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AIDID AHEAD IN ROUND TWO

By Horace Awori

NAIROBI, Oct 30 (IPS) - The U.N.'s decision to switch from peace enforcement to peace keeping is likely to trigger a fresh round of conflict between Somalia's warlords in which Gen. Mohammed Farah Aidid stands to win. He already has managed to defy the weight of the U.N. peace enforcement mission, and force an American decision to pull out of the strife-torn country by the end of March.

He has now fired the first salvo in the new phase of the conflict. After a two week lull in fighting following a cease-fire with U.N. and U.S. forces, an Oct. 25 "peace march" by Aidid's arch rival and self-styled interim president Ali Mahdi Mohammed into his southern half of the city was shot up by Aidid's militiamen. Last year's anarchic faction fighting between the two warlords led to Somalia's famine and international military intervention. This time, after Ali Mahdi ignored appeals by the U.N. not to go ahead with the march, the peace keepers stood back and watched.

WOMEN'S NETWORKS TO GO BEYOND OFFICIAL RHETORIC AT BEIJING

UNITED NATIONS, Oct. 30 (IPS) - Powerful women's networks in both industrialised and developing countries are set to place gender issues firmly on the policy agenda at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. But rather than "official" feminist rhetoric -- which has to date been the exclusive province of states and bureaucracies -- new strategies must include men, women and youths at the grass-roots level, said representatives of women's advocacy groups here.

"We have to use our brains on how to reach people, bearing in mind that the majority of women at the grass-roots cannot read and write," said Tanzania's Gertrude Mongella, Secretary-General of the U.N.-sponsored conference. Mongella made

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Aidid's Somali National Alliance (SNA) spokesman in Nairobi accused Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali of instigating the ensuing two days of fighting, which killed 17 people. "We want the world at large to know that Monday's clashes were instigated by none other than Dr. Boutros-Ghali and that Ali Mahdi was simply used as a willing tool," Hussein Dimbil said.

But while the SNA accuse the United Nations of attempting to marginalise Aidid, his opponents claim that Washington is willing to accommodate the General as the only credible force in Somalia. One of the 15 factions in the war-scarred country, the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM) based in south-eastern Somalia, has described the American withdrawal as a plot "to impose the leadership of general Aidid and his sub-clan on the people of Somalia."

SPM secretary for international affairs, Hassan Omer Horri, told IPS that south-eastern Jubaland could secede to "avoid Aidid's terrorist operations and destruction in the region". The SPM spokesman singled out former U.S. ambassador to Somalia, Robert Oakley, as the main culprit. Oakley, current U.S. Special Envoy, negotiated the release this month of the U.S. pilot and Nigerian soldier captured by Aidid's followers in the worst battle in four months of conflict Oct. 4, in which 15 U.S. troops and one Malaysian died.

The SPM, along with Ali Mahdi, wants Oakley recalled and a peace and reconciliation conference for all the factions -- without Aidid -- held in Somalia. The United Nations, which has suffered the death of over 70 peacekeepers since June, has supported

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that line. However, Washington favours a regional initiative led by Ethiopian president Meles Zenawi involving a full faction conference including Aidid -- the most powerful of Somalia's warlords.

It would build on the meeting in March in Ethiopia which called for disarmament under a two-year transitional government drawn from faction representatives. "What I see is the beginning of taking up positions and shifting alliances as the inevitable election of the head of the transitional government comes up," said former Somali diplomat here, Ali Hassan Dualeh.

"The battle lines are being redrawn and Ali Mahdi has been busy forging alliances with the 11 other factions that are opposed to Aidid", said Dualeh. But according to Aidid's spokesman Dimbil, "in terms of territory (Aidid) cannot be ignored in any discussions or efforts for a peaceful settlement and the creation of a transitional government for Somalia".

He pointed out that Aidid was the driving force behind the overthrow of the 21-year dictatorship of Siad Barre in January 1991, the last time there was unity of purpose among Somalia's factions. "many of the (current) so called movements and fighting forces are merely names on paper and had no fighting forces whatsoever."

He argued that they could not expect the same treatment as those who bore the brunt of the fighting. Aidid has also used the international media to convey an image of a reasonable politician rather a hunted fugitive with a price on his head.

On the diplomatic front, he is now repeating a tactic he used when the American-led intervention first arrived in Somalia last December, of praising the role of the U.S. While lambasting the United Nations, a former Somali university lecturer in international relations Hassan Ogle says that what happens in Somalia now will depend on the regional leaders.

