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DUTCH MINISTER PLEADS FOR NEW APPROACH TO DEVELOPMENT AID

by Guido de Bruin

THE HAGUE, Sep 21 (IPS) -- Peace and security -- not just a fairer world economic order -- should be the focus of development aid in the present era of conflict, says Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation Jan Pronk.

Radically challenging the traditional conventions of development cooperation, he says that the balance between international politics and development cooperation today "is as important as the balance between development policy and international economic relations was before the 1990s." Speaking at the presentation of his 1994 budget Tuesday, he said that in today's world, scarce aid resources were being drained by humanitarian emergencies that were the direct result of conflict and the obligations of peace keeping operations.

"Development cooperation is no longer the soft sector of foreign relations, a form of international welfare policy correcting or compensating the harsh reality of international politics," Pronk notes in his policy paper 'A World In Conflict' which accompanies

the budget proposal. "Development cooperation will increasingly be part of that reality."

Thus, Pronk's budget allocates more money to emergency aid in conflict situations, to reconstruction programmes in war torn societies and to the support of transformations to democratic market economies. At the same time, Pronk pleads for the extension of peace keeping and peace enforcing tasks of the United Nations and for a broader mandate of the U.N. Secretary-General which will enhance his power to act in conflict situations. "Strengthening the international order is a sacred necessity," Pronk said.

In 1994, Pronk will have around 3.4 billion dollars to spend, some 100 million dollars more than this year. The budget for emergency relief work increases from 92 to 158 million dollars, while Dutch contributions to the U.N. High Commission for Refugees rise from 13 to 23 million dollars, and to the EC emergency aid programme, from 31 to 42 million.

To accommodate his new interpretation of development assistance, Pronk has reduced the number of countries receiving structural development aid from 55 to 34. Among countries cut from the list are Botswana, China, Chile, Colombia, the Philippines, Cameroon, Malawi, Thailand and Chad. "We will give structural aid to fewer countries, but short-term aid to more countries," he said. The latter includes lands at war like Angola, Cambodia, Sudan and Somalia and nations in transition like Armenia, Namibia, Vietnam and South Africa.

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U.N. TO REVAMP ITS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

by Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS, Sep 20 (IPS) - The United Nations is planning to set new standards for its blue-helmeted soldiers. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali says the rapid rise in peacekeeping operations and their widened scope highlight the "urgent need" to develop and maintain "uniform high standards" for the missions.

In his annual report to the 48th session of the General Assembly which opens Tuesday, Boutros-Ghali says that "peacekeeping is a United Nations invention". "The concept is, however, not a static

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Pronk stressed that the shift of emphasis in the 1994 budget had to take place in spite of relatively frozen resources. Though he has around 100 million dollars more to spend in 1994, the percentage of Dutch gross national product (GNP) of official development assistance (ODA) as defined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) is expected to decline from 0.86 in 1992 to an estimated 0.80 percent in 1994.

That percentage is still above the internationally agreed target of 0.7 percent of GNP, but is lower than the 0.9 percent norm which Pronk himself aims at -- and which has generally been achieved in the Netherlands throughout the 1980s. "This 0.8 percent is really too low. I am ashamed of it, though internationally, I get a lot of applause. I always ask the cabinet for more money, but I never get it," Pronk said.

Pronk himself has calculated that, considering the expected increasing demand for emergency relief, peace keeping operations and aid to eastern Europe in the coming years, the Netherlands will have to spend some 1.5 percent of its GNP on development cooperation under its new definition. In line with his new approach, Pronk wants to change the OECD's definition of ODA, which was formulated in 1960.

The OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) discusses whether, for example, aid to a non-DAC country like Armenia or contributions to the World Bank's Global Environment Facility can qualify as ODA in the future. "We take full part in these discussions. I also pleaded for the inclusion of costs of peace-keeping operations in developing countries in the definition of ODA, but no one agreed," he said.

Apart from problems of world conflict, Pronk also wants Dutch development cooperation to address Western consumption and production patterns which damage the environment, as well as slowing the world's population growth and preventing migration.

"In contrast to the 1970s, development cooperation in this decade is not solely concerned with a just international order. It is just as important to see whether through some kind of order, the spread of disorder can be countered and how development cooperation can contribute to that," Pronk says.

that Baghdad now may be willing to activate U.N. monitoring cameras at two missile sites.

The directive, read by Council President Alfonso Taylhardat of Venezuela, was similar to those that have been issued every 60 days since the United Nations first imposed the embargo following Iraq's Aug. 1990. invasion of Kuwait. The issue of Baghdad's compliance with the monitoring and destruction of its chemical, biological and nuclear weapons capability continues to prevent the Saddam Hussein government from conducting any trade with the outside world.

Despite some progress between U.N. Special Committee (UNSCOM) weapons monitors and Iraqi officials at talks in New York this month, the sanctions will likely remain unaffected for some time. Moroccan Ambassador Mohammed Benjelloun-Touimi acknowledged, "This sanctions renewal is unrelated" to the mildly positive working relationship heralded by both UNSCOM leader Rolf Ekeus and Iraqi Gen. Amer Rashid two weeks ago at the conclusion of their talks.

He said there was little debate about whether or not to renew sanctions, unlike the atmosphere during the previous sanctions review in July when several Council members debated conditions for lifting the embargo. "It is too early yet to be considering lifting sanctions," Benjelloun said.

