

Issue #10, December 2009

VOICES

INTERNAL

PEACE
AND
CONFLICT
RESOLUTION



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Editorial

As the Copenhagen Climate Summit draws to an end and the future of the planet hangs on the interests of nations, the possibility of a world of truly united nations offers itself to us and we are able to glimpse its staggering potential. If we all agreed, if we all acted together for our common good, what could we not achieve? The motto of the United Nations is “We the peoples... A stronger UN for a better world.” One must understand that a stronger unity of the peoples of the world will lead to the betterment of the human condition on earth.



Robert Wrigley

*UN Regional Information Center in
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Peace is without any doubt the condition of a better world. This certitude motivates nations to unite under UN mandates to intervene in any part of the world to ensure stability, manage conflicts or prevent them from breaking out. The term “peacekeeping” is however not to be found in the United Nations Charter; it has come to encompass such a various range of objectives that it simply defies definition.

This 10th Edition of Internal Voices offers a varied insight into the various facets of peacekeeping and the work undertaken by the UN to promote peace throughout the world. Issues discussed range from the impact of global warming on local stability, to the efforts made by the international community in managing post-conflict societies. Contributions to this issue honour the remarkable efforts provided by the governmental and non-governmental organisations striving for the common good, but have also exposed some less positive developments which, as UN interns, it is of great importance for us to know.

This issue introduces a new concept for Internal Voices. Where previously an issue would focus exclusively on a single theme, contributors have been encouraged to write on what they felt would be of interest to UN interns. By widening the range of topics discussed the Internal Voices Team hopes to raise awareness of global issues and strengthen knowledge of the UN’s role in them. Wherever we may come from, by sharing amongst ourselves our ideas and experiences we come to realize that there are people out there actively working “for a better world” and that the work we do in an office at one end of the globe has a very concrete impact at the other end.

The Internal Voices Team sends you its season’s greetings and wishes a happy reading!



United Nations
Regional Information Centre
for Western Europe

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Got something to say?

Tell us! We welcome your comments and feedback. Feel free to let us what you think of Internal Voices.

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Internal Voices is a 100% UN interns’ magazine giving all UN interns the opportunity to network, express opinions and share knowledge, points of view and experiences. Everything from

articles to layout and editing is done by UN interns. If you want to get involved, the intern team at UNRIC in Brussels would love to hear from you!

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UN Peacekeeping Operations Today, Can the Needs be Met?



René Mbuli,

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Developed in 1948 as an instrument to respond to the post-World War II inter-state conflicts, for example by monitoring the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbours, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations have evolved over the years as conflicts kept occurring. Traditional peacekeeping operations were generally limited to the monitoring of ceasefires and to the stabilization of situations on the ground; but with the changing nature of post-Cold War conflicts, peacekeeping operations have shifted from dealing with inter-state to intra-state conflicts and civil wars, as well as engaging in more complex tasks to ensure sustainable peace and prevent a relapse into war.

Peacekeepers today perform a broad range of activities, which include:

- civil and political affairs
- civilian policing
- human rights monitoring and protection
- election observation
- humanitarian relief
- security sector reform
- mine actions
- disarmament
- demobilization and reintegration of former combatants
- public information

Whether involved in Cyprus, Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) or El Salvador, the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) has helped enormously in preventing conflicts, driving peace processes and leading war-torn countries on the path to sustainable peace.

Even though DPKO has not always delivered the required results, as shown by its failure to prevent the genocide in Rwanda in 1994 or to deal with the complex crisis in Somalia in 1993, it still remains an indispensable and important international tool to deal with the complex conflicts of today. According to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) statistics, in 2009 the UN had 15

peacekeeping operations led by DPKO with over 116,000 personnel, 82,000 of whom are military observers, about 11,000 police personnel, 6,683 international civilian personnel, close to 15,000 national civilian staff and more than 2,260 UN Volunteers. Nevertheless, some of the DPKO failures have been linked to the challenges it faces, and many observers have begun questioning the UN's ability to meet the needs of the present peacekeeping demands.. UN operations encounter a myriad of challenges such as agreements on clear and effective mandates, difficult coordination between UN missions and other UN bodies, or limited human and financial resources. Other challenges include managing scandals such as sexual abuses or illegal diamond transactions by UN peacekeepers, supporting ceasefire agreements between parties and designing exit strategies, as well as managing transitions from peacekeeping to post conflict peace-building, protecting civilians and providing a safe corridor for humanitarian relief. DPKO constantly has to review its modes of operation to ensure that these challenges do not result in further failures.