"I believe that if the U.S. throws its weight behind Aidid, and there are signs this may be happening, the regional peace initiative may well back the strongman". Ethiopian president Zenawi has good relations with Washington and is anxious to end the instability of his eastern neighbour. ■

Soviet Union, Ukraine says it urgently needs funds to help destroy its nuclear arms.

Ukraine's Ambassador Victor Batiouk told the U.N. Committee on Disarmament and International Security last week that his country had no nuclear ambitions. But due to "historic circumstances and the breakup of the Soviet Union, Ukraine had nuclear weapons deployed on its territory," he said. "We are ready...to completely disentangle the knot of nuclear problems which has tightly gripped our newly independent state."

Ukraine became "a major nuclear power" by accident, when it inherited about 1,900 nuclear warheads and their delivery systems at the break-up of the Soviet Union in Dec. 1991. Batiouk says Ukraine proposes a fund that would finance a programme for eliminating strategic offensive weapons while enabling donor states to exercise effective financial control over the resources provided.

"If somebody expected to watch the free show of a Ukrainian nuclear strip tease, by now he might be disappointed," he added. "But, on the other hand, if somebody would like to help us in getting rid of nuclear weapons without endangering our security, he is most welcome," said Batiouk.

Last month the United States agreed to provide about \$175 million to Ukraine to help dismantle its nuclear weapons. Visiting U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher also announced an additional \$155 million in economic aid to Ukraine making a total of \$330 million. And last October Ukrainian President Leonid Kravchuk told newsreporters that Ukraine might keep its 46 modern, longrange SS-24 missiles by only deactivating their coding systems.

But Christopher last week insisted that all of the missiles should be dismantled, along with unspecified older nuclear weapons in the country's arsenal. Since the breakup of the Soviet Union, the US and Ukraine had for long been stalemated on the question of dismantling nuclear weapons. Kravchuk has promised Christopher that two treaties linked to the dismantling of the weapons would be submitted to the Ukrainian parliament for ratification in November.

The two treaties are the Treaty on the Reduction and Limitation of Strategic Offensive Arms (START) and the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. But there have been reports out of Kiev that many members of the Ukraine parliament want to keep the nuclear weapons for two reasons: either out of nationalistic pride or fears of a militarily resurgent Russia.

Batiouk told U.N. delegates that neither the government nor the people of Ukraine had taken part in the decisions concerning the production and deployment of nuclear weapons on its territory. Ukraine had paid for the ambitions of the Soviet leadership with its own well-being, he said. His country's national economy was such that it could not afford to destroy the nuclear weapons deployed on its territory. ■

UKRAINE SEEKS GLOBAL FUND TO DISMANTLE NUCLEAR ARMS

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 29 (IPS) - Ukraine has urged the United Nations to set up an international fund for nuclear disarmament. A country which has inherited some of the deadliest weapons from the

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FIFTY SIX SCIENTIFIC ACADEMIES URGE ACTION ON POPULATION

WASHINGTON, Oct 29 (IPS) - Representatives of 56 national scientific academies issued a statement this week urging action by the international community to "help achieve zero population growth within the lifetime of our children". The statement followed an unprecedented four-day scientific summit held in New Delhi to explore in detail the complex and inter-related issues of population growth, resource consumption, socioeconomic development, and environmental protection.

"The world is in the midst of an unprecedented expansion of human numbers," says the scientists' statement. It warned that the current population of 5.5 billion people could double over the next 50 years. Such growth could strain much of the earth's natural resource base close to breaking point, according to the scientists.

They stressed that the degree to which policymakers can help curb population growth "will have enormous implications for the human condition and for the natural environment on which all life depends." "Scientists today have the opportunity and responsibility to mount a concerted effort to confront our human predicament. But science and technology can only provide tools and blueprints for action and social change," the statement said.

"It is the government and international decision-makers, including those meeting in Cairo next September at the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), who hold the key to the future," the scientists stressed. They said the statement was prepared as the scientists' input to the Cairo Conference.

The New Delhi meeting grew out of two earlier meetings, one in 1992 of the U.S. National Academy of Sciences and the Royal Society of London, and the other an international conference organised by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences. Those meetings produced statements of deep concern over the implications of rapidly expanding world population.

The New Delhi statement was issued by representatives from the scientific academies from most of the world's industrialised nations, including those in Eastern Europe and some of the new republics of the former Soviet Union. Also signing were 19 national academies from Third World nations. The statement calls for governments to seriously consider population issues and take action on a number of fronts. They need to devise strategies to reduce and eliminate gender-based inequalities, say the scientists. Such inequities are reflected in the inability of women to take control of their own fertility.

