD, 1992), a biosafety protocol setting out procedures for the safe

In February 2000, delegates of 133 Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) meeting in Montreal, Canada, adopted the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety finally ending five years of negotiations. The Protocol is the result of considerable compromise of all the negotiating groups and reflects the complexity of the issues discussed as well as the arduous effort to translate both environment and trade requirements into an internationally binding obligation.

The Protocol was started when Parties to the CBD (Nassau, Bahamas 1994) established an Open-Ended *Ad Hoc* Group of Experts on Biosafety. In spite of limits, the Protocol still represents an essential milestone on the road of Sustainable Development



**The medfly:
Future target for a new pest-
control strategy.**

SOURCE: *Science News*,
Volume 157, April 1, 2000

transfer, handling and use of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), in order to avoid any adverse effect on biodiversity and its components. The intricacies of such a protocol has been evidenced by the negotiations in February 1999 in Cartagena, Colombia, when officials from 138 governments were unable to finalize the text of a legally binding protocol on reducing risks related to

the transboundary movement of GMOs.

Economic interests, international trade agreements, environmental protection and concerns for human and animal health are strictly connected in this issue. In fact, public opinion is widely concerned about the impact of these new products and novel foods, and, on the other hand, governments, specially in developing countries, are desperately trying to fill the technology gap and to build capacity for scientific evaluation and risk assessment and management.

The focus of the fury is a technology that borrows genetic code from plants and animals and transfers it to a plant. Modified seeds can produce more food on less land with less synthetic pesticides and herbicides. In fact they can produce their own pesticide and reduce the amount used in fields. In addition, conventional farming depends on pesticides that have been concentrating dangerously in the soil or were encountering resistance and on a narrow range of plant strains—just 12 crops that provide 90 percent of human food. These new seeds may reduce the health hazards of the farmers, women and especially children working in the fields. (See sidebar page 4.)

Foods derived from biotechnology have led to safety concerns for human and animal health and the environment. Concerns for human health include the risks of transferring toxins from one life form to another, of creating new toxins or of transferring allergenic compounds from one species to another, which could result in unexpected allergic reactions. Risks to the environment include the possibility of outcrossing, which could lead to the development of more aggressive weeds or wild relatives with increased resistance to diseases or environmental stresses, upsetting the ecosystem balance. Biodiversity may also be lost as a result of the displacement of traditional cultivars by a small number of genetically modified culti-

vars. There are also concerns about the effect that biotechnology products could have on farm animals.

Opponents concede that no one has ever been harmed by genetically modified food. Those who object to the science itself believe that more research on long term safety is needed.

There are however, questions about environmental effects. Can genes from herbicide-resistant corn get into weeds creating “frankenweeds?” Will benign insects like Monarch butterflies be killed by pollen drifting from bug-killing corn?

GMs may represent the answer to important issues. One example is the not yet marketable Swiss innovation the so-called golden rice which has genes from a daffodil and from bacteria spliced into it to boost vitamin A. This food could be an enormous boon for small children of whom about 125 million worldwide suffer from Vitamin A deficiency which causes blindness.

Another potential beneficiary would be banana farmers who spent 200 million dollars a year to buy pesticides to combat a pest that affects the main banana crop. A plant strain known as the Calcutta banana was resistant to this pest and the gene that confers resistance could be transferred to the conventional strain. This would be an environmental and social “win-win”.

In Europe, the debate over genetically modified food is passionate. British newspapers refer to such food as “Frankenfood” while environmental advocates have destroyed entire fields of test plants. In February, activists dumped four tons of American-grown soybeans near the residence of Prime Minister Tony Blair to protest his support for gene-modified foods.

Legally, the European Union requires labels on any food with one percent or more of genetically modified ingredients. But planting, importing or selling genetically modified ingredients has virtually stopped because farmers will not plant the seeds, consumers will not buy the foods and stores will not stock them. Regulators have not approved any new strains for nearly two years. In 1999, the European Union bought only \$1 million worth of American corn, a sharp downfall from the \$305 million in 1996. Europe buys 25% of the American soybean crop worth \$2.6 billion in good years. However, purchases dropped according to the United States Department of Agriculture to \$1 billion last year in part due to cheaper prices in Brazil and Argentina.

Despite this decline, soybeans are hit less because most imported soybeans are used to make animal feed and cooking oil. Under European Union regulations food for animals is not labeled and processed oil contains no DNA and does not have to be labeled.

Not all Europeans agree with the EU position. Swiss voters, have, for example, twice rejected by large margins referendums that would have banned all genetic research or put a 10-year moratorium on field trials or sales.

In sharp contrast to the debate in the European Union, is the United States where nearly two-thirds of supermar-

ket foods contain such ingredients. In 1998, around 35 million hectares of genetically modified (GM) crops, including varieties of soya, maize, tomatoes, potatoes, cotton, tobacco and oilseed rape, were planted for commercial purposes worldwide. About 75% of those crops were planted in the USA where biotech seeds account for 36% of American corn, 55 percent of its soybeans and 43 percent of its cotton. Canada, Australia and China also have significant commercial plantings of GM crops.

Frankenfood and cloning

The real debate may still be in the future. UN agencies and international organizations have been requested, on many occasions, to help governments, particularly those in developing countries, to enhance sustainable agricultural output to achieve food security as outlined in the Programme of Action of the World Food Summit (Rome, 1996).

Rio's Chapter 16 of the Agenda, 21 (Environmentally Sound Management of Biotechnology) recommends promotion of: a) cooperation on issues related to conservation of, access to and exchange of germplasm; b) promotion of collaborative research programmes, especially in developing countries, to support activities outlined in this programme area; c) acceleration of technology acquisition, transfer and adaptation by developing countries to support national activities that promote food security, through the development of systems for substantial and sustainable productivity increases that do not damage or endanger local ecosystems and d) development of appropriate safety procedures based on programme area, taking account of ethical considerations.

World Bank Vice-President, Ismail Serageldin, a specialist in food security, believes that food demands will become so great as the world population moves from six to eight billion people that the planet must embrace genetic manipulation as one of the tools to boost production. This population growth is in addition to the 800 million people worldwide today who are already malnourished. Developing countries will need to shoulder 85% of the burden of providing additional food. He pleads that the issue of GM foods be separated from the other biotech controversy of animal cloning.

Will the advances in biotechnology help feed the poor in third world

countries? According to food security experts, "organic farming is already practiced by 800 million poor people in the world because they do not have the money to buy costly pesticides and fertilizers. It's not working"

More research needed

As controversy seems unlikely to diminish in the coming months, two specialized UN agencies which monitor food safety—the Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization—have convened a task force of their joint Codex Alimentarius Commission to develop standards and guidelines on biotech foods.

Codex was started in 1962 to implement the Joint FAO/WHO Food Standards Programme. It is an intergovernmental statutory body with 162 member countries. Its purpose is to protect the health of consumers, to ensure fair practices in food trade and to promote coordination of all food standards work undertaken by international governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The Task force met for the first time in Japan in March 2000, to analyze the risk presented by various biotech foods. Among the it will consider is the concept of "substantial equivalence" established by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1993. Substantial equivalence has been widely accepted as the most practical approach to determining food safety. It embodies the idea that "existing organisms used as food, or as a source of a food, can be used as the basis for comparison when assessing the safety of human consumption of a food or food component that has been modified or is new. Added to this not uncontroversial "tool" the Task Force will need to review other methods of science-based risk assessment.