The cost of peacekeeping operations has risen precipitously, thereby requiring greater vision for future operations. In this regard, while building on the August 2000 Brahimi report, the UN developed new strategies (as reflected in the New Horizon non-paper) in order to deal with future peacekeeping challenges and meet the demands. The non-paper recommended the need for a clear political strategy and more cohesiveness among the parties constituting the peacekeeping units.

DPKO and the Department of Field Support (DFS) highlighted the need to build the capacity of UN peace-



Mongolian Peacekeepers deployed for the protection of the Special Court for Sierra Leone. 26 July 2009

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keepers, member states and regional partners to speed up mission deployment. This would allow the design of mandates that reflect achievable objectives, it would make these objective clearer and strengthen consultations with the Security Council and contributing countries on proposed tasks affecting their personnel before planning documents are issued. In short, they highlighted the need to render the entire deployment process more fluid.

Another important issue today concerns the need to deploy robust peacekeeping bodies to effectively protect civilians. If these recommendations and more are put into practice alongside increased resources, the UN will be able to coordinate coherent and integrated ways of dealing with pre and post-conflict situations around the world.■



Peacekeepers serving the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) participate in UN International Peace Day

© UN Photo/Martine Perret

"Peace is not just a colored ribbon. It's more than a wristband or a t-shirt. It's not just a donation or a 5 K race. It's not just a folk song, or a white dove. And peace is certainly more than a celebrity endorsement. Peace is a fulltime job. It's protecting civilians, overseeing elections, and disarming ex-combatants. The UN has over 100,000 Peacekeepers on the ground, in places others can't or won't go, doing things others can't or won't do. Peace, like war, must be waged."

George Clooney

United Nations Messenger of Peace

A Man With a Dream

Interview with Jeremy Gilley, filmmaker and visionary

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Foreword

“The Day After Peace” charts the remarkable 10-year journey of award-winning filmmaker Jeremy Gilley to establish an annual Peace Day. Before setting out on his near impossible mission in 1999, Jeremy Gilley was an actor. At some point, he became disillusioned with his work and decided to fight for a higher goal. His idea was to create one Peace Day every year, when all wars would stop and no acts of violence would be conducted. What seemed an unachievable and foolishly idealistic project for some was for Jeremy a great and noble challenge which he pursued - and continues to pursue - with passion, never ceasing energy and unabated optimism.

He started by discovering that a UN International Peace Day already existed, but almost nobody knew about it. What he first tried to do - and eventually achieved - was to prompt people around the world to observe this day on a fixed date - 21 September. For that, he had to travel around the world - from New York to Israel to Costa Rica and speak to an astounding amount of people, including former Secretary-General of the UN Kofi Annan, various other UN officials, Nobel Prize winners such as the Dalai Lama and world leaders like Shimon Peres, then President of Israel. He also founded Peace One Day, a non-profit organisa-

tion created to help promote awareness on his project and engage all sectors of society in observance of Peace Day on 21 September every year.

The next step was to make sure that global ceasefire and non-violence were actually put into practice - the most difficult task in the process. Mr. Gilley got the help of famous actors like Jude Law and Angelina Jolie and well-reputed corporations - Coca-Cola, Puma, Addidas etc. - to send his message all around the globe, but his mission is not over. Even today, after 10 years of struggle, much is yet to be achieved and Jeremy, together with Peace One Day, is still working hard to this purpose.

Mr. Gilley spared no effort to achieve his goal - from risking his life in the war zones of Afghanistan to cutting his once-shoulder-length hair, the price of credibility. Understanding the potential of film to positively affect people and create change in the world, he caught on camera all the stages of his long and strenuous quest - every journey made, every country visited and every person met. The result - “The Day After Peace” - is a moving testimony to the perseverance of the human spirit, a film which gives its viewers an amazing feeling of potency and self-esteem. ■

Interview

First I would like to ask you what are your short-term and long-term goals?

The short-term goal right now is actually about strategy and planning. My goal is to make sure that the strategic initiatives and campaigns and processes that we will run are obviously well organized and well executed and *funded* in order for us to be able to achieve the longer-term plan, which of course is to institutionalize the 21st of September. And when I say institutionalize I mean make it a day which is self-sustaining. It won't really matter who Jeremy is or Peace One Day is; it'll be the Peace Day for the world and people will do things. Children will be vaccinated, young people will do things in schools, families will come together, people will say sorry... It'll be a day which unites our world in a way that we've never been united before and that's a phenomenal and wonderful opportunity that the day represents. So the long-term plan, which is the most important plan, is to quite simply make the day self-sustaining, inform the individuals that the day exists. And we predict that by 2012 three billion people will have been informed of the day's existence.

