



INTER PRESS SERVICE

DAILY JOURNAL

VOL. 1 NO. 135

WEDNESDAY, 8 SEPTEMBER 1993

U.N. ACCUSES WORLD BANK OF MISLEADING GOVERNMENTS

by Pratap Chatterjee

AMSTERDAM, Sep 6 (IPS) - Two UN agencies involved in setting up a new environmental body have accused the World Bank of trying to mislead governments in an attempt to gain control over the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

From confidential notes taken at recent meetings between the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP), U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, IPS has learnt that the two agencies have accused the Bank of deliberately refusing to pass on their advice to governments responsible for decisions on the GEF. The three institutions have been operating a pilot version of the GEF for the last three years. The GEF is currently located within the World Bank premises in Washington and staffed by the bank's officials.

The initial 1.1 billion dollars they received to set up the scheme is running out and they are now looking for an additional 4.2 billion dollars, plus the legal authority to turn the GEF into a permanent

body. At the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro last year, the GEF was asked to handle funds for two conventions on the prevention of global warming and the loss of biodiversity.

However, the governments involved stipulated that the pilot GEF body would have to be reformed to allow all countries a say in deciding how the money was spent.

GEF staff are currently working on plans to meet these conditions. Legal experts from the UNDP and UNEP have suggested a special inter-governmental meeting to empower the GEF with the authority to make funding decisions with the help of the conventions' signatories. But it appears that the GEF officials have decided to ignore these recommendations.

Instead, they have told governments that the best way to give the new body legal authority is to allow the Bank to pass a resolution to formally establish the GEF and then allow the other two agencies to participate. According to a confidential report by the UNEP, this proposal would "effectively entitle the Bank to over-ride policy and programme decisions taken by the Participants (the governments that will become members of the GEF)".

A situation in which the World Bank could be seen as effectively dominating the GEF is unlikely to be acceptable to environmentalists or governments which borrow money from it. World Bank loans are controlled by donor countries. But the idea behind the GEF, say Third World governments, is that the balance of power between borrowers and donors would be equal with both having a say in how money for international environmental projects is spent.

The UNEP report goes on to say that: "pretending that the World Bank has established, or could (continued on page 2)

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IS THIRD PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

by Barbara Borst

PARIS, Sep 7 (IPS) - The French Government's recently declared foreign policy priorities -- Europe, security and African development -- represent continuity more than change, despite the shift from Socialist to conservative rule this year, analysts say.

Foreign Minister Alain Juppe formalised those priorities in talks Thursday and Friday at an unprecedented gathering of about 160 French ambassadors. He also set out plans to reform and revitalise the foreign service. On the topic of African development, Juppe said that the fight against

(continued on page 4)

CONTENTS

U.N. ACCUSES WORLD BANK OF MISLEADING GOVERNMENTS	1
AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IS THIRD PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY	1
EC WANTS U.N. TO RESTRICT USE OF LAND MINES	2
AIDS UNLIKELY TO CAUSE NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH IN AFRICA	3
NEWSBRIEFS	5

establish, inter-agency facilities through its own decisions has contributed to an image that the World Bank dominates the GEF. "Such an image is most harmful to any efforts to obtain acceptability for the GEF as a funding mechanism for global environmental conventions."

The document adds that the former head of UNEP, Mostafa Tolba, refused to sign a similar proposal when the pilot project was created in 1991. As a result, the agency complains that it has received scarcely any financing for environmental projects during the GEF's pilot phase. It says this is the reason it would find any similar set-up for a permanent environmental body unacceptable.

Notes on the current GEF proposal taken at a recent meeting of the UNDP state that there are two possible conclusions. The GEF may genuinely believe that its proposal was the best option and was trying to convince governments this was the case. Or it was "attempting to bluff support for the resolution" by introducing it separately to the implementing agencies, obtaining a consensus and then winning round the participatory governments on the grounds that the agencies involved had come to an agreement.

The UNDP suggests that the former possibility is unlikely in view of two factors. Firstly, that the GEF is not actually carrying out a campaign to convince participatory governments of the advantages of the first option. And secondly, the fact that several of these governments (specifically the Third World countries and Britain) are not happy with the Bank's proposal.

It goes on to say that the existing Bank-based GEF "has to a large extent failed to take into account input from the other implementing agencies". In an internal memo which gives an account of six meetings that the three institutions held on the subject, the UNDP complains the GEF chairman Mohammed El-Ashry imposed 'consensus' on the other agencies. This is not the first time the UNDP has complained about the Bank and its attempts to manipulate governments.

Shortly after the establishment of the GEF in 1991, an internal UNDP memo from Michael Gucovsky, senior adviser on the environment, attacked GEF plans for "advocating one line of action to GEF participatory governments instead of providing information from which they can make their own decisions".

