



NEWSLETTER

The United Nations Association in Canada
Winnipeg Branch

C/o The University of Winnipeg Library
515 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9
Phone: (204) 586-0173 Fax: (204) 783-8910
Email: unac@merlin.mb.ca



A Better World Starts Here

December, 2006

Special points of interest:

- The next public forum will be held January 19th at the University of Winnipeg. The theme will be *Addressing Cultural Differences and Sources of Conflict: Local and Global Perspectives*
- *Ban Ki-moon takes over as UN Secretary-General on January 1st, 2007. Learn more about him on page 6.*

Inside This Issue:

The Global Water Crisis	1-3
2006 High School Human Rights Conference	1, 4
Kofi Annan's Message for Human Rights Day 2006	4
Public Forum Information	5
Membership Renewal Form	5
Ban Ki-moon vs. The Bad Guys	6

The Global Water Crisis

Kermal Dervis

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

As set out by many friends and experts who have shaped the concept and practice of human development over the past fifteen years -- prominent among them the late Mahbub ul Haq, a vigorous champion of the concept in the 1990s, and Nobel Prize winner Amartya Sen -- human development is first and foremost about allowing people to lead lives that enable them to realize their potential as human beings. Today, the normative framework for human development is reflected in the broad vision set out in the internationally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

This year's Human Development Report – Beyond Scarcity: Power, Poverty and the Global Water Crisis – looks

at an issue that profoundly influences progress towards the MDGs, and human potential more generally. Water is a basic human need and a fundamental human right. Access to water, a simple resource that many in rich countries take for granted, has implications for improving life chances, expanding choice, and the exercise of basic human freedoms. Water for life in the household and water for livelihoods through production are two of the foundations for human development.

The crisis in water for life is the widespread violation of the basic human right to water. One in every six people in the world is denied the right to clean, accessible and affordable water. 2.6 billion people do not have even rudimentary forms of

continues on next page



Kermal Dervis is head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the UN's global development network. This is the address he gave at the global launch of the UNDP 2006 Human Development Report in Cape Town on November 9th.

Manitoba Students Talk Human Rights

Marcie Hawranik

On December 11th, 2006 the Winnipeg Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada hosted its annual Human Rights Conference for Manitoba high school students. The Conference was entitled "Global Gender Perspectives: Through the eyes of the beholder."

Approximately 320 students were expected to attend from rural and urban Manitoba high schools. The day-long conference was held at the University of Winnipeg. The Keynote address, delivered by Anita Sheth of Save

the Children Canada, was open to the general public. She spoke about children and human rights, covering topics as diverse as sexual exploitation, forced labour, poverty, and trafficking.

Following the keynote, students participated in two consecutive workshops. The interactive workshop covered topics such as the local sex trade, environment and gender, immigrants and the challenges they face when transitioning into a new country, people with disabilities, aboriginal self-

determination, art and gender, and HIV & AIDS.

In the late afternoon of the conference, students enjoyed a presentation/performance by two-time Grammy Nominee, Canadian Rap Artist Fresh IE. Fresh IE presented to the students on the role of gender in justice and gangs from a Manitoban and national perspective.

A number of human rights and peacebuilding organizations were also invited to

Continues on page 4



The Human Development Report (HDR) was first launched by the UNDP in 1990 with the single goal of putting people back at the center of the development process in terms of economic debate, policy and advocacy. The goal was both massive and simple, with far-ranging implications — going beyond income to assess the level of people's long-term well-being. Bringing about development of the people, by the people, and for the people, and emphasizing that the goals of development are choices and freedoms.

“Those most affected by the crisis in water and sanitation — the poor, women and children — are also the ones who have the least voice in asserting their claims to water”



The Global Water Crisis (*Continued*)

sanitation. That deprivation causes nearly two million avoidable child deaths each year. As the great author Victor Hugo wrote in *Les Misérables*, “The sewer is the conscience of the city.” The central message of this year’s Report is that the global water crisis is not one of physical scarcity, but one rooted in poverty and inequality.