Monarch caterpillars eat only leaves thrives along roadsides and field edges pollinated, sheds pollen beyond field b from corn plants genetically engineered pesticide can kill the larvae of the mc according to a Cornell University st raise doubts about a supposed smart b the pesticide arsenal, the Bt toxin. Bic companies sell corn carrying the t gene, designed to protect the crop f moth caterpillars with minimal collat damage to bees and other benefi insects. The Bt toxin, discovered in bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis*, kills victims by perforating their guts. In 1996, Novartis Seeds of Golden Valley, Minnesota, introduced corn souped u with the Bt gene to fight corn borers. 1998, up to 16 million of the 80 mil acres of corn harvested in the United S carried some form of the gene, accor Monsanto Co., a St. Louis firm that licen technology behind Bt corn.

SOURCE: Science News, Volume 155, Number 21, 19



Female Agricultural Workers

There are many health risks associated with the use of chemicals in agriculture, and four million people are reported to be exposed to chemicals in their work in agriculture. Women and their children are at particular risk. They have been described as the invisible part of the workforce. This is because their role in the agricultural economy has been greatly underreported. In fact, in Africa, women produce 70 to 80% of the household food, in Asia the figure is 65% , and 45% in Latin America.

Many women do not consider themselves agricultural workers. As they may only work part time in this area, the rest of their time is spent running the home, raising the children, or even working in other industries.

These women working in the fields of the world come into contact with pesticides on a regular basis. For example, in Guatemala, in 1997, there were 310 pesticide poisonings, 8% of the poisonings were women, a number than is believed to be an example of extreme underreporting.

In addition to the risk in the fields, many homes also use pesticides. Most homes that were surveyed did not know how to properly use and dispose of these chemicals.

Because of the physiology of women, and their role in child bearing, women are at greater risk than men for some environmental contaminants. Lactation influences the movement and metabolism of many fat soluble compounds in the body. Because women have a higher fat composition, many fat soluble compounds are stored in the body. The levels of some of the compounds, such as organochlorine pesticides, are many times higher in women in the developing world. These levels are often associated with higher cancer risks. Many women in agricultural communities do not have access to health care, and maternal mortality rates are much higher for rural women.

Pesticides and other agricultural chemicals have a major impact on reproductive health. Reports of the effects include congenital abnormalities, low birth weight, abortions, lactation problems, etc. Women who use hormonal contraceptives are at greater risk when they are exposed to organophosphate pesticides.

Women seldom know the danger they incur when using pesticides. The literacy rates are very low among rural women who are using the products. Even if the warnings and other precautions are available on the products, they are not in the local language, and even if they are the illiterate women cannot understand them. Women, however, benefit greatly from a better education. Better educated women will be more likely to grow higher value crops and more likely to teach other women improved techniques.

Also, the research which has been completed on health risks in agricultural health risks, little as it is, is primarily focused on men. As the Institute of Medicine, part of the National Academy of Science, reported in 1998, research is only now focusing on gender issues and occupational health. Of the 1,233 reports on occupational cancer, only 14% presented data that included women in their analyses.

SOURCE: *Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute*

For its part industry is not taking a back seat to this heated controversy. Currently, DuPont, Monsanto and Dow Chemical and others plan to spend \$50 million for a three year advertising campaign to keep consumer fears about genetically engineered foods from taking hold in the US and Canada. These companies have formed a coalition with the UK's AstraZeneca Plc, France's Aventis SA, Germany's BASF AG and Switzerland's Novartis AG to start the campaign as early as May 2000.

The Cartagena Protocol

One year after negotiations were suspended in Cartagena, Columbia in 1999 the most relevant aspects of the final text are probably the reaffirmation of the Precautionary Approach, its application to all the living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on biological diversity and human health, and the definition of differentiated, agreed procedures in function of their use.

The Precautionary Approach: Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development declares that: "In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation." References to this principle are expressly made in the Preamble and in the Objective of the Cartagena Biosafety Protocol. Its substance is recalled in the articles referring to the decision-making procedures regarding intentional movement of living modified organisms (LMOs) for introduction into the environment or intended for direct use as food, feed or for processing (LMO-FFPs).

The Objective of the Protocol is to contribute to ensuring an adequate level of protection in the field of the safe transfer, handling and use of living modified organisms resulting from modern biotechnology. The Scope of the Protocol states that it shall apply to the transboundary movement, transit, handling and use of all living modified organisms that may have adverse effects on the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, taking also into account risks to human health. An exception to this article refers to LMOs which are used as *pharmaceuticals* for humans that are addressed by other international agreements or organizations. Two additional, partial exceptions exclude LMOs *in transit* or destined for *contained use* from the application of the Advance Informed agreement (AIA). In any case the Protocol clearly provides for the right of an importing Party to subject all living modified organisms to risk assessment before taking a final decision on import.

The first transboundary movements of LMOs *intended for* intentional introduction into the environment of the Party of import are regulated under the *Advance Informed Agreement (AIA)*. The whole process of notification, acknowledgement and decision is supposed to be completed in 270 days. Detailed information has to be provided by the importer on notification and LMOs should be clearly identified by

accompanying documentation.

Decisions regarding LMOs for domestic use, including the placing on the market, that may be subject to transboundary movement for direct use as food, feed or for processing (LMO-FFPs) are regulated under a specific procedure. This provision shall not apply to decisions regarding *field trials*. LMO-FFPs should be clearly identified by accompanying documentation as material that "may contain" living modified organisms and as not intended for intentional introduction into the environment.

For both AIA and LMO-FFPs a Party of import may review and change its decision, require risk assessment for subsequent imports, set up simplified procedures or enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements and arrangements. Failure by the Party of import to communicate its decision within the requested period shall not imply its consent to an intentional transboundary movement.

Risk assessment and management are regulated under specific articles and the notifier, if required by the Party of import, should sustain the cost of risk assessment. Each Party must prevent any adverse effects on biodiversity and human health as well as unintentional transboundary movements, and ensure that any LMO has undergone an appropriate period of observation before it is put to its intended use.

Three major authorities are defined in the Protocol: the competent national authorities, the Biosafety Clearing-House and the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. In particular, the *Biosafety Clearing House* is established as a part of the existing CBD Clearing-House to facilitate the exchange of scientific, technical, environmental and legal information and to assist Parties to implement the Protocol. It shall provide access to information made available by the Parties and, whenever possible, to other international biosafety information exchange mechanisms.



SOURCE: World Press Review

Confidentiality of the information submitted is determined by the national authorities; in no case shall the following data be considered confidential: the name and address of the notifier, a general description of LMOs and a summary of risk assessment performed and of the emergency plans envisaged.

The needs of developing countries for *capacity building* in biosafety and biotechnology are clearly expressed and all Parties shall cooperate in the development and strengthening of human resources. Parties are also requested to promote *public awareness* and define *agreements with non-Parties* in a way consistent with the Protocol while *socioeconomic considerations* may be taken into account in reaching decisions. An enormous task is finally requested of future *Conferences of the Parties* that will serve as the meeting of the Parties to the Protocol. In particular they should provide: procedures and mechanisms to facilitate the AIA process; further details on the documentation accompanying LMO-FFPs; operational modalities on the biosafety CHM, and a provision on liability and redress.

By time the Protocol comes into effect, after its fiftieth ratification, the joint FAO/WHO Task Force may have made its own progress in guaranteeing the consumer peace of mind on the health risks of biotech foods. Until then for most of us, the jury is still out.

SOURCES:

- Agence France Presse "Green Revolution Can't Cope with Population Crisis." March 1, 2000
- FAO website press release 00/16 on Codex Alimentarius
- FAO press release 00/17 FAO Stresses Potential of Biotechnology but Calls for Caution
- International Centre for Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology (ICGEB) website at www.icgeb.trieste.it
- "Monsanto Others Plan \$50 Mln Ad effort on Biotech Foods," 21 March 2000
- "130 Nations Agree on Safety Rules for Biotech Food", Andrew Pollack, 30 January 2000, The New York Times
- "Protests on New Genes and Seeds grow More Passionate in Europe" by Donald G. McNeil Jr. 14 March 2000, The New York Times
- "In the Heartland, Genetic Promises" by David Barboza, 17 March 2000, The New York Times

"I am told that, in all your deliberations and all your preparatory work for the Millennium Assembly over the last eighteen months, the environment was never seriously considered."