What are you planning on doing after this?

Well, I'm going to lie on the beach for a long time I think!



You deserve it! The next question we would like to ask you is: What was the greatest challenge you encountered in your quest to create an international day of peace?

There are stages in the process, but it relates directly to creating the day. The greatest challenge was of course to find a country, a member state that was willing to sponsor the resolution to establish a day of peace with a fixed calendar date, and also be a ceasefire none-violence day. Those are the two fundamental points. The most important thing to talk about is that the peace-day we now have has a fixed calendar date, the 21st of September, and is a day of ceasefire and none-violence, which is fundamentally important to the day's success. The reason why, I think you'll see, is that this is definitely recognized globally, by every human being on the planet in the not-so-distant future.

So the greatest challenge was finding a government to put that resolution forward and then find another government, another member state to co-sponsor the resolution. As you know, in order to create a General Assembly resolution you need a sponsor and a co-sponsor. Obviously I'm delighted and honoured that the British government and the Costa-Rican government came forward and established the peace day in its current form: the day of ceasefire and none-violence with a fixed calendar date. That was the greatest challenge. And of course I'm an individual, you know I was bottom of the class, the only qualification I got was a D in pottery, I'm dyslexic, I didn't really know much... I'm telling you when I began this process I knew nothing of the international community and I knew very little about the UN, so it was a steep learning custom in or-

der to make this day a reality, and obviously I delighted and very honoured to have been able to play the part that I played.



You overcame that challenge in a formidable way, but what is the greatest challenge facing you now?

The greatest challenge is obviously to create a day that is self-sustaining, i.e. institutionalize it. In the same way as on Mother's Day you give flowers to your mother, it's very important and it means a lot to your mum and my mum, and that's a day that is institutionalised. It's self-sustaining. It doesn't need any one group to continue to hold it in the place which it has in our hearts and minds. And we are going to manifest exactly the same situation: the Peace Day, the 21st of September.

Of course, we won't do it alone. In fact, every aspect of this I haven't done alone. If it wasn't for the courageous men and women and support of the UN system none of this would have happened in the first place. If Secretary General Kofi Anan hadn't encouraged me to continue on it wouldn't have happened. If Ban Ki-moon hadn't spoken to me and en-

couraged me then it would be a very different situation. Under Secretary-General Kieran Prendergast, Shashi Tharoor, Ahmed Faouzi... these men have been incredible inspirations to me and I'm deeply grateful to the Secretariat for opening up the doors in Somalia and Burundi, Gaza, the West Bank, India, Sri Lanka, etc. It's been very much a collective effort of UN staff, corporations, individuals that have supported me, and I'm deeply grateful to everyone. I think it's because of everyone that we will achieve the ultimate goal, which is that whenever you say, "It's Peace Day today" somebody will say to you, "Well of course, I know!" That's what we want to get to. We want to get to a place where everybody knows about the day and that is what we will achieve in the coming years.

You decided to involve companies such as Addidas, Coca-Cola and Puma, amongst others, as a marketing tool to reach out to as many people as possible. As you show in your film, in the mind of some this is perceived as negative and has the potential to undermine your message. Do you see it as necessary step to achieve your goal?

Absolutely! And I don't think personally in any way working with corporations undermine what's going on. In fact, I think it's the reverse. If you look at the way in which the United Nations has worked with corporations for years - UNICEF has been one of those organizations... You have for example the Global Compact... It is generally accepted and anybody who isn't accepting that working with a corporation or the corporate sector is fundamental to the success of situations like this really doesn't know what they're talking about. That's the reality of the situation. For me, united corporations would equally, like the

United Nations, be very successful. The advantage that United Corporations would have is that the workforce is large. They obviously would have an awful lot of money, and they obviously have the trust of individuals throughout the world; so the corporate sector is well placed to make a massive contribution towards the united board of wealth and international corporations cooperating. Which of course, the academics are saying, is the key to humanity's survival. Intercultural cooperation is the key, and corporations have to support it up so that we can be here today. I'm obviously very grateful to them for the way in which they've made things a reality.

So it was a necessary step.