Access to water is intrinsic to human development, but it also has implications for several other targets that the international community has set itself in the Millennium Development Goals. The human cost manifests itself in lost opportunities for education and huge gender inequalities. Worldwide, 443 million school days are lost each year because children are too weak from diarrhea and other water-related illnesses.

As we look across the continent of Africa and beyond, it’s clear that the world’s failure to meet this essential need has knock-on effects on a global economic scale. Developing countries lose billions of dollars on an annual basis due to the productivity losses associated with water delivery and management. By undermining economic growth, the deficits in water and sanitation are trapping households in cycles of poverty and reinforcing inequalities both within and between countries.

So, how do we make water a human right — and mean it? In analysing the causes of the problem, several themes emerge in the Report. First, few countries treat water as a political priority. Second, the limited coverage of water utilities in slums and informal settlements means that the poorest tend to pay the most for water. And third, the international commu-

nity has failed to prioritise water and sanitation in the partnerships that have coalesced around the MDGs.

Underlying these problems is the fact that those most affected by the crisis in water and sanitation — the poor, women and children — are also the ones who have the least voice in asserting their claims to water. Too often, the debate over public or private provision of water has diverted attention away from the fact that the poor remain under-served, irrespective of who owns the utility.

Hence, there is a need to focus on the legislation, institutions and regulatory capacity needed to target the inequalities in water and sanitation. Many countries have made extraordinary progress by legislating on the right to water, and communities in slums and villages have shown leadership in mobilizing resources to improve sanitary conditions.

Here in South Africa, the constitutional right to water has enabled the Government to protect and promote the right to water for every individual. This is amply demonstrated by the policy and legislative frameworks, budget allocations and achievements to date on this critical issue. However, challenges remain. Access to potable water in South Africa is not universal and coverage rates among the poor still vary significantly.

Also, South Africa has not yet matched its success in expanding access and reducing inequality in water provision with comparable outcomes in sanitation. The challenge for South Africa, as the Government recognises and is taking steps to address, lies in expanding access and engaging communities in the identifica-

tion and adoption of the most appropriate and sustainable solutions that respond to environmental and resource constraints.

As always, the United Nations Development Programme stands ready to support the Government of South Africa, by sharing our experience gained worldwide and working together to make further progress in an area where South Africa is already a leader.

Globally, there are several clear steps that governments can take to address the water crisis. These include setting clearly defined targets for utility companies to increase water access to the poor; ensuring that national policies — and their objectives — are clearly understood by all concerned and that providers are made accountable for meeting those objectives; using a combination of cross-subsidies and funds from municipal bonds to finance the upfront costs of connecting households to water mains; and enforcing a minimum entitlement of water for all citizens, provided free to those who cannot afford to pay.

And at the international level, governments should support a Global Action Plan to raise the profile of water and sanitation, garner additional resources, and monitor performance of both donor and recipient countries.

The second dimension of the water crisis as addressed in this Report is the crisis in water for livelihoods. That is the chronic water stress that affects nearly 800 million people on the planet and threatens the collapse of ecological systems, intensifying competition for water and heightening cross-border

The Global Water Crisis (*Continued*)

tensions. The world is not running out of water in an aggregate, absolute sense, but for millions of people, access to water resources is coming under stress.

Moreover, it is now clear that global warming could have a devastating impact in a few decades leading to severe droughts in some areas, floods in others, as well as an increasing intensity of tropical storms. I strongly commend to you the work of Sir Nicholas Stern, Head of the UK Government Economic Service, who has brought to bear hard-headed and rigorous methods of economic analysis on these issues.

Agriculture is the main user of water. Declining flows in rivers, shrinking lakes and falling water tables are symptoms of unsustainable water use in some regions. Parts of China and India, both fast-growing economies, are suffering from water stress which results in large losses in agricultural productivity. As competition for irrigation water intensifies, the inequalities between small and large farmers will come to the fore with greater prominence. Agriculture also faces increasing competition for water from industries and rapid urbanization.