The Iraqis attempted to assuage U.N. doubts late last week by offering to switch on two monitoring cameras at the al-Rafah and Yawm al-Azim missile sites by Tuesday. Although Ekeus and others have stressed that those sites are not important to the Iraqi weapons programme in themselves, UNSCOM members had hoped that the activation of the cameras -- originally intended to follow the New York talks -- would symbolise greater Iraqi compliance with long-term monitoring.

But Rashid said Baghdad refused to turn on the cameras until it could secure greater U.N. assurances that it may begin to see the end of sanctions, which all sides admit have completely reversed Iraq's economic progress in recent decades. If the offers coming from Baghdad to turn on the cameras was intended to win over the Council during the latest periodic review, it failed. "Turning the cameras on is not so important" as complying more fully with Council resolutions, Benjelloun said.

SANCTIONS RENEWED ON IRAQ DESPITE PROGRESS ON CAMERAS

by Farhan Haq

UNITED NATIONS, Sep 20 (IPS) - The U.N. Security Council Monday renewed full-scale economic sanctions on Iraq for another 60 days, despite signs

U.S. SEES OPPORTUNITY IF SAVIMBI CEASES FIRE

by Jim Lobe

WASHINGTON, Sep 20 (IPS) - U.S. officials say if UNITA rebels in Angola follow through on a promised unilateral ceasefire Monday, they see a major opportunity to get U.N.-mediated peace talks back
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on track.

Initial information from Angola "is not encouraging," according to a U.S. official monitoring the situation. He said Monday that UNITA batteries unleashed an intensive barrage on and around the provincial capital of Cuito early in the day, when the ceasefire was supposed to have gone into effect. But by mid-afternoon, UNITA chief Jonas Savimbi had told his forces via guerrilla radio that the ceasefire should take effect at midnight.

"We have heard UNITA's words before. Now, we want to see action," a senior State Department official told IPS. The official said Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs George Moose had talked with Angolan Prime Minister Marcolino Moco Sunday night and was assured that Luanda "will respond positively to meaningful UNITA actions".

The U.N. Security Council last week gave UNITA 10 days to stop the fighting and commit itself to resuming U.N. talks or face an arms and oil embargo. Washington sent Moose's principal deputy, Amb. Edward Brynn, to meet with UNITA officials in Abidjan last week. Brynn is currently in Luanda briefing the government there and "directing (Washington's) response to the latest events," said the official who spoke on the condition he not be identified.

The intense diplomatic activity is seen by U.S. officials as the best chance to end the violence which U.N. envoy Alioune Blondin Beye says is costing 1,000 lives each day. The civil war in Angola resumed after an 18-month hiatus, almost one year ago when UNITA lost U.N.-monitored elections to the government party, the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA).

Despite an offer to serve as a junior partner in a coalition government, Savimbi rejected the poll and launched military offensives, quickly gaining control of about 75 percent of the country's territory. The United Nations, and the brokers of the 1991 Bicesse peace accord -- the United States, Portugal and Russia -- have since repeatedly blamed UNITA for frustrating new efforts to bring the two sides together.

In recent weeks, the government, which had demobilised a major part of its army in the run-up to the elections, has taken some of the ground it lost to UNITA, and a reported shortage of fuel supplies have made it more difficult for the rebel organisation to respond to government advances and manoeuvre around Cuito. The threat of a fuel and arms cutoff has apparently gotten Savimbi's attention, according to U.S. officials who told IPS Monday that they remain sceptical of UNITA's intentions.

One official said he was disappointed that Savimbi, in his radio announcement Monday, had not committed himself to the Bicesse Accord and the Abidjan protocol signed last April which Luanda has insisted should be a precondition for future talks. But he added that if UNITA guns do in fact fall

silent during the night and remain that way over the next day, "it will definitely be a positive sign."

He said UNITA's principal envoy in talks with Brynn last week, Jorge Valentim, had mentioned the Bicesse and Abidjan accords. "We have been urging UNITA to beef up their ceasefire offer so that it meets the real concerns that the government has," said the official here. A ceasefire must be a prelude to serious negotiations.

He added that Washington is prepared to intensify its own involvement in future U.N.-mediated talks. "The next couple of days will be fast-breaking and very important for the medium-term future," the official said. "There is a major opportunity here, and we're hoping they seize it." ■

GEO-ECONOMIC FOCUS SHIFTS FROM ATLANTIC TO PACIFIC

JAKARTA, Sep 20 (IPS) - The world's economic focal point is shifting steadily from the Europe and North America to the Asia-Pacific, jolting existing geopolitical plates and throwing up new centres of power, economists in the region say. This dramatic shift is also creating new tensions in relations between competing regions, increasingly manifesting itself in threats of embargoes and trade sanctions as those being seen in the sharp exchanges in the past months between the United and China.

"For the first time in 500 years, the weight of economic power is shifting from West to the East," said Kyung-Won Kim, president of the Korean Institute of Social Sciences. "The economic supremacy of the Atlantic nations which had been a fact of life throughout modern history is now being seriously challenged by East Asian nations," Kim said in an analysis of trends towards the year 2020 presented at a meeting of Pacific Rim nations in the Indonesian island of Bali last week.

Economists, bankers and government officials attending the conference warned of enormous political and strategic implications of this geo-economic shift. With the Cold War over, traditional role-playing by nation-states is giving way to economic reforms and regional economic integration.

Gus Nilo, managing director of the Indonesian conglomerate Sinar Mas Group, says the flows of trade, finance and technology are shaping new power realities and new global tensions. "Politically, the world is evolving into a new age of geo-economics," Nilo said. "International boundaries are falling as companies relocate from one country to another, one continent to another."

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