Oh yes it's a totally necessary step. There really is frankly, in my opinion, absolutely no other way of looking at it. I mean, if you want to affect change, if you really want to affect the supply chain, if you really want to see the corporate sector evolve and be a contributor to a safer world -one where the destruction of each other and the destruction of our environment is on the decrease, then you have to be in the room of the most powerful men and women in the world, many of which are working within the corporate sector. For me, to be on the outside and to criticize and throw stones at these individuals is individually pointless. You have to be in the room in order to affect change, and that's always been my strategy from the beginning. I believe it to be the right strategy. I believe that the men and women that I've met in the corporate sector are just like you and I: they want to change the world, they don't want to see people suffering, they want to do all that they can. So treating them as human beings with respect obviously creates a situation

where they're in the right frame of mind to be able to do the kind of things that we want them to be able to



do. That's the right way to go about it.

It's also a matter of leading by example. If they're going to do it then maybe some other smaller companies will be willing to do the same.

I totally agree, and I also think it's very important. The man that I saw in the film, Ray Anderson... Watch the film (again) and listen to the words of Ray Anderson... I mean he is one of the great, great thinkers in America in the way in which corporations have a social responsibility. He really is leading the way; he knows that working with the corporate sector is the way forward. Anybody who says otherwise, in his words, are individuals who are into *revolution*, not *evolution*, and revolution is a lot more blood-thirsty than evolution. Before I made the decision to work with the corporate sector I did my research and I made sure I understood what I was embarking on, and once I did understand I have stood by this decision and will continue to work in that way, exactly in the same way that the UN Global Compact does.

We had a last question for you. With all that you went through, what would you say was the hardest decision: going to Afghanistan or cutting the ponytail?

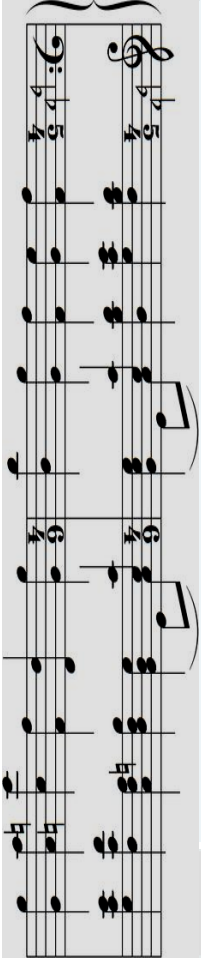
Hahaha... dear... Cutting the ponytail!

internal music quiz



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Quite often, the most powerful, political messages are to be found in the lyrics of your favorite song. The best songwriters are those who challenge us to rethink our perception of this world – often through their challenging questions. In this month's quiz we challenge you to find out which *artist* and *song* is hidden behind the following questions...



1. How many years can a mountain exist before it's washed to the sea?
2. Where did all the blue skies go?
3. Where have all the flowers gone?
4. Do they know it's Christmas?
5. Did you ever stop to notice all the blood we've shed before?
6. What if God was one of us?
7. Ooh, ooh, ooh - where was the deputy?
8. Don't you think it's sad what's happened to the water?
9. Is it getting better, or do you feel the same?
10. Take a look at you and me; are we too blind to see?
11. What's love got to do with it?
12. How long must we sing this song? How long? How long...

Yepp, how long? Sing along and give it a try before checking the answers!

1. Bob Dylan – 'Blowin' in The Wind
2. Marvin Gaye – 'Mercy, Mercy Me (The Ecology)'
3. Pete Seeger & Joe Hickerson - 'Where Have All The Flowers Gone
4. Band Aid (Bob Geldof & Co) - 'Do They Know It's Christmas
5. Michael Jackson – 'Earth Song
6. Joan Osborne - 'One Of Us
7. Bob Marley – 'I Shot The Sheriff
8. The Beach Boys – 'Don't Go Near The Water
9. U2 – 'One
10. Elvis Presley – 'In The Ghetto
11. Tina Turner – 'What's Love Got To Do With It
12. U2 – 'Sunday, Bloody Sunday



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Water: Source of Life, Source of Conflict



Eva Donelli

*UN Regional Information Centre
in Brussels, Italy Desk*

Fresh water is a basic and fundamental resource, not only essential to daily human activity, but indispensable to life itself. For centuries, wars and conflicts have been tied to the protection of this vital resource. With the question of climate change adding to a swelling world population, the risk of water shortages in many regions of the world is increasingly becoming an issue. Water has become the defining point of contention in a number of conflicts. International law is often inadequate in defending the fair use of shared water supplies; neighbouring countries compete for access to water and “Water

Wars” seem to be inevitable in the world’s future: in regions where water supply is scarce, armed conflict is sometimes the only option to obtain water. The one who controls the population’s access to water controls the population itself. Water then becomes both an end in itself and a means to exercise authority.