They also must do more to provide convenient family planning services and other reproductive health services with a wide variety of safe contraceptive options, "irrespective of an individual's ability to pay". In addition, governments should encourage voluntary approaches to family planning.

"We urge (governments and international decision-makers) to take incisive action now and to adopt an integrated policy on population and sustainable development on a global scale," the statement concludes. "With each year's delay the problems become more acute." Science and technology can help solve many global problems, said Bruce Alberts, the U.S. National Academy of Sciences president, who attended the meeting.

Among those endorsing the statement were academies from Asia, China, India, Nepal, Malaysia and the Philippines. Academies from the Americas, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Mexico, and Venezuela also endorsed the document, as did the Caribbean Academy of Sciences. From Africa and the Middle East, endorsers included Ghana, Kenya, Uganda, Nigeria, Egypt, Iran, Israel and Jordan. ■

WORLD BANK SAYS YES, BUT NEPAL CANNOT AFFORD NEW DAM

by Binod Bhattarai

KATHMANDU, OCT 27 (IPS) - Opposition to a huge hydroelectric dam, the Arun III, is growing in Nepal with critics insisting the country cannot afford the World-Bank funded project. "We are not saying no. Just that we cannot afford it now. We don't have the capability to build and manage a project of that scale," says Bikas Pandey of Alliance for Energy (AE), a group campaigning against big dams in Nepal.

"Accepting a bad project now is worse than not having a project," he adds. Pandey is a micro-hydel engineer. The 68-metre high dam on the Arun river in Nepal's east is expected to generate 210 mw of electricity. It will cost a whopping 750 million dollars which is roughly as much as Nepal's annual budget this year.

Activists assert the project is an unbearable burden on Nepal's cash-strapped economy. The Himalayan nation is one of the world's poorest. Pandey's group has been urging donors and top World Bank officials to change their decision. Arun III, is probably the first World Bank-funded scheme that is being opposed for financial and not environmental reasons.

The World Bank is pressing the government to raise power tariffs in Nepal, but AE says the rates are
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already the highest in South Asia. "We can't pay for that kind of electricity," according to Pandey. Though an estimated 90 percent of Nepal's 18.5 million people, most of whom live in villages, do not have access to electricity, Arun III is expected to service the Kathmandu valley, 120-kms away.

However, this does not seem to bother the villagers living around the dam site in Sankhuasabha district. They want dam planners to redeem their pledge of constructing roads linking the remote mountain hamlets with Kathmandu. Land has already been acquired from the villagers, but in an attempt to cut costs the original 200-km road that was promised was scaled down considerably early this year.

"We want a road whatever it may cost," says a

local ruling party politician, Gopal Raj Pahadi. "We will not get electricity or the jobs. All we are saying is build the access road in such a way that it benefits a larger population." Dam planners propose to hack a 117-km road out of the mountains to the Arun river. Helicopters will be used to airlift construction material as the road must be completed in three years if the construction deadline is to be kept.

"We need a guarantee that the old road will be built or else we have to be assured of money to build smaller link-roads before the construction begins," says Pahadi. But Arun III's project chief Janak Lal Karmacharya told a delegation of some 50 people from Sankhuasabha district recently that "it is beyond my authority to guarantee that (road)." ■

WOMEN'S NETWORKS TO GO BEYOND OFFICIAL RHETORIC AT BEIJING

(continued from front cover)

her remarks earlier this week at an informal meeting organised by Inter Press Service (IPS) with the cooperation of the Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA).

The Oct. 25-26 meeting brought together more than 45 participants from the United Nations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), international development agencies and media networks in an attempt to draw up an information and communications strategy for the conference. "The Fourth World Conference on Women: Action for Equality, Development and Peace," is slated for Sept. 4-15, 1995 in Beijing, China. The conference is expected to adopt "a platform for action" that identifies key issues blocking the political, economic and social advancement of the majority of the world's women.

In addition, it will review and appraise the status of women since the 1985 adoption of the 'Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women to the Year 2000.' The 'Strategies' provide a framework for action at the national, regional and international levels to promote greater equality and opportunities for women. Participants at the two-day meeting agreed that NGOs and the media were vital communicators for reaching groups that exist in areas missed by development projects and women's NGOs.

And they said that the advancement of women could not take place in the absence of -- or lack of access to -- accurate and timely information. To this end, they stressed that both NGOs and media organisations should focus on reminding women of their constitutional and legal rights, as well, as their rights under international treaties and conventions ratified by their countries.