"If I could sum it up in one sentence, I should say we are plundering our children's heritage to pay for our present unsustainable practices."

"We must face the implications of a steadily shrinking surface of cultivable land, at a time when every year brings many millions of new mouths to feed. Biotechnology may offer the best hope, but only if we can resolve the controversies and allay the fears surrounding it. I am convening a global policy network to consider these issues urgently, so that the poor and hungry do not lose out."

"Above all we need to remember the old African wisdom which I learned as a child—that the earth is not ours. It is a treasure we hold in trust for our descendants."

*Kofi Annan, UN Secretary General
Speech to the General Assembly announcing his
Millennium Report, April 3, 2000*

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Interview with Assistant Secretary General for the Millennium Assembly Mr. Miles Stoby on NGOs and the UN



The last decade of the millennium witnessed the series of United Nations conferences sponsored by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Now under review by the General Assembly, these conferences had several major outcomes. The first was to raise the profile of the human development issues for which they had been convened. The second has been the enormous increase in the participation of NGO organizations to whom much of the implementation of the various programs of action is being left.

The participation of NGOs in the work of the United Nations started as soon as the UN began its work. At that time, the United Nations Charter in Article 71 set the precedent for a relationship naming the ECOSOC as the body through which "suitable arrangements for consultation" with NGOs would develop. In 1948, there were only 41 NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC. Since that time, the UN has both altered and expanded its mechanisms for cooperation with NGOs.

By 1968 the number of ECOSOC affiliated not-for-profit organizations had increased to 377. This was the year of the first landmark ECOSOC resolution governing the formal relationship between the Council and its associated NGOs. Resolution 1296 (XLIV) set up the system through which the consultative relationship was established. In 1991, just prior to the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development (UNCED, Rio de Janeiro 1992) there were 928 accredited NGOs and currently there are 1,398.

To understand the changing relationship between NGO's activities the United Nations programs of action in this millennium, WIT interviewed Mr. Miles Stoby, Assistant Secretary General of the United Nations for the Millennium Assembly.

"The increase in the number of NGOs accredited to ECOSOC has been amazing. We had about 15,000 NGOs at the Forum at Rio and this process of continuing interest in environmental development has meant that a lot of the NGOs who before had no continuing status with the ECOSOC now have one. Following UNCED we pushed for a review of the NGO's involvement in the UN. The result was Resolution 31/1996 which set forth both the requirements for obtaining and maintaining consultative status and the privileges afforded to affiliated NGOs. However, instead of finding a large NGO community interested in opening the UN up to include more NGOs by relaxing the rules, bringing in new groups, there was a group of conservative NGOs which didn't want any change. It was sad to find that so many NGOs themselves were defending the status quo."

WIT: What are your thoughts regarding the increasing the participation of NGOs from the South in UN activities?

Stoby: "The lack of NGOs from the South is still a major challenge. If you look at the list of NGOs accredited to ECOSOC and the Department of Public Information, you'll find that the majority are international NGOs with headquarters in the United

States. That imbalance can and needs to be corrected, otherwise there will be a backlash, and developing countries will come to feel that the UN reflects activities of civil society from only one part of the world." The discussion continued.

WIT: Are there ways in which this can be avoided?

Stoby: "There are many complex factors involved. I think the first thing is for developing countries to feel that civil society as a concept is not a foreign one. If they feel that the whole concept of civil society activities is a western concept, then you begin with suspicion. In fact, civil society in developing countries is not the least uncommon and in fact has always existed. Religious groups, family support groups, business groups are common in many countries. But the term "civil society" has not been used to describe them."

WIT: How can this idea of suspicion be dealt with?

Stoby: "I suppose there are three factors. One, which is the most important, is the extent to which the Southern NGOs feel that the UN as an institution is taking into account their needs. That is important for all of us at the UN to be aware of. If Southern NGOs feel that the UN is a place where their voice can be heard, and their interests can be looked after, they will come here. I think the second factor is the extent to which civil society in many developing countries has been activist. This has started to change. One expects it will grow. How quickly it will grow, whether it will be balanced across the regions, or its intensity will be varied from region to region, we'll have to wait and see. The third factor has to be a disinterested support for NGO's activities in favor of developing countries by both governments and NGOs from the North. I use the word disinterested because it is important to see civil society prosper and flourish regardless of the direction that civil society may choose to take."

WIT: What about increasing the knowledge of Southern NGOs regarding what the UN does?

Stoby: "An important way to encourage participation of Southern NGOs in the work of the UN is to increase the number of UN activities in developing countries. Instead of having to bring NGO leaders from developing countries to New York or to other UN centers which happen to be in the North, we should increasingly hold large UN events in developing countries. In fact, the criticism of the UN holding costly conferences misses the mark completely. The cost of holding the conference is born by the host government. To give the impression that there are extravagant affairs which the UN pays for is not accurate."

WIT: How does the UN decide where to hold these conferences?

Stoby: "Once the UN has decided to hold a conference the rule is, and it's a General Assembly rule, that the conference must be held at the headquarters of the substantive department which deals with the conference. In other words, if we are going to hold a conference on social development, it has to be held in New

UNCTAD X

York because the division which deals with social development is in New York. If we're going to hold a conference on food, it must be in Rome, because that is where the substantive organization is. Furthermore, if we're going to hold a conference outside these UN centers, then the government which invites the UN to hold it in its country, agrees that every extra penny which it costs will be completely covered by the government or other voluntary fund raising. Now if the conference is held in the developing countries where these problems are usually more acute, the conference will tend to involve many more people from the developing countries in the work of the UN. It brings the UN to life for that region. Arguments against holding these conferences in developing countries are not convincing."

WIT: Do you see the increase in activities of civil society this millennium as being important for the UN?

Stoby: "The Secretary General has always been in favor of civil society cooperation with the UN. It is part of his reform measures. We expect this attitude to grow and flourish in this millennium. Watching it do so will be an important part of the work of this organization in the years to come."

As this millennium begins, the increasing number of NGO's activities will highlight how the role of NGOs is changing, how it expects to change, and how successful it can be in furthering the economic and social development activities for which these UN conferences have been convened. An enormous effort will be needed to increase the participation of NGOs from the South in order to make the UN the organization it merits being.

WIT notes from UNCTAD X, the Tenth Annual United Nations Conference on Trade and Development Bangkok, Thailand, February 12-17, 2000:

Although development has entered the negotiations on trade issues, WIT noted the absence of serious inclusion of women in discussions of the interrelationship between trade and development. Moreover, WIT perceived unwillingness from the developing world on the part of some governments and some large NGO networks to engage new ideas about development. Rather, WIT noticed the preference from some governments and non-governmental groups to repeat the same mistakes of the post-industrial nations that contaminated and depleted natural resources and ignored humane labor standards.

WIT further perceived that some donor nations were inclined to support the view that the monetary ends of growth and development justified any means. In this context, World Information Transfer prepared the following statement for distribution at UNCTAD X.

WIT statement to the UNCTAD X Bangkok, Thailand, February 2000

We support the increase of development assistance and debt relief on the condition of promoting education and environmental conservation, particularly for the education of women.

It has been verified by research of all UN agencies involved that education of women not only reduces population growth and the abuse of children but also promotes sustainable development.

The continued practice of cultural and religious patterns of discriminatory practices in both education and human rights of women by governments opposed to change should, in our opinion, be discouraged through pressures to adopt "good governance" practices.