In a bone-dry land as ungoverned and ungovernable as Somalia, where armed groups are part of the landscape, water is the “liquid gold” and is controlled by groups that are more than able to defend their liquid treasure. Drought and desertification in North Darfur forced the Arab nomads to move into South Darfur, where they engaged in conflicts with black African farmers.

“The one who controls the population’s access to water controls the population itself.”

In refugee camps the women in colourful toubes wait patiently in huge water queues, and boys pass by on their donkeys carrying jerry cans. They leave in the morning and come back in the afternoon. It takes on average of four hours to collect water in Darfur. In the camps, each person gets about 4-5 litres of water per day for drinking, bathing, washing clothes and cleaning. In general the water situation is better than in the villages, where there might be only one water pump for 500-600 inhabitants. A vast underground lake has been recently discovered beneath the desert in the far north of the country: the resource should help bring peace in Darfur, but if mishandled it could actually worsen the conflict. The real question is: who decides and who benefits?

The world’s population is growing fast and the amount of water presently available seems insufficient to satisfy

the increasing demand. To make matters worse, the available stocks are unequally distributed. This is the case in Yemen, where very high population growth has plunged the country into a deep water crisis, forcing the population to gather around places of safe access to drinking water but paradoxically reducing the amount available per person. The country is running out of water fast and that plays a major role in fuelling Yemen's armed conflict.

Another issue behind water conflicts is the fact that large rivers and lakes are normally shared by more than one country. Without the existence of a legitimate water sharing agreement, states tend to unilaterally acquire control over the water supply. Mountain Aquifer, which is under-



© UN Photo/Logan Abassi

neath the West Bank, is a point of contention between Israelis and Palestinians. Palestinians accuse Israeli settlements of diverting the water supply away from them. According to a World Bank report, Israeli settlements use over four times more water than the Palestinian average and they struggle with what they say are insufficient quotas. Both sides blame each other for failing to honour the 1995 agreement. A water rights compromise has to be found to enhance the peace process.

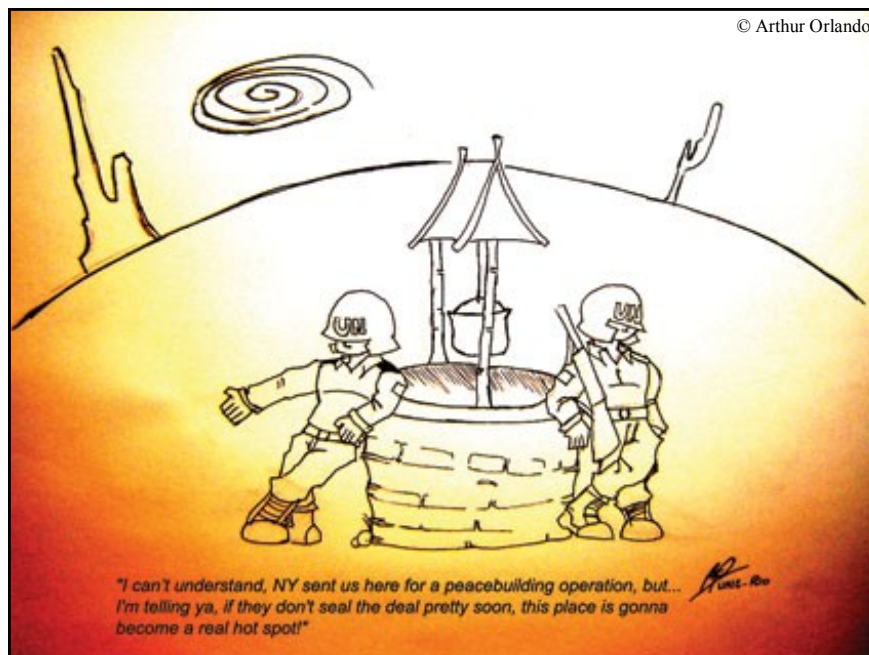
As well as being a point of contention causing or exacerbating conflicts, water itself has historically been used as weapon. In 1993 in Iraq, Saddam Hussein reportedly poisoned and drained the water supplies of southern Shiite Muslims to quell their opposition to his government, provoking an immediate reaction from the European Parliament and UN Human Rights Commission.