In addition, participants at the meeting proposed a strategy of information-sharing and communication between the United Nations, NGOs

and the media. They said that U.N. Information Centres (UNICs), the women's conference secretariat and the Department of Public Information (DPI) should readily make available relevant and accurate data to NGOs for dissemination at the local, national and regional levels.

In return, NGO representatives at the meeting said that the United Nations should use more NGO-documented information and be more accessible to journalists and media organisations. Other proposals by the group included greater awareness about the information needs of poor urban and rural communities in addition to the needs of marginalised groups like the illiterate, disabled and elderly.

And they urged the conference secretariat to organise events around women-related issues on which the media would focus attention -- like violence against women. The group also proposed the idea of using slogans -- like "Where are the Women?" -- and the passing of a torch as symbols of women's solidarity at events and other U.N. -sponsored conferences leading up to Beijing.

Dr. Roberto Savio, Secretary-General of the Society for International Development (SID) told the meeting that parliamentarians had an important contribution to make at upcoming U.N. conferences, including the Sept. '94 International Conference on Population and Development, the Mar. '95 World Summit on Social Development, and the Sept. '95 World Conference on Women.

He said that parliamentarians from both the North and the South were vital in shaping the future world network of interdependent, multilateral economic and development institutions as they reflected the needs and demands of people everywhere. Savio told the group that a series of parliamentary meetings would take place in Brasilia, Capetown, Kuala Lumpur, Bonn and Washington prior to the Women's Conference. He said that at these meetings, parliamentarians would push to ensure that international institutions be made more accountable, less technocratic, and governed by truly democratic principles. ■

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NEWSBRIEFS...**CHINA'S INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS MUST PASS ENVIRONMENTAL TESTS**

BEIJING, Oct 29 (IPS) - Stung by criticism that its breakneck economic growth is causing irreparable ecological damage, China has called for tighter environmental impact assessments before granting loans for new industrial projects in the country. Beijing's recommendations are contained in a circular released last week, based on guidelines set by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (AsDB) on granting loans to industries, according to the official China Daily.

An official of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA) acknowledged that slapdash industrial development in China has made people "jump at loans, disregarding the possible impact of projects on the local environment". "Because of the poor upbringing of Chinese in many areas, some tend to view things myopically, thinking more of economic gains," he said, but refused to say how many projects had been sanctioned and later found to be polluting their surroundings.

The circular admitted the nature-friendliness of new projects seldom goes beyond the project report. Often, information on possible ecological hazards is toned down or even withheld. "Projects which devastate the environment now justify their (loan) grant applications through a small part of their project which is environmentally friendly," it says. "For instance, cement works and chemical plants which cause massive amounts of water pollution will play up their plans to treat sewage." The circular was released on the eve of a workshop here this week, attended by representatives from the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), to discuss Beijing's blueprint for "long-term development and environmental protection..."

GERMAN AGENCY HELPS TO CREATE CLEAN ENERGY FROM A TREE

BONN, Oct 29 (IPS) - A German development agency will launch a pilot project in Mali to help develop an

indigenous and cheap source of energy, and help to protect the fragile ecosystem in the Sahel zone. Experts from the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) will join hands with their local counterparts in extracting non-edible 'curcas oil' on a commercial scale from physic-nut trees (*Jatropha curcas*).

This is a drought-resistant shrub-like tree found in abundance in Mali and belonging to the family of the Euphorbiaceae, making it a close relative of the castor-oil plant. Because of its medicinal properties, it is used locally to treat several ailments. In some areas, soap is also made from its oil-rich seeds...

GA ELECTS FIVE NON-PERMANENT MEMBERS OF SECURITY COUNCIL

UNITED NATIONS, Oct 29 (IPS) The General Assembly Friday elected Argentina, Rwanda, Oman, the Czech republic and Nigeria to serve as non-permanent members of the Security Council during 1994-1995. These countries will replace Morocco, Japan, Cape Verde, Hungary and Venezuela, whose mandate as non-permanent Council members expires December 31.

Guinea Bissau, one of the African Group's candidates, withdrew after three rounds of voting in which Nigeria also participated. Belarus, one of the Eastern European candidates, lost to the Czech republic in the second round of voting...

SPANISH FISHERMEN DEMAND EC BAN ON HUGE DRIFT NETS

MADRID, Oct 29 (IPS) - Spanish fishermen demanded the European Community (EC) Friday to completely prohibit the use of floating nets in commercial fishing, otherwise they have threatened to stage violent protest demonstrations.

According to the leading representatives of some 10 fishing collectives, the indiscriminate use of floating nets in the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean is exhausting marine resources and leaving thousands of families who use traditional fishing methods without a future....

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