On top of this, internal World Bank reports shown to IPS last week indicate that the UNDP and the Bank have been unable to work together on joint GEF projects.

The report was prepared by Anne Lomond, a member of the Bank's audit department, and looks at the success of the pilot phase of the GEF. The report says: "Of the 13 (joint) projects we reviewed in depth, we noted that on three there were significant disagreements between Bank and UN Development Programme staff... In only one project was there

significant co-operation".

Lomond also noted that in general neither the Bank nor the Development Programme look at documents sent by the other agency. It adds that proceedings during implementation committee meetings (of the three agencies) "suggests a process that is often highly competitive and occasionally acrimonious". ■

EC WANTS U.N. TO RESTRICT USE OF LAND MINES

by Thalif Deen

UNITED NATIONS, Sept 6 (IPS) - The European Community (EC) wants the United Nations to counter the indiscriminate use of landmines -- among the most devastating and low-cost anti-personnel weapons deployed in Third World military conflicts.

The 12-member EC says in a letter to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that the increasing use of landmines is not only taking civilian lives but also hindering the movement of humanitarian relief supplies and resettlement of refugees.

The U.S. State Department warned last month that there were 85 million uncleared mines in the world, with more than 150 people, mostly civilians, being killed every week. The most severely affected countries include Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Cambodia, Mozambique, Vietnam, Angola, and to a lesser extent, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The EC's letter requests that assistance in mine clearance be a new item on the agenda of the upcoming 48th session of the U.N. General Assembly scheduled to open Sep. 21. The 12 countries -- Belgium, Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain -- say the accumulation of unexploded devices in post-war situations is an urgent problem.

The EC cites a 1981 Convention which, in effect, bans and restricts the use of anti-personnel landmines in military conflicts. "When hostilities cease, minefields and other areas ridden with unexploded devices perpetuate a climate of terror, aggravated by the fact that these areas are not marked, and by the continued danger represented by such devices after they have been laid," says the letter.

It says the presence of unexploded landmines, particularly along communication routes and on farmlands, also seriously hampers economic recovery and post-war reconstruction. The EC singles

(continued on page 3)

out the problems of landmines faced by the United Nations and international relief organisations, particularly in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Mozambique.

Since the establishment of the U.N. Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) about two years ago, the United Nations has led a team in the destruction of about 37,000 anti-personnel mines and other unexploded ordnance in an area covering about four million square metres of land in Cambodia. The team included members of non-governmental and relief groups.

In a report to the Security Council last month, Boutros-Ghali said that mine clearance by its very nature was "a risky and painstaking task, and initial progress was slow." But the experience gained over the past few months has led to an acceleration in the rate of mine clearance in Cambodia. Some 2,330 Cambodians have been trained in mine-clearance techniques, of whom 1,400 are employed by the United Nations.

The U.S. State Department said in a report released last month that landmines "may be the most toxic and widespread pollution facing mankind". Titled, 'Hidden Killers: The Global Problem with Uncleared Landmines', the report pointed out that mines have become the weapon of choice in many developing countries because they are inexpensive and easy to lay.

"In a time of high-tech, target-specific weaponry, landmines are perhaps the weapons most consistently dangerous to non-combatants," the report says. The large exporters of landmines include China, the former Soviet republics, Italy, Pakistan, Egypt and Singapore.

The Washington-based human rights organisation, Africa Watch, said in February that landmines used in Angola originated in Britain, China, Czechoslovakia, France, Germany, Italy, South Africa, the former Soviet Union, the United States, and Yugoslavia. Africa Watch said that anti-personnel landmines scattered indiscriminately throughout Angola by both sides during three decades of conflict have caused tens of thousands of civilian casualties in violation of international law.

It charged that mines in the country have rendered large areas of arable land and pasture, roads, bridges, river banks, villages, and some economic installations, off limits to people. Middle East Watch said last year that the Iraqi army sowed millions of landmines in northern Iraq.

"These unmarked, unrecorded, non-degradable and unremoved landmines are an ongoing threat to the lives, limbs and wellbeing of the Iraqi Kurdish population in northern Iraq," it said. The State Department said in its report that less than 15 percent of the world's uncleared mines originated in the United States, but added that the United States had the best technology for de-mining. ■

AIDS UNLIKELY TO CAUSE NEGATIVE POPULATION GROWTH IN AFRICA

WASHINGTON, Sep 8 (IPS) - The deadly AIDS virus is unlikely to cause negative population growth in any entire country of Africa, according to a report released here Wednesday by the World Bank.