The current practice of a liberal attitude by developed countries towards developing governments promoting discriminatory practices regarding women, promotes the perception that developing economies:

- 1) are "limited" in their capacity to establish "good governance";
- 2) are only capable of perpetuating those practices that retain old status quo divisions in their cultures.

The dichotomy of power between men and women, practiced for generations in certain countries, is against the basic tenets of a democratic society. For equitable free trade, it is imperative that stringent measures are taken toward the elimination of discrimination.

Sustainable development cannot be attained without full acknowledgement of the rights of every human being.

Excerpts from "Rethinking Development, Challenges and Opportunities."

Speech by James D. Wolfensohn, President, The World Bank, to UNCTAD X, February 16, 2000.

"The proportion of the population of developing and transition economies living on less than \$1 a day fell from 28% in 1987 to 24% in 1998. Excluding China, the reduction is rather less - from 29% to 26% in those same years. But a growing world population has delivered a stark challenge. The actual number of people living in dire poverty has remained roughly constant, at about 1.2 billion. Excluding China, the number has actually risen, from just under 880 million to 980 million. In addition, the total number of people living under \$2 a day is now estimated at nearly 3 billion, approaching half the world's population..."

Rethinking development needs also to take into account the new challenges represented by our globalizing world...Globalizations is here to stay...If it's well structured and sequenced, trade liberalization can be an engine of development and poverty reduction...The picture is especially disheartening for the poorest countries...common sense and equity alike tell us that liberalizing market access for HIPC [Heavily Indebted Poor Countries] countries is an essential complement to debt relief...Thus, the trade agenda, properly conceived, is converging with the wider development agenda...trade liberalization needs to be seen...as a means towards achieving wider development objectives..."

If liberalization is to deliver its potential benefits, governments need to take, and external partners need to support, a range of complementary action in areas such as...governance and institutional reform...LDCs [Least Developed Countries] are far behind...developing countries...with respect to...physical infrastructure...of paved roads...electric power production...and telephone main lines per 1000 population...LDCs fare equally badly with respect to...education, health and good governance...the international community needs to help the poorest countries to help themselves..."

HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT

Negotiating the Elimination of Persistent Organic Pollutants

The relationship between human health and the degrading effect of highly toxic environmental pollutants is finally being understood by governments. While the politics of development continue to rule, the scientific evidence continues to mount indicating that the 250 year path towards industrialization taken by the developed nations cannot be repeated by the developing world.

The fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) for an International Legally Binding Treaty to Eliminate Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) met from March 20-25, 2000, in Bonn, Germany. In one sense, this meeting was historic in that it was the first one held in the rebuilt Bundeshaus since the German capital moved from Bonn back to Berlin. Approximately 500 representatives from 121 countries, international organizations and non-governmental organizations participated. Under the leadership of UNEP, the United Nations Environment Programme, governments plan to develop a global treaty for the phase out and elimination of the highly toxic pollutants known as the "dirty dozen" persistent organic pollutants. These toxicants grouped into three categories include 1) pesticides: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene; 2) industrial chemicals: hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and 3) unintended byproducts: dioxins and furans.

Five main issues dominated the negotiations:

- 1) the Precautionary Principle and its impact on the criteria for assessing new POPs;
- 2) the goal of elimination of POPs stockpiles, contaminated sites and releases or emissions of POPs;
- 3) the individual and general exemptions to the bans;
- 4) the technical and financial assistance to developing countries and economies in transition; and
- 5) the relationship between multilateral agreements (MEAs) and the World Trade Organization.

1) While the majority of countries supported the inclusion of the Precautionary Principle in the Treaty, particularly in the assessment of the risk profile of new chemical candidates for POPs, Australia and United States refused to accept its inclusions in this Treaty. Australia in rejecting a precautionary approach argued for the 'softest' criteria for new POPs, claiming that the more stringent criteria would result in far too many new POPs candidates.

2) The NGOs of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) [World Information Transfer is a member of IPEN's Steering Committee] compiled a matrix that scored countries on both the Precautionary Principle and the goal

of POPs elimination. The survey showed that only nine countries out of the 119 present at the negotiations clearly did not support the goal of elimination of all POPs releases. Rather, they argued that POPs elimination was not practical and should be replaced with continual minimization and achievable reductions. The United States as well as Canada held this position.

3) There was significant argument about general or specific exemptions for continuing use of POPs chemicals. The European Union accepted individual exemptions for the protection of public health, the US supported by Australia wanted a host of general exemptions including one for POPs products in the hands of users at the time of the Treaty's introduction. Many countries saw this as a recipe for a "black market" in POPs chemicals. One general exemption that gained universal support was for POPs used in laboratory standards and for reference standards. Australia and China requested an exemption for Mirex, the highly toxic chemical used in northern Australia for termite control. Mirex, like PCBs, has been detected in the breast milk of the Inuit people of the Arctic, the eventual 'sink' for many of the global POPs chemicals which travel towards cold climates. The Russian Federation requested exemptions from a ban on the use PCBs until 2015 stating that they have over 40,000 tons of the toxicant. They also wanted an exemption for DDT arguing that they needed DDT for the control of vector borne encephalitis. The debate continued over exemptions for ongoing use of DDT for malaria control. South Africa argued for their right to continue to use DDT, while African countries contended that other safer means of malaria control were available. Overall, the request for



Young girl collecting from a dump, recycling to make a living

SOURCE: UNICEF

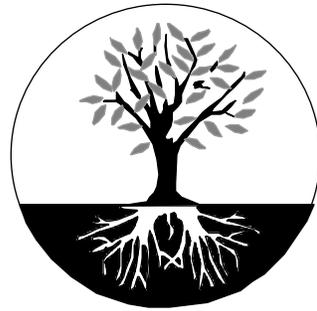
exemptions to the elimination suggested that if granted, the continued use of POPs chemicals would stretch far into the future.

4) The debate over financing and assistance boiled down to "no money...no treaty". Nearly all the arguments about elimination and management of stockpiles returned to the basic issue of who would help pay the significant costs of the Treaty implementation. There were intense arguments not only over the dollar value of the financial assistance but the means by which it would be delivered. The developed nations supported the current funding mechanism of GEF (Global Environment Fund) claiming that any new funding body would cost too much to set up and support. The G77 countries including the African coalition argued resolutely for a new independent funding body, claiming that GEF was too slow and too bureaucratic. Canada, the only country to commit substantial sums to technical and financial assistance for the treaty, pledged \$20 million Canadian dollars over 5 years. The USA pledged \$500,000. Japan pledged approximately \$150,000.

5) The debate regarding consistency with the World Trade Organization (WTO) had just begun as the negotiations drew to a close.

The POPs Treaty negotiations will continue at INC5 planned for South Africa later this year.

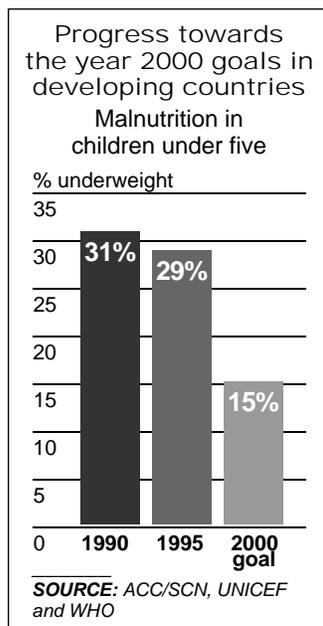
SOURCES: National Toxics Network Inc. Rivett ACT 2611 AUSTRALIA, Mariann Lloyd-Smith, Coordinator; Earth Negotiations Bulletin, Vol. 15 No. 34, Monday, 27 March 2000



GOOD NEWS!

birth control pill fundamentally changed the choices available for young women graduating from college, beginning with the first round of baby-boomers born just after the Second World War. Indirectly, the pill had an impact on all women, not only career women, and men as well, because all individuals could delay marriage. This created a wider marriage market for career women and encouraged more women to enter a career path. The new study concludes that affirmative action laws and reforms in abortion laws did not initiate the changes in women's choices of career and marriage but rather supported the social changes triggered by the availability of the birth control pill.