Greater international cooperation is needed to end the water shortage and control competition over a crucial resource like water. In this sense,



© UN Photo/Marc Garten

Green Cross International, an environmental NGO, is working with governments, local authorities and civil society on a project called "the Water for Peace programme", aiming to promote cooperation and conflict resolution throughout the world's trans-boundary river basins. This programme is run by the International Water Programme and in July 2009 won an award at the Save the World Awards ceremony. David Alix, Director of the programme, spoke of the importance of tackling water issues in conflicts, explaining that "in order to utilize water as a positive and powerful peace-building tool, finding shared benefits and common ground is the key. ■"



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Where Children Become Soldiers

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According to Amnesty International, approximately 250,000 children under the age of 18 are thought to fight in conflicts around the world, and hundreds of thousands more are members of armed forces who could be sent into combat at any time. Most child soldiers are between 15 and 18 years old, but significant recruitment starts at the age of 10 and the use of even younger children has been recorded, especially in Africa, where the situation is most critical. It is believed that since its foundation in 1987, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) has abducted more than 20,000 children to use them as soldiers and sexual slaves.

Joseph Kony: the terror in Uganda

Joseph Kony is the principal LRA leader and one of the most wanted

men in the world. In 2005, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for him and four of his top commanders. The LRA started its activity in Northern Uganda and has been fighting against the country's government in what has become one of the longest running armed conflicts in Africa.

Inside the LRA, as well as in all the other armed groups that recruit children, child soldiers are commonly subject to abuse and most of them witness death, torture and sexual violence. Many participate in killings and suffer serious long-term psychological damages. Girls are used as sexual slaves and many are forced to marry soldiers - Joseph Kony himself is famous for having 40 wives.

The LRA was started in the 1980's by a woman called Alice Lauma, also known as Lakwena, a spirit medium who claimed that the Holy Spirit had spoken to her and ordered her to overthrow the Ugandan government for being unfair to the Acholi, an ethnic group in Northern Uganda. She

founded the group known as the Holy Spirit Movement which first gained the support of the Acholi and other ethnic groups, but after failing in her mission several times Lakwena was exiled. With no remaining clear leader of the movement Joseph Kony took control, claiming to be Lakwena's cousin. He transformed the Holy Spirit Movement's rebel army into the LRA. The new armed group did not receive the same support from the Acholi people as the Holy Spirit Movement, so the rebels began to abduct children. It is estimated that more than 90% of the LRA's troops were abducted as children. According to UNICEF, the LRA has abducted more than 25,000 children since 1986 and only 5,000 have been reunited with their family after receiving basic medical care, psychosocial counselling and family-tracing support in reception centres.

“250,000 children under the age of 18 are thought to fight in conflicts around the world.”

Most of the children find social reinsertion almost impossible. They are the victims of their own psychological trauma and stigmatized by the rest of society. A former child soldier in Uganda, aged 13, told the Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers of his ordeal. "Early on when my brothers and I were captured, the LRA men explained that all five brothers couldn't serve in the LRA because we would not perform well. So they tied up my two younger brothers and forced us to watch. They beat them with sticks until they died. They told us it would give us strength to fight. My youngest brother was nine years old." The work done by social workers to assist these traumatized children is truly praiseworthy; their selflessness helps a child's emotions to return to minds numbed by years of drilling and death. According to the UNICEF, nearly 1 million Ugandans are still displaced as a consequence of the violence and insecurity in the north, which constitutes one of the largest displaced populations in the world.



Girl recruited by the FARC guerrilla. FARC is known for child abduction and abuse.
© Wikipedia/Sgiraldoa

The situation now

The 2009 Report of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict in Uganda shows that no military activity of the LRA has been reported on Ugandan territory since the signing of the Cessation of Hostilities Agreement in August 2006 between the Government of Uganda and the rebel group. From the signing in June 2006 to March 2008, Northern Uganda experienced the longest period of peace

since the beginning of the war, while the Government of Uganda and the LRA engaged in a series of negotiations to end the conflict, which are known as the Juba Peace Talks and were mediated by the Southern Sudanese Government. However when the signing of the Final Peace Agreement (FPA) should have taken place, in April 2008, Joseph Kony chose not to appear and his absence put a sharp end to the peace talks. The reason the rebel leader gave to the international community for not showing up were the International Criminal Court arrest warrants for him and four other LRA leaders.

“They (...) forced us to watch. They beat them with sticks until they died. They told us it would give us strength to fight.”

The situation got worse when, in December 2008, joint operations by the Ugandans, Congolese and Southern Sudanese directed against the LRA failed to capture or kill the group's leaders. In response, the LRA has been ransacking towns, burning homes and killing civilians with guns, machetes and hammers.

The Secretary-General report shows that since the collapse of the peace talks, the rebel movement remains very active in the region. Violent incidents of killing and maiming of children, abductions, recruitment and grave sexual violence are regularly reported in the neighbouring Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic and in southern Sudan.