This is a crisis that is already here and will affect future generations. Global warming is already occurring and will put increasing pressure on water availability patterns throughout the world. While in the short to medium-term the accelerated melting of glaciers leads to an increase in water flows, in the long-run this will result in a decline in water availability as ice caps retreat and release less water during summer months adversely affecting water.

This, together with extreme weather patterns adds a new dimension to the competition for water resources. There is an urgent need to focus not only on mitigating climate change but also supporting adaptation strategies.

Water is also the ultimate fugitive resource. Two-fifths of humanity lives in river and lake basins shared by two or more countries. Linked by a web of interdependence, these societies can either suffer from increasing political conflicts or benefit from cooperation. Shared management of river basins can yield significant benefits in terms of the quantity, quality and predictability of water flows. Lack of cooperation, on the other hand, increases the potential for cross-border tensions in water-stressed regions.

As a first response to the increasing competition there needs to be a recognition that the environment is a user of water as well. Water has to be priced in a manner that reflects its scarcity, rather than subsidised in a manner that ensures that large farmers or industries get their share at the cost of the poor. And at a cross-border level the challenge is to focus on the human development needs of communities that share the same water resource.

The world's water crisis is a denial of human rights compounded by increasingly policy-induced scarcity. We know that it is within our technical and financial resources to address the crisis, just as the rich world today did in their own countries a century ago.

Political will is of course important at the national level. But water also has to be much higher on the international agenda for us to

convert rhetoric into action. We at the United Nations must also work right, starting with better coordination among the many UN agencies that work on water.

These efforts must also involve a greater level of commitment from donor governments towards addressing this crisis. If the rich world is serious about helping developing countries achieve the MDGs, then giving priority to water and sanitation will go a long way towards making more effective use of aid financing.

Excellencies, Dear Friends,

The Global Action Plan set out in this Report provides the roadmap that we need to follow, not only in providing more funds but in building capacity, leveraging resources, and measuring our progress against the targets we have set. We need hard heads and soft hearts, a combination symbolized by the great leader Nelson Mandela, and which continues to be practiced by President Mbeki and many leading South Africans today.

Power, poverty and inequality are not naturally occurring causes of water scarcity. They need to be confronted with a political policy response. The debate that is being launched with the publication of this year's Human Development Report, will, I hope, spur everyone to much greater action.

Thank you.

Reprinted by permission from MaximsNews.com

You can access the 2006 Human Development Report online at:

<http://hdr.undp.org/hdr2006/>



The starting point for accelerated progress in water can be summarized in two words: national strategy. HDR 2006: p. 96.

“Power, poverty and inequality are not naturally occurring causes of water scarcity. They need to be confronted with a political policy response”

The problem in many developing countries is that there are marked limits on the capacity of regulators to regulate. HDR 2006: p. 101





A child dies every three seconds as a result of extreme poverty. www.makepovertyhistory.ca

Human Rights Conference (Continued)

set up displays to further inform the attending students.

The Human Rights committee plans to follow up with the attending students after the conference and en-

courage them to organize human rights awareness activities and events within their own schools.

The aim of the conference is to educate high school students on gender and

human rights issues locally and globally, and provide students with the information to empower them to become global citizens.



United Nations Day Observance

Members of the platform party (L-R: The Hon. John Harvard, Hon. Jon Gerrard, Mr. Bidhu Jha, Mr. Hugh McFayden, and Mr. Ashok Athavale) observe as Ms. Stuart Hanks presents a trophy to a winner of the 2006 Public Speaking Competition.



Kofi Annan completes his term as the UN's seventh Secretary-General at the end of 2006

The Secretary-General's Message for International Human Rights Day

The campaign to make poverty history poses a central moral challenge of our time. Enforcing universal human rights can blaze a path towards that goal.

Basic human rights – the right to a decent standard of living, to food and essential healthcare, to opportunities for education or decent work, or to freedom from discrimination – are precisely what the world's poorest need most. Yet, by virtue of their enfeebled status, they are the ones least able to achieve or defend such "universal" rights. As a result, human rights are jeopardized wherever and whenever a man, woman or child subsists in extreme poverty.