SOURCE: National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 7527, www.nber.org/papers/w7527 <<http://www.nber.org/papers/w7527>>, Fortune; April 3, 2000; Pg. 68



■ F&A new study on the relationship between the birth control bill and the American labor force, "The Power of the Pill: Oral Contraceptives and Women's Career and Marriage Decisions" by Harvard economists Claudia Goldin and Lawrence Katz strongly suggests that the pill has been the greatest factor in women's emergence in the corporate world. The small number of female American college graduates entering professional programs sharply increased around 1970, and shortly afterward so did the age at which these women married. The study found the main reason for these changes was the wide availability of the birth control pill among young, college-educated women. Young women were generally denied access to the pill until the late 1960s, even though it had been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration in 1960. The study's authors contend that wider access to the

■ George McGovern, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations Agencies for Food and Agriculture in Rome, is proposing that the UN, led by the US, launch a school lunch program similar to school lunch programs functioning across the US. Drawing on his 40 years of experience, McGovern referred to successful lunch programs in Latin America in the 1960s. Of the estimated 790 million chronically hungry people in the world, 300 million are school-age or younger. Most of them live in Africa and Asia. His book, Ending World Hunger in Our Time, expected in the Fall 2000 contains his approach to this intractable problem.

SOURCE: George McGovern, The Washington Post, "Too Many Children Are Hungry" February 27, 2000,

■ Kerala, a small state in the south of India, demonstrates the relationship between universal literacy, particularly among women, and population control. The women of Kerala are 98.5% literate. The rate of population growth has declined to a level comparable with some of the Scandinavian countries.

SOURCE: Los Angeles Times 3/24/2000

■ The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is a new approach by WHO to exercise its constitutional right to negotiate a set of globally binding rules on public health policy. WHO is establishing an International legal framework, which will assist and support countries in their national regulation process? Currently, tobacco kills one person every eight seconds. Today in India, tobacco kills 670,000 people every year. In China, if present smoking patterns continue, about a third of the 300 million Chinese males now aged 0-29 will eventually be killed by tobacco. These deaths are preventable. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is intended to encourage governments to place health at the top of national and international agenda and to create a debate on the wider issues and solutions to health problems.

SOURCE: Speech by Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General World Health Organization, New Delhi, India, 7 January 2000

■ Pennsylvania has cut the amount of air pollution emitted from utilities and other industrial sources by 61 percent from 1990 levels—more than required by current clean-air rules, accord-

GOOD NEWS! *(continued)*

ing to Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection.

SOURCE: *Energy Central News*, 3/30/00

■ Daimler-Chrysler (formerly called Chrysler) started a \$43 million program to eliminate all PCB electrical equipment from its facilities in 1989. The proactive program addressed more than 500 PCB transformers and 10,000 PCB capacitors. Daimler-Chrysler is currently reporting a 100 percent reduction in PCB transformers and a 99 percent reduction in PCB capacitors, and is now focused on eliminating the few capacitors that remain in service. In 1996, General Motors began its formal program to eliminate all high-level PCB transformers in the United States and Canada by 2000. The company reports spending \$28 million so far to remove and properly dispose of some 298 transformers—containing more than 3 million pounds of PCB's. General Motors will meet its goal this year by replacing its remaining 400 transformers. Ford Motor Co. created a PCB phase-down program in 1995 to eliminate all PCB containing equipment globally by 2010. It projects that 95 percent of all PCB equipment in their facilities worldwide will be removed and properly disposed of by 2006.

SOURCE: *U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*;
www.epa.org/pcb_workinggroup.htm

■ The Toyota Motor Corporation has made a financial donation of JPY 75 million (approx. US\$720,000) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). In an agreement signed by the Executive Director of UNEP, Klaus Toepfer, and the President of Toyota Motor Corporation, Fujio Cho, Toyota will support Earth Report, the UNEP-supported environmental TV series transmitted weekly on BBC World to 180 countries. Starting 1 April, 2000, the 75 million donation from Toyota will be used to support the production of the weekly award-winning Earth Report series, which is produced in association with the Television Trust for the Environment (TVE) and the World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF). The grant will also be used to support the production of 12 UNEP video news releases on environmental issues of global concern. Started four years ago, the editorially-independent series has won a reputation for scientific accuracy and responsible reporting in its coverage of global environmental issues.

Recent stories featured in Earth Report programmes have included: Nelson Mandela championing solar power for rural Africa; UN scientists assessing the environmental damage from the conflict in the Balkans; an investigation into falling sperm counts; conflicts over water in the Middle East and the plight of indigenous peoples in Central Africa whose forest home is being destroyed by logging companies.

Current programmes will include: investigation of pirate fishing in the Southern Ocean; how to stop human waste going to waste; profile of an international effort to save the steppelands of eastern Mongolia; why environment will be afforded more respect in future free trade negotiations at the WTO; and how bees and sniffer dogs are coming to the aid of scientists in combating contamination of our environment.

SOURCE: *UNEP PRESS RELEASE, NAIROBI, 28 March, 2000*



Honda and Toyota roll out gas-electric vehicles—Insight and Prius. The two hybrid cars, combining gasoline and electric power sources differ from electric cars in that they don't have to be plugged in to charge their batteries and generate their own electricity as they drive. They reduce emissions and get exceptional gas mileage (up to 80 miles per gallon).

■ The American Lung Association and other environmental and public health groups are rallying behind recently released research that justifies increased regulation of air pollutants, particularly a controversial rule that is now being held up by a court-imposed stay. The two studies, both released April 11 by the Health Effects Institute, a nonprofit research center, link soot particles and other air pollutants to medical problems and premature deaths. The studies have been characterized as central to the contentious debate over the scientific basis for the Environmental Protection Agency's regulatory plan for managing particulate matter and ozone. In addition, the studies provide justification for regulation of other sources of particulate soot, the groups contend. The studies give "substantial additional scientific backing" to EPA's controversial rule issued in 1997 to regulate PM and ozone. A stay was placed on the rule last year after industry groups opposition. EPA and the Department of Justice are appealing the case to the Supreme Court. One of the two studies essentially revalidated two earlier studies that EPA had relied on to draw up the PM, ozone rule. The studies, conducted by the Harvard School of Public Health, linked particle soot to premature death. The second study linked increased health disorders to lighter levels of particulate pollution. The study claims, "These complementary analyses of mortality and morbidity provide new and strong evidence linking particulate air pollution at current levels to adverse health effects." The groups are using these studies to call for not only implementation of the PM, ozone rule, but also other EPA initiatives for controlling particle suit, specifically diesel trucks and fuel and coal-fired power plants. The diesel proposal would tighten diesel fuel and diesel engine sulfur emission standards and is currently being reviewed by OMB. It is expected to be released later this year. The proposal is being criticized by the oil industry for the high costs and tight timeframe it imposes, while environmental and state representatives are praising the rule, citing its environmental and human health benefits.