After her visit to Sudan, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy spoke in a press conference on 25 November 2009 about the situation of the children there. “Despite the progress, I

must say that of course there is a great deal of challenges that exist, there are still a large number of children that are associated with armed groups. I met LRA children. If you meet them you will be shocked. There is no light in their eyes due to years of abuse (...). These children talked to us of terrible abuses, sexual and other.”

Do date the Ugandan government has been unable to end the insurgency. With the conflict spilling over the borders into the neighbouring countries and the LRA's recent move to South Sudan, there is a very real risk of more child abductions. The international community has a moral role to play, not only in deploying peacekeeping troops under UN mandate to ensure civil protection, but also in assisting legitimate governments in imposing regional stability. ■



© Cartooning for Peace

Conflict Resolution Through Dialogue and Reconciliation

© CartoonResources.com



"I thought you said your wife wasn't contesting the divorce."

Patricia Connyino

Treasury Services Unit, Budget & Financial Management Services, UN Office Nairobi, Kenya

Conflict in the world is not anything new as we all have different views and opinions and we are bound to disagree once in a while. However, as seen in the joke above, conflicts can sometimes be blown out of proportion due to various factors, for example in instances where perceived disagreements tend to be out of phase with the subject of the disagreement, and in such cases conflicts can be exaggerated by significant levels of misunderstandings.

Furthermore, on many occasions actors who are seen as important for the social system (for example the church, family, politicians) participate in disputes and their involvement can either solve the conflicts or make the situation worse. There are many instances around the world where politicians aggravate conflicts in order to further their causes.

In other instances conflicts may arise from perceived threats. People respond to a perceived threat rather than the true threat facing them. While perception doesn't become reality *per se*, people's behaviours and ongoing re-

sponses become modified by the evolving sense of the threat they confront. In cases of conflicts between different communities or tribes, one community could attack another simply on the unfounded assumption that the other will attack first.

It is of great importance to consider all these factors when dealing with conflict resolution. Such underlying causes of conflicts can be resolved through extensive dialogue between the conflicting parties. It is very unfortunate that dialogue is a conflict resolution tool that remains under-used; many countries claim to be proponents of dialogue without actually following it up. Righteous opinions are expressed and promises are made, largely diffused by the media, but only rarely acted upon.

In December 2007 Kenya faced the worst post election violence in its history; many people lost their lives and many more were displaced from their homes. The violence resulted in a lot of mistrust and animosity between the communities involved. Although the violence came to an end after the intervention of His Excellency Kofi Annan, the underlying issues are yet to be properly resolved. Forgiveness is constantly being preached from all corners of the country but the people who were most affected have not yet been given the opportunity to express themselves. The resulting situation is a false air of calm which could explode at any time and lead to an even greater upheaval.

This is a classic case where, if dialogue and reconciliation are not given priority, there could be recurrent violence. In the cultural contexts of Western countries such as Canada and the United States successful conflict resolution usually involves fostering communication among belligerents and drafting agreements that meet their underlying needs. In these situations, conflict resolvers often talk about finding the “win-win” solution and trying to bring the conflicting parties together to sort out issues in a manner agreed to by all.

In many non-Western cultural contexts, such as in Africa, Asia and the Middle East, it is also important to find “win-win” solutions; however getting there can sometimes be very different because of the lack of a culture of dialogue. In these contexts, direct communication between disputants that explicitly addresses the issues at stake is non-existent, making the conflict worse and delaying resolutions.

Bruce Kent, a British political activist, said “*One day it is going to dawn on the human race that war is as barbaric*

a means of resolving conflicts as cannibalism is a means of coping with diet deficiencies.” The world should not wait for the day when war rules our behaviour; instead we should all play our part in encouraging dialogue and reconciliation between conflicting parties, work to understand the true threats and develop strategies that help to solve conflicts before they develop into full blown war. ■

"The greatest invention of peace-keeping is located between your nose and your chin."

Tristan J. Loo

Author of “Street Negotiation, How to Resolve Any Conflict Anytime”

© UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

“There's no chance of world salvation less the conversation is peace”

*Until the rainbow burns the stars
out in the sky...
Until the ocean covers every
mountain high...
Until the dolphin flies and parrots
live at sea...
Until we dream of life and life
becomes a dream ...*

Stevie Wonder: UN Messenger of Peace

*Staring right at 2000 AD
As if mankind's atrocities to man has no history
But just a glance at life in 2000 BC
We find traces of man's inhumanity to man
There's no mystery*