If we are to be serious about human rights, we must demonstrate that we are serious about deprivation. As suggested by this year's International Human Rights Day observance, we must answer

the call to fight poverty as "a matter of obligation, not charity".

Each of us should understand that the Rights set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights are of little value to the millions of people in this world who are haunted by disease and starvation, so long as they have no effective remedies. We must all recognize that wherever entire families eke out an existence on less than a dollar a day, or children die for lack of basic yet lifesaving care, the Declaration has, at best, a hollow ring.

Viewing poverty through a human rights lens heightens our moral imperative to act. But it brings other benefits as well. Since human rights norms emphasize individual empowerment, a rights-based approach can help empower and enable the poor. It can help citizens at all levels to win the knowledge and status

they need to play a real part in decisions that affect their lives. It can focus attention on sound and sustainable processes that offer hope for long term progress. And it can encourage us to measure our success not only by income levels, but by the freedom people have to lead fulfilling and enjoyable lives.

Today, development, security and human rights go hand in hand; no one of them can advance very far without the other two. Indeed, anyone who speaks forcefully for human rights but does nothing about human security and human development – or vice versa – undermines both his credibility and his cause. So let us speak with one voice on all three issues, and let us work to ensure that freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity carry real meaning for those most in need.

"If we are to be serious about human rights, we must demonstrate that we are serious about deprivation"

Join us for our next public forum!

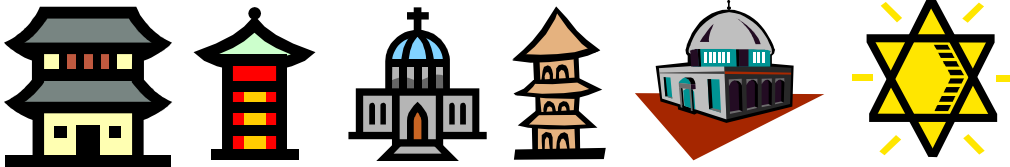
Addressing Cultural Differences & Sources of Conflict: Local and Global Perspectives

Is religion a barrier to common understanding, or an asset?
 How effective is education in reducing inter-cultural conflict?
 How integral are economic and political disparities in inter-cultural conflicts?

Friday, January 19th, 2007 — 6:00 PM

The University of Winnipeg (Room TBD)

For more information, contact the Branch office at (204) 586-0173



Your Membership Supports Global Citizenship Education & Advocacy!

Renew Today!



The United Nations Association in Canada strives for a better world through a variety of projects focused on specific issues and audiences. We work closely with the educational communities in every province and territory to build their capacity to educate young people from a global perspective. We also work directly with youth, challenging them to develop the tools and skills necessary to confront some of the world's most complex problems.



Please Check All That Apply:	Suggested Donation	Other	Quantity
<input type="checkbox"/> Membership Renewal	\$25	\$ _____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> New Membership	\$25	\$ _____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Gift Membership (One Year)	\$25	\$ _____	_____

TOTAL _____

Method of Payment

- Cheque (enclosed)
 Cash (enclosed)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Gift Membership Info:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Please Forward Payment To:



**The United Nations Association in Canada
 Winnipeg Branch**
 C/o the University of
 Winnipeg Library
 515 Portage Ave.
 Winnipeg, MB R3B 2E9

Ban Ki-moon vs. The Bad Guys

James Traub



Ban: "A bland and placatory public speaker"?

As he prepares to take office as Secretary General of the United Nations on New Year's Day, Ban Ki-moon, South Korea's foreign minister, has vowed to improve the institution's beleaguered reputation. Some of the changes he has in mind, like improving coordination among the U.N.'s many agencies, are essentially bureaucratic — but others concern issues of great moral and geopolitical moment.

Ban appears to share the incumbent Kofi Annan's conviction that the United Nations must promote human rights around the world. To that end, he has sworn to make the new Human Rights Council, established to replace a notoriously toothless predecessor, live up to "the heightened expectations of the international community." Is he promising more than he can deliver?