SOURCE: *E&E Newslines*, Vol. 11, #38, April, 2000 www.eenews.net

■ Following the U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Dan Glickman recommendation that President Clinton des-

ignite a 355,000-acre national monument in Sequoia National Forest, lawmakers led by Radanovich (R California) have given up trying to pass legislation that would have delayed the monument. Glickman has previously delivered his opinion that the Sequoia groves need "permanent protection" and should be designated as a national monument, according to USDA. Clinton is expected to use the Antiquities Act of 1906 to make the designation, which allows him to bypass Congress. The trees themselves total about 26,000 acres, but the Secretary recommended a 355,000-acre designation to preserve the surrounding sub-watersheds on which these trees depend, or in areas where the risk of fire to Sequoia groves must be controlled. As a national monument, preservation of the giant trees would become the focus of the Forest Service's management. Glickman proposed convening a scientific panel to help create a new management plan incorporating logging, controlled burns and other good management practices.

The Secretary suggested that all land within the monument become off-limits to commercial logging. Grazing and other existing permits will be able to continue and recreational facilities for hunting and fishing would be kept in tact.

Besides the massive, ancient trees, the area has other outstanding natural and historical resources such as the California spotted owl, limestone caves, pinnacles, soda springs and evidence of prehistoric human use.

SOURCE: *E&E Newslines*, Vol. 11, #38, April, 2000 www.eenews.net

CHERNOBYL UPDATE

The following news about nuclear in the United States is drawn from web sites on nuclear issues and local newspapers.

1-The release of radioactive steam in a steam generator tube at the Indian Point 2 nuclear reactor in Buchanan, New York, February 15, 2000, did not involve enough radiation to harm anyone. Consolidated Edison, owner and operator of the reactor, had planned to replace the steam generators in 1993 according to research published by Public Citizen in the 1995 report, "Roll the Dice." But reductions over the past few years in U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) safety standards have allowed Indian Point 2 and other nuclear utilities to operate reactors with more severely degraded tubes.

2-British Energy (BE), Britain's privatized nuclear energy conglomerate, has formed a US-based entity called AmerGen which has joined forces with Philadelphia Electric in an attempt to purchase 20 US nuclear power plants, including Three Mile Island. By the end of 2000, BE could control 25 percent of US nuclear power. AmerGen is picking up Three Mile Island for \$100 million. The British company hopes to make money running this and other run-down reactors by selling power back to the same companies that sold the reactors. AmerGen has fired well trained nuclear workers and contracted out for their replacements in order to avoid the costs of paying workers' benefits. According to Friends of the Earth, the company plans to fire another 300 workers. The Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) has asked the US Congress not to examine antitrust issues involving nuclear utilities which would prevent public review of the sales of nuclear plants.

3-Residents of the US state of New Jersey get nearly three-quarters of their electricity from nuclear power, more than in any other state. Most residents—including an estimated 3.5 million in North Jersey—are included in emergency evacuation plans that federal regulators have developed to deal with a major accident. Vermont was a close second at 72.5 percent, but New Hampshire and South Carolina are the only other states getting as much as half their power from nuclear sources. Nationally, there are 103 commercial nuclear plants supplying about 20 percent of the country's electricity. Each of those commercial nuclear plants has an emergency response plan approved by federal regulators before a facility can start generating power. Most recent data is available for 1998.

In the United States there has been only one nuclear accident that caused a general emergency and that was in 1979 at the Three Mile Island power plant in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Seven years later the world's worst nuclear disaster occurred in Ukraine at the Chernobyl facility. The overall feeling within the US was that the enormous contamination caused by the fire at Chernobyl simply could not happen in America for a variety of reasons. The generating plants at both Three Mile Island and Chernobyl were not of the same construction, nuclear regulation in the US is safer, plant monitoring is more frequent. Despite the greater cleanliness of nuclear energy compared to coal and oil, toxic releases remain under reported—unless a general emergency as was the case of Three Mile Island occurs. Changes in federal regulations of nuclear plants, the implementation of these standards, and changes in the expertise of nuclear workers as well as corporate ownership also go under reported, if covered at all in the media.

As long as the public stays focused on nuclear issues through the availability of accurate information in all the media, Chernobyl style devastation will most likely not occur. The Internet is becoming the place where more and more people research that information, but the local daily newspaper remains the main source of news on local nuclear issues.

SOURCES: *Nuclear News* (3/31/00), <http://www.nuclear-free.com> ; <http://www.nirs.org>, *Nuclear Information and Resource Service*; *The Record*, February 18, 2000, *Star-Ledger*, March 28, 2000.



Oksana, one of the Chernobyl victims (see *WER*, Winter 1999, Vol. X, No. 4, page 12), with her new prosthesis donated by WIT starting a new life



DID YOU KNOW?

■ The World Commission on Water for the 21st century—a panel sponsored by UN institutions—said that at present a billion people do not have access to safe water, and two billion do not have proper sanitation. The commission reported that, “In the next two decades, it is estimated that water use by humans will increase by about 40 percent, and that 17 percent more water will be needed to grow the food for the growing populations than is available. The report

pointed out that only 2.5 percent of the planet’s water is not saline, and of that, two-thirds are locked up in icecaps and glaciers. Of the tiny remainder, around 20 percent lies in remote areas beyond human habitation and most of the rest—monsoons, storms and floods—comes at the wrong time and place. The commission recommends: 1) more than doubling annual investment in water supply, from 70-80 billion dollars a year to 180 billion, with the focus on sustainable use of water rather than simply lowering water tables; 2) letting the private sector take the lead in providing water supplies, with governments serving as regulators and protectors of the environment; 3) scrapping water subsidies that encourage waste, and enforcing the “polluter pays, user pays” principle. Help for the poor should be made through targeted subsidies rather than handouts for the whole population. World Bank Vice President Ismail Serageldin chairs the Commission, set up by the World Water Council. The co-sponsors of the Council are the UN’s Development Programme (UNDP); Environment Programme (UNEP); World Health Organization (WHO); and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The ministerial meeting in The Hague took place on March 21 and 22, 2000.

SOURCE: Agence France Presse; March 13, 2000

■ WHO estimates that the human and economic burden associated with asthma surpasses that of the AIDS virus and tuberculosis combined. In a recently released statement on bronchial asthma, WHO said the incidence of asthma was rising by 50 percent every decade and that between 100 and 150 million people—roughly equivalent to the population of the Russian Federation—currently suffer from the disease. Every year, more than 180,000 people die from it. In the United States, the direct and indirect costs related to asthma total more than \$6 billion per year. The United Kingdom spends \$1.8 billion annually on health care and workdays lost from the illness. In India, there are estimated 15-20 million cases. Asthma symptoms in children in Kenya approach 20 percent, while in Brazil, Costa

Rica, Panama, Peru and Uruguay, they vary from 20 to 30 percent. Although the cause of the increase in asthma rates is unknown, experts point to urbanization, exposure to indoor allergens during infancy and a family history of asthma as major risk factors in the development of the disease. Since 1992, WHO has been working to develop strategies for asthma management and prevention through a Global Initiative for Asthma (GINA).

SOURCE: 13 January 2000, *The World Health Organization*

■ High concentrations of dioxin have been found in newborn babies’ umbilical cords, Japan’s Environment Agency said recently. An average of 14 picograms of dioxin was found in one gram of fat from the umbilical cord, according to the agency’s first research on dioxin accumulation in human and animal bodies, carried out in fiscal year 1998. The amount extracted from the umbilical cords was more than half that found in breast milk, which had a concentration reading of 22.2 picograms, according to figures released by the Health and Welfare Ministry in August. The research was conducted on umbilical cords from 29 newborn babies, as well as on dead human bodies and 12 types of wildlife, including birds, raccoons and whales.