*All for one, one for all
There's no way we'll reach our greatest heights
Unless we heed the call
Me for you, you for me
There's no chance of world salvation
Less the conversation's peace
We can't pause, watch and say "no" this can't be
When there's a plan by any means to have*

*Cleansing of one's ethnicity
And we shouldn't act as if we don't hear nor see
Like the holocaust of six million Jews and
A hundred and fifty million blacks during slavery*

*All for one, one for all
There's no way we'll reach our greatest heights
Unless we heed the call
Me for you, you for me
There's no chance of world salvation
Less the conversation's peace
When publicly or privately convened
May love, positivity and life's preservation
Be the basic theme
And should you put your trust in some*

*Prophet in life
Give him trust but your faith must stay
With the one
Who gave the ultimate sacrifice for...*

*All for one, one for all
There's no way we'll reach our greatest heights
Unless we heed the call
Me for you, you for me
There's no chance of world salvation
Less the conversation is peace*

© Stevie Wonder



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The MONUC in the Congolese Quagmire



Pierre Mapoba

*UN Regional Information Center
in Brussels, France Desk*

The United Nations peace-keeping force in the Democratic Republic of Congo, called MONUC, with 25,000 soldiers and an estimated cost of more than \$1 billion a year, is the UN's largest ongoing peace-keeping operation in terms of budget and personnel. The UN operation in Congo started in 1999 while the country was facing civil war, mainly in the Eastern provinces of Kivu and Ituri. These provinces are extremely rich in minerals such as gold, diamonds, tin and coltan, a metallic ore used in many mobile phones and laptops.

The origins of the civil war are

partly the result of the fact that the DRC was a natural destination for those who had been displaced by the war in neighbouring Rwanda as well as the victims of the Rwandan Genocide. Mobutu Sesse Seko, who until 1997 was the country's President, agreed to give asylum to these refugees, who were mostly of the Hutu ethnic group. Among them were rebels from a Hutu militia called FDLR (the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda). The Tutsi Rwandan President Kagame warned the international community of the danger represented by this militia gathering across his border, and that it represented a threat for peace in his country.

Therefore, he supported the rebellion against Mobutu which was spearheaded by Laurent Desiré Kabila, the father of the current Congolese president Joseph Desiré Kabila. When this rebellion succeeded and he became President, Kabila accepted, in return for the support that he had received,

that Rwandan President Kagame send troops from Rwanda to protect the border region against attacks from the FDLR. Unofficially, Kagame also supported a Congolese Tutsi rebel militia called CNDP, the National Congress for the Defence of the People. Both rebellions aimed at exploiting the country's resources and terrorising the civilian population. Since the beginning of the war millions of civilians have been killed, women raped and thousands displaced. Thanks to the assistance given by NGOs and UN aid workers the displaced live in refugee camps where life may be hard, but at least it is safe.

"...it will take a political agreement between all those implicated (...)"

In this context, the military mission of the UN in Congo consists of protecting millions of lives from the threats they usually face. Their mis-

sion was to neutralize the FDLR in order not to exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Kivu. To achieve this the UN works in close cooperation with the Congolese army. However, a recent scathing report from Human Rights Watch showed that the UN had failed in this mission, because members of the Congolese army are wanted by the International Criminal Court for alleged enrolment of child soldiers in 2002-2003, during the operation known as Kimia II. The UN military force was accused of having provided military firepower, transport, rations and fuel to an army commanded by General Bosco Ntaganda, accused of war crimes by the International Criminal Court for his actions as the new main CNDP leader. In a deal struck to put an end to the CNDP's abuse, Ntaganda had been promised impunity by the Congolese army for his actions if he agreed to join them, in what constitutes a formidable act of treachery.

Must the world's largest UN peacekeeping mission be stopped after these charges? Would a hasty withdrawal ensure peace and order to those who still survive in utter misery and despair? Can the government of Congo maintain security while facing a rebellion organized by its neighbours, Rwanda and Uganda? The role of the UN peacekeeping forces should be defined by more specific missions on the



A member of the Indian battalion of the MONUC and the Forces Armées de la République Démocratique du Congo deploy to Kirotshe, the scene of the latest combat with the CNDP in September 2008

ground, especially fighting the rebels from Rwanda in order to force them to leave Congo. International law is quite clear when it comes to the violation of the sovereignty of any country, which is the biggest concern with the current invasion of the DRC. The state-building of the Democratic Republic of the Congo will be a long process; indeed it will take a political agreement between all those involved, including Rwanda, Uganda and the African Union to reach an acceptable and reasonable agreement.

The last issue at the core of the problem is identity. No military force can find a solution to this problem. The war in Congo is in fact