The old Human Rights Commission routinely fell victim to gross human rights violators who gained a position on the body and devoted themselves to quashing resolutions criticizing anyone among their number. In the ambitious reform package Annan formulated last year, he proposed a new organization with better financing, wider powers and more stringent requirements for membership: aspirants would have to win the support of two-thirds of the U.N.'s members to secure a spot. But thanks to a combination of resistance from states that preferred the status quo and maladroit American diplomacy, the two-thirds requirement was reduced to a mere majority.

The Bush administration refused to endorse this compromised institution or to seek a place on it. Cuba, China, Russia, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, sought and won seats. And the outcome was numbingly famil-

iar: efforts by Western countries and human rights organizations to criticize gross abusers like Uzbekistan failed, while a campaign orchestrated by the Organization of Islamic Countries produced two separate resolutions condemning Israel. The final tally of censure was Israel 2, everyone else 0.

But halfhearted reform was not really the problem. Even if council contenders had been required to win the support of two-thirds of U.N. members, the most egregious human rights violators would still have won their seats without breaking a sweat. (Saudi Arabia would have fallen one vote short but presumably could have found a vote if it had needed one.) The council's failure was, if anything, a democratic one. Twenty-six of the 47 members come from either Africa or Asia, and in retrospect it seems naïve to imagine that a body broadly representative of the U.N.'s membership would enforce standards of state responsibility observed chiefly in the West. After all, even the Security Council, where the West has a larger voice, has barely been able to muster a response to the atrocities in Darfur and has been altogether silent in the face of lesser horrors in places like Zimbabwe.

The problem lies with the United Nations itself. The United Nations necessarily reflects not only its own ideals but also the interests and internal conditions of its member states, and it turns out that the universal principles enshrined in documents like the U.N.'s 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights are not, in fact, universally accepted. What's more, the fact that the United States, the world's most voluble exponent of the virtues of freedom, has itself been accused of trifling with civil liberties in the name of fighting terrorism has further undermined the enterprise. Or perhaps American behavior simply offers a useful pretext for stonewalling: so long as most of the U.N.'s members — including many of the official democracies — are fundamentally undemocratic, bodies like the Human Rights Council are almost bound to fail.

Should we, then, accept that the United Nations lacks the moral authority to defend the principles enumerated in its own landmark declarations? That would be tantamount to accepting the institution's disposability. Instead, we should look elsewhere. In a sense, the moral core of the U.N. lies in the office of the secretary general, who stands above the

interests of states and thus speaks for all men and women. For all that we may regard him today as a reduced figure, Kofi Annan won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2001 essentially for having embraced the rhetorical and moral responsibility of his office.

Annan's two finest moments may have been a 1997 speech rebuking African heads of state for behaving as if human rights were a Western preoccupation that did not apply to their own citizens and his address to the General Assembly two years later in which he argued passionately that the United Nations must protect people from atrocities committed by their own governments, even if that entails "humanitarian intervention." Many of the third-world countries that denounced the idea as a violation of state sovereignty embraced it six years later when the General Assembly formally adopted "the responsibility to protect." Words, of course, are cheap, and few of those states are prepared to help save the beleaguered people of Darfur. But Annan had at least forced the U.N. to focus on the rights of people rather than of states.

The iron grip of regimes all over the world is threatened by growing demands for both economic and political liberty. It's true, in this sense, that the international community has heightened expectations of the United Nations. And this brings us back to Ban Ki-moon. Both Washington and Beijing, which together played the decisive role in the selection process, sought a candidate who would be more "secretary" than "general." And in Ban, a bland and placatory public speaker, they seem to have found their man. Ban has spoken chiefly of managerial issues and from all appearances is a very recent convert to the cause of human rights. Yet if no amount of reform can change the underlying dynamics of the Human Rights Council, then it is the secretary general himself who must meet those expectations. Ban Ki-moon will have to find his voice.

James Traub, a contributing writer, is the author of a new book, "The Best Intentions: Kofi Annan and the U.N. in the Era of American World Power."

Reprinted by permission from
MaximsNews.com