SOURCE: Jiji Press Ticker Service, Tokyo, Dec. 27, 2000

■ In Mexico, currently, 10 percent of all cancer deaths annually are women who succumbed to cervical cancer. In the developing world, cervical cancer continues to be one of the “more common” forms of cancer afflicting women from the lower end of the economic scale. In Tanzania, doctors in the nation’s clinical services hospital note that 15,000 of the 20,000 new cases of cancer detected every year relate to cervical cancer. According to a study published in the *Cancer Journal* for Clinicians, “Cervical cancer is the seventh most common cancer, overall, and the third most common in women. And in general terms, it’s much more common in developing countries, where

Public expenditure on basic social services and social indicators

Country	% of public expenditure 1992-1996	Under-5 mortality rate 1996	Underweight (% of under-5s) 1990-1997	Female net primary enrollment ratio 1986-1997
Cote d’Ivoire	11.3 *	150	24	46
El Salvador	14.8 *	40	11	80
Guinea	13.3	210	26	26
Nepal	12.9	116	47	60
South Africa	12.5	66	9	96

*Preliminary data

SOURCES: Country studies and UNICEF, *The State of the World’s Children, 1998*

cervical cancer accounts for 15 percent of female cancers." The World Health Organization (WHO), estimates that in 20 years, as more people take up smoking and adopt "Western diets," 70 percent of cancer cases will occur in the Third World. According to the WHO, lung cancer remains the most widespread form of cancer, resulting in 921,000 deaths out of the annual death toll of five million. It is followed by stomach cancer, with 628,000 deaths every year, and colon and rectal cancer, with 413,000 deaths. By 2020, however, the WHO anticipates the mortality rate from lung cancer to have risen sharply—to 20 million.

SOURCE: (IPS World Desk) Feb 14, 2000 by Marwaan Macan-Markar. [c] 2000, InterPress Third World News Agency (IPS) All rights reserved

■ A new source of water pollution has been detected in the US—drugs excreted by humans and livestock—although European scientists have found trace amounts of pharmaceuticals contaminating lakes and streams for the past ten years. Approximately 40% of the antibiotics produced in the US are fed to livestock as growth enhancers. Now, these antibiotics, along with trace amounts of commonly prescribed drugs people discard in their trash are showing up in groundwater. The concentrations of these drugs are slight, but no one knows how aquatic life will be affected by a steady bath, from cradle to grave, of low levels of pharmaceuticals.

SOURCE: Science News, April 1, 2000, Vol. 157, No. 14.



VOICES

■ World Information Transfer's Ninth International Conference on Health and Environment: Global Partners for Global Solutions on the theme of "Solutions for the Millennium" will take place on April 26, 27, and 28, 2000, United Nations Headquarters, New York. The Conference is co-sponsored by the Governments of Indonesia and Uganda, in cooperation with the Interreligious and International Federation for World Peace and supported by DESA, UNEP, UNDP and WHO. Among many distinguished speakers, James Van der Beek, star of the TV series Dalton Creek, will talk about "Social Responsibility—the potential of the next generation," and Cary Granat, President of Dimension Films, is the Friday luncheon speaker. Program is listed on WIT's web site: www.worldinfo.org. The Conference is for free, however, registration is mandatory.

■ Beijing +5, 5-9 June 2000, United Nations Head

Quarters, New York

The year 2000 marks the fifth anniversary of the UN Fourth World Conference on Women. The Conference, held in Beijing, China, was the largest UN conference ever. Delegates from 189 governments and 2600 NGOs participated; more than 30,000 women and men attended the parallel NGO forum. 189 countries endorsed the Beijing Platform for Action, which calls upon governments to act in the 12 critical areas of concern. The UN General Assembly resolved to convene a Special Session to appraise and assess the progress achieved in the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and the Beijing Platform for Action, five years after its adoption. The March 2000 session of the Commission on the Status of Women acted as the preparatory committee for the review. NGOs which were accredited to the Fourth World Conference on Women are invited to attend the Special Session as observers. NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council are also invited to attend the Special Session as observers. Altogether, approximately 4,000 NGOs are currently invited to the Special Session. Deadline for registration was March 31, 2000. For further information contact Koh Miyaoi by fax: 212-963-3463 or by e-mail. Internet addresses for further information: www.conferenceofngos.org and www.un.org/womenwatch/

■ World Summit for Social Development plus 5

At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly requested that a report be made in the year 2000 on the implementation of the Summit's outcome. Accordingly, a Special Session of the General Assembly on the Implementation of the Outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and Further Initiatives will be held in Geneva on 26-30 June 2000 (WSSD+5). NGOs in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, and all NGOs accredited either to the World Summit for Social Development or to the Preparatory Committee are invited to attend the Special Session. There would be no further examination of credentials unless the application to either had been rejected by the Committee on NGOs. An NGO Forum called the Geneva 2000 Forum will also be convened. For all queries regarding the Special Session: Ms Gloria Kan, Chief, Intergovernmental Policy Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations, Room DC2-1362, New York, NY 10017, USA; tel.: 212-963-5873; fax: 212-963-3062; e-mail: kan@un.org

For inquiries about the Forum contact www.conferenceofngos.org and Geneva 2000 Secretariat, Rue de Varembe 9-11, P.O. Box 125, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland; tel.: +41 22 749 25 70; fax: +41 22 749 25 89; e-mail: info2000@geneva2000.org

For all host country arrangements: Ambassador Daniel Stauffacher, Delegate of the Swiss Government for the Follow-up Conference of the World Summit for Social Development, Rue de Varembe 9-11, P.O. Box 125, CH-1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland; tel.: +41 22 749 25 70; fax: +41 22 749 25 89; e-mail: info2000@geneva2000.org

■ Women'sNet Community Radio Pilot Project, was conducted in Gauteng, South Africa, and worked with community radio stations and gender organizations from the same communities.

VOICES (continued from page 13)

The Objectives of the pilot were: 1) to train community radio to use the Internet effectively; 2) to generate gender-sensitive programming; 3) to provide training in gender sensitivity to community radio stations with a view to impacting on programming and news gathering; 4) to train gender organizations in the preparation of radio-ready content; 5) to develop a network of community radio stations and gender organizations, forming partnerships to strengthen 'community' information; and 6) to establish an Internet-based clearing house of radio-ready content. The Internet site will be formally launched on 29 March 2000. The url is radio.womensnet.org.za

For further information contact: Sonja Boezak, Women'sNet Information Coordinator, sonja@womensnet.org.za; www.womensnet.org.za; flamme.org.za; 13th Floor, Longbank Building, 187 ee Street, Johannesburg, S. Afr.; tel.: +27 11 8386943; fax: +27 11 4921058.

■ The Education Connectivity Program of the Schlumberger Excellence in Educational Development (SEED) program is a corporate nonprofit initiative that fosters a worldwide community within which learners from any social and cultural background can participate in a world of ideas as interdependent citizens. SEED provides learners with access to the global community via the Internet through the use of the Connectivity Grant Program and the Educational Website. Connectivity Grant Program web site: www.slb.com/seed/cp.d; For further information contact <berner@new-york.slb.com>; USA tel.: 212-350-9479; USA fax: 212-350-9457.

■ ICT (Information Communication Technology) volunteering has become a strategic area for the United Nations Volunteer (UNV) Program. NetAid (www.netaid.org) is planning to start offering an online volunteering service as of the 20th of February. It will make it easy for people anywhere to donate their time and skills to development projects/institutions, using the Internet (e-mail, in particular) as their prime communications channel. The project directors want to ensure that potential online volunteers can find sufficient choices when they check out the module which will go live on the 20th. Please contact netaid@unv.org for more information. Manuel Acevedo Focal Point for ICT and Development United Nations Volunteers (UNV) Postfach 260111, D-53153 Bonn, Germany; e-mail: manuel.acevedo@unv.org; home page: www.unv.org; tel.: (49-228) 815.22.15; fax: 815.20.01.

■ Expo 2000 in Hanover, Germany, will hold the world exposition on the theme of "Mankind-Nature-Technology" from June 1 to October 31. tel.: +49-511-8404-0; fax: 49-511-8404-100.