The report, however says that negative growth may occur in some sub-national regions and in a small number of large cities as a result of the acquired immune deficiency syndrome. The report reviews a number of studies on the prevalence of AIDS in sub-Saharan Africa and its likely impact on population growth and says media reports have tended to "highlight potential negative impacts" of the disease.

Titled, 'The Impact of HIV/AIDS on Population Growth in Africa', it stresses that "there is no reason for complacency."

"Even if AIDS does not cause negative population growth in any country, it will have severe consequences," said John Stover, the author of the report. "Millions of people will be affected."

The new study follows last week's release of a report by the U.N. Population Division which found that the AIDS epidemic will have a direct impact on the pace and size of population increases in Africa. The size and extent of that impact, however, remains a subject of debate.

Sub-Saharan Africa has a higher incidence by far of AIDS than any other region. By the year 2000, between 10 and 30 percent of Africa's population will be infected, according to a recent U.S. State Department report. The new report is published by the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the World Bank, and the African Population Advisory Committee (APAC), an independent group co-sponsored by the U.N. Population Fund.

It was produced by the Africa Bureau of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). It analyses conflicting predictions by a number of computer modelers on AIDS' likely impact on Africa.

Some of these differences result from varying estimates of the incidence of HIV infection and the levels at which the prevalence of this AIDS-causing virus is likely to plateau or reach a more or less stable level within the population. Researchers agree, according to the report, that negative population growth will not occur unless adult HIV prevalence reaches 30 to 50 percent.

Plateaus as high as 30 to 40 percent may be reached in some population groups and in some large cities, according to some computer modelers and data compiled on the disease in Africa. ■

AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT IS THIRD PRIORITY OF FOREIGN POLICY

(continue from front cover)

poverty and the need for aid for growth, notably in African countries that remain closest to France, would remain more than a priority for France.

"We must make our Western partners share in such demands," he added after elaborating on France's commitment to European unity, international peacekeeping and other priorities. Juppe said, that France would pursue its current efforts to not only "accelerate the reinsertion of African countries in the world economic game, but also to accompany their transition toward greater democracy wherever it is demanded". Juppe later included French cultural and linguistic activities as a fourth priority saying that in a multitude of countries they represented, "an alternative to the uniformisation of culture".

Speaking on foreign policy, Philippe Moreau Defarges of the French Institute for International Relations said the one significant change is that Gaullist political forces, which have always made French independence paramount, now put Europe at the top of their list. "Foreign policy is a domain of continuity," he said. "President Francois Mitterrand and the Socialists were enthusiastic Europeans. The present government will do more bargaining."

Moreau Defarges recalled that important change in France's policies toward Africa came in 1989 at the conference of French-speaking countries in La Baule, France, where Mitterrand declared that aid would become conditional on progress toward democracy.

Mitterrand, a Socialist, and the center-right coalition that won control of the government and the National Assembly last March, agree on the "general thrust of aid to Africa" he said, but for different reasons. "For Mitterrand, it is human rights", he added. "Prime Minister Edouard Balladur puts the accent on the effective use of aid money."

Moreau Defarges said that, along with nuclear weapons and ties to other French-speaking countries, Africa continued to be a cornerstone of France's ambitions to remain a world power. "The reason to restate Africa's importance to France is to reassure the continent that France will not reduce its involvement there, despite preoccupations with economic troubles at home and with the European Community and ex-Yugoslavia," he said.

Gustave Massiah of the Centre for Studies and Initiatives in International Solidarity said that Africa would always remain a French priority due to the diplomatic influence France gains from its ties with the former colonies and because of African petroleum wealth. "Current French policy on Africa

is designed to prevent both an erosion of French influence on the continent and an increase in U.S. diplomatic and economic -- particularly oil -- ties to that region," Massiah said.

He added that while the priority remains the means have changed. "Despite its pronouncements, the present government has forsaken the policy of linking development with progress toward democracy and returned to the old support of the powers in place," he said.

He went on to cite French reactions to events in Togo, Chad and Gabon as examples and said that now, more than ever, African political leaders made substantial contributions to French political parties. "The government's assessment of Africa is very pessimistic," Massiah said. "The emphasis is now on tighter control of how aid is spent in Africa and on not pouring funds into what is viewed as a lost cause."

Sharon Coutroux of Survie (Survival) said that, for the moment, little appeared to have changed in French policy toward Africa despite an overwhelming need to restructure and rethink that policy. "Things have changed enormously in Africa since the fall of the Berlin wall, but France continues to support the regimes as before," she said. "Out of a budget of 40 billion francs (8 billion dollars), there is very little that serves development."

A Survie publication charges that just five percent of France's aid to Africa goes to development. The rest is lost to corruption and projects that benefit the elite in Africa or France. The document claims that "the principal effect of aid is to decompose the states and societies of the South, such as Somalia, Zaire, Madagascar, Cameroon, Togo, Cote d'Ivoire and Rwanda".