■ American Solar Energy Society's next annual Conference "SOLAR 2000: Solar Powers Life-Share the Energy" will

POINT OF VIEW (continued from back page)

think and what to think about. She accomplishes this through her close contact with her baby from the earliest ages when she first teaches language, and continues as the child grows. By their own actions, mothers teach their children what sorts of behaviors are appropriate and which are not to be tolerated. Within the family, more and more women are coming to the understanding that they are powerful beings making executive decisions daily which affect their child's future.

Mothers teach their sons how to treat women. In some societies training infant sons that they are more important than their sisters is demonstrated early on by feeding practices. The baby boy is fed first and given more than his equally hungry baby sister. Mothers teach their sons that boys can play with their friends while the girls do family chores; that a family can afford the boy's education but not the girl's. The girl child learns from watching her mother what behaviors from males to tolerate and that males are superior—the first sex.

In cultures that prefer boys to girls, the mother degrades her own gender—and thus herself—by neglecting the girl child while indulging her male offspring. Both actions induce men and women alike to demean the female.

By the time a child becomes an adolescent, he or she knows the rules of inequality so that changing traditional gender based behavior needs to begin at birth for a culture of peace to develop. Inequality and the perception of inequality are known to be the primary instigators of war. (See Vamik Volkan, WER Summer 1999, Vol. XI, No. 2.)

Women whose personal and family needs are met are in the position to change age-old child rearing practices that perpetuate the second class status of women. The plethora of international networks created by the Beijing Women's Conference of 1995, offers the means to disperse new information on child rearing practices. Many of those networks rely on the Internet and email to spread ideas. Together these technologies create the enabling environment as well as support groups for a new perspective about rearing sons to take hold.

What are the elements of a new education for boys? (These same characteristics produce confident and courageous girls who learn not to tolerate prejudicial treatment.)

The following practices are based on psychologically recognized norms for child rearing: 1) unlimited love and attention offered in the first two years of life; 2) distinguishing between appropriate and inappropriate behavior by adding parameters to behavior from age two; 3) allowing for imaginative play and exploration during the years between 6 and 12; 4) adding responsibilities with each new privilege so that the child learns that with added freedoms come added accountability; and 5) finally, during the adolescent period teaching values and responsible behavior patterns. In practice, each of these prescriptions requires that the parent control impulses to act on immediate feelings, and instead focus on the child and the teaching inherent in the adult's behavior toward the child.

As long as the UN promotes peace and tolerance, its member states will have to continue to develop strategies promoting equity between men and women. A key strategy for "peace and equality" lies in how we educate our sons.

World Information Transfer is a Non-Profit, Non-Governmental Organization in Consultative Status with the United Nations, Promoting Health and Environmental Literacy.

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We have not inherited the world from our forefathers...we have borrowed it from our children. -Kashmiri Proverb

World Information Transfer, Inc. (WIT) is a not-for-profit (501c3) non-governmental organization in consultative status with the United Nations, promoting environmental health and literacy.

In 1987, inspired by the Chernobyl nuclear tragedy, WIT was formed in recognition of the pressing need to provide accurate actionable information about our deteriorating global environment and its effect on human health to opinion leaders and concerned citizens around the world.

WIT exercises its mandate through:

1. The publication of the *World Ecology Report*, a quarterly digest of critical issues in health and environment, published in five languages and distributed to opinion leaders around the world, and for free in developing countries.

2. Our annual conference on *Health and the Environment: Global Partners For Global Solutions* held at United Nations headquarters in New York since 1992. The world's leading authorities in the field of environmental medicine share their latest findings and discuss possible solutions with leaders in governments, business, organizations and the media.

3. Since 1995, WIT has been providing and promoting humanitarian relief to areas devastated by environmental degradation. Supplies and equipment have been sent to schools, hospitals and orphanages and assistance programs developed in areas contaminated by the Chernobyl fallout. These programs have been rapidly expanding since their inception.

4. Centers for Health & Environment providing centralized scientific data pertaining to health and sustainability issues. The objective of the Centers is to provide continuous monitoring, ongoing research, education and implementation of corrective programs. The first center was opened in Kiev in 1992 and moved to Lviv in 1996. The second center opened in Beirut, Lebanon in 1997.

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World Information Transfer
WORLD ECOLOGY REPORT

World Information Transfer, Inc.
(ISSN #1080-3092)
451 Park Avenue South, 6th Floor
New York, NY 10016
Telephone: (212) 686-1996
Fax: (212) 686-2172
E-Mail: wit@igc.apc.org
Electronic edition available on:
<http://www.worldinfo.org>

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POINT OF VIEW

Challenging Traditions of Dominance: Re-educating Boys

Beijing +5 recalls that five years ago in China the fourth International Conference on Women was convened by the United Nations in order to address the myriad inequities between men and women. This June, several thousand women along with dignitaries and diplomats are expected to meet in New York at UN headquarters to consider the degree to which the Beijing Platform of Action (PFA) has been implemented.

Conservative groups supported by the Vatican, along with several Islamic and Catholic nations, will again try to control a woman's choice to bear a child. These groups dismiss as irrelevant, what it means for the child if its mother does not want it, or dies in the process of giving birth to it. However, the foes of a woman's right to control her body recognize the power women have in their social role as mothers. As the first teachers of the next generation, mothers have the power to choose whether to perpetuate or challenge the values and traditions of their culture. It is widely recognized that culture is not only passed down through women, but also that the voice of conscience is female.

With such fundamental power, it appears illogical that women the world over share the experience of being the "second sex," as French philosopher Simone

de Beauvoir wrote. Yet, in every part of the world women are equal in neither rights nor opportunity to men and across cultures are viewed as sexual objects in the service of men.

While there are notable exceptions, the majority of the world's women earn a portion of men's salaries for equal work [American women on average earn 75 cents to every dollar earned by a man] and rarely hold chief executive positions in companies or countries. Women are the primary family care givers and in many instances must balance work and family.

Although women have gained the right to vote in many nations, relative to the female population, few are found in government as elected or appointed officials. Some women command high salaries and important posts, yet few make decisions at the highest corporate and financial levels. Women are still subject to the laws and rules promulgated essentially by men.

To achieve and sustain gender parity, women will need the cooperation of men. However, as mothers and the first teachers, women can exert the power they have over the future, by rearing cooperative men.

A woman generally teaches her children how to

Islam now faces the challenge of globalization, and in doing so, people have either of two responses. The first group likes to stress the identity of Moslems and so formalize the Islamic teaching. This is traditional Islam. Because of that, we institutionalize Islam into something we worship. We forget that we are ordered only to worship God and not anything else. Because of this, people always forget that Islam is a universal religion like other religions. It is not a unique religion for itself. By stressing the uniqueness of Islam, then formalizing it, Moslems stress the advantage of the Moslem over what they describe as the disadvantage of other religions. While the Holy Qu'ran says that humankind was made from woman and man, and God made them into tribes and nations that they might know each other. There is no order to kill each other.

So there is no way for people like myself, but to follow the second path. That is to take the principle of equality, of meekness to the law and equality regardless of peoples origin—ethnic, religious, political or of language. A Moslem's obligation is to uphold spirituality and morality of Islam and not to institutionalize it, especially in the relationship between religion and the state.

Statement by President Abdurrahman Wahid of Indonesia, World Culture & Sport Festival, Seoul Korea, February 10, 2000

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**HOW YOU CAN HELP:**

WIT is a non-profit, international, non-governmental organization, in consultative status with the United Nations, dedicated to forging understanding of the relationship between health and environment among opinion leaders and concerned citizens around the world. You can help us with your letters, your time, and/or your donations.

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New York, NY 10016

"Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world. Indeed it's the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

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