Coutroux claimed that less than one percent of aid goes to French non-governmental development organizations that could put it to direct use, while other European states give 10 or more percent of their aid budgets to such groups. She charged that few French citizens were aware of what happens to the tax money allocated for foreign aid, because there is little public debate on the issue and because much of French policy toward Africa is controlled directly by the president's office, not the legislature.

Survie has gained support from a majority of deputies in the French National Assembly for proposals that Coutroux says should begin to transform French aid policy and practices. However, the assembly has yet to present that proposal for debate and a vote.

The proposal would reorient aid toward the poorest members of recipient societies. Survie also recommends creating an ethics committee to oversee donations and to consolidate French aid programs, now handled, among others, by the ministries of cooperation, finance and foreign affairs. ■

NEWSBRIEFS...

CAMBODIA RETURNEES BRING HOME HIV

NEW DELHI, Sep 7 (IPS) - In the first instance of large-scale HIV infection in India's military, about 45 soldiers just returned from United Nations peace-keeping duty in Cambodia have tested positive for the AIDS virus. Unnamed army officials were quoted by a local newspaper as saying another 100 members of the Indian Army battalion which was part of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) are suffering from various other sexually transmitted diseases.

The infections were detected during routine medical tests on the troops after their return home earlier this year. The battalion, made up of 650 soldiers was in Cambodia for three months. An army spokesman in New Delhi told IPS Tuesday the Defence Ministry was collecting data from different army hospitals and would not be able to comment on the report immediately.

Alarmed Army Medical Corps officers had to send for additional AIDS testing kits as there were not enough to handle the situation. The infected soldiers have been sent to the new AIDS ward of the Indian Army's Medical College in the western city of Pune. "Such incidents are symptomatic of the declining standards among both officers and soldiers in the army," an unidentified military official told the 'Times of India'.

Under Indian Army regulations, suffering from sexually-transmitted disease is not a crime, but hiding it is. Cases of HIV infection among Indian defence personnel have been reported earlier, and have been handled by the hospital in Pune. A recent United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) report on the economic implication of AIDS in Asia notes that countries in Indochina are vulnerable to the spread of AIDS because they are contiguous with Thailand and Burma, two countries where the disease as shown the most rapid spread.

The presence of large numbers of peacekeepers in Cambodia since mid-1992 spawned a sex industry, and a survey in Phnom Penh's red light district recently showed 16 percent of the women tested positive for HIV. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), India is on the verge of an

AIDS pandemic. It estimates that a million Indians will have the full-blown disease by the year 2000.

More than 12,000 of the 1.8 million people screened so far in the country have tested positive for the AIDS virus. The government's National AIDS Control organisation estimates that 1.5 million Indians are infected with HIV....

TRIO OF BACKERS FOUND FOR INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' FUND

BRUSSELS, Sep 7 (IPS) - Belgium joined Spain and Portugal as the financiers of a new international fund for indigenous peoples, allowing the fund to start work. Set up at the Ibero-American summit in July 1992, the fund for Latin American and Caribbean nations had 19 potential beneficiary members in the region -- but lacked the support of at least three donor nations to bankroll the projects.

Spain and Portugal immediately gave backing to fund work in their former colonies, but it took time to find a third donor nation, despite 1993 being the official United Nations Year for Indigenous Peoples. "Belgium has broken with its own colonial legacy in giving support to the fund," said an official at Belgium's development ministry.

The Belgian government put up an initial 50 million Belgian francs (1.4 million dollars) towards funding of small-scale projects promoting rights of indigenous peoples, developed by the peoples themselves in Latin America and the Caribbean. "It will promote indigenous solutions for indigenous problems," said Eddy Niesten, spokesperson for Belgian development minister, Eric Derycke.

Projects should either promote ownership of natural resources, rights of the local population, or defend the culture or improve education for indigenous people. "In many Latin American countries, there is no legislation on the indigenous ownership of land," said another aide to Derycke.

He said that the projects would back indigenous ownership of land, and could hence have far-reaching effects in triggering legislation reform in the region over land ownership. The headquarters of the fund is in La Paz, Bolivia. The Inter American Development bank has already pledged a start-up loan....

Published Monday through Friday by **Inter Press Service** news agency

IPS news agency provides a daily news wire service from and to more than 100 countries for more than 1,000 media and other clients in 12 languages. IPS also goes to specialised audiences including diplomats, and the APC e-mail network which reaches over 15,000 non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worldwide. The agency provides special coverage of development issues and closely follows the work of the U.N. and its specialised agencies.

IPS, United Nations, Room 485, New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel. (212) 963-6156/751-3255, Fax (212) 754-2791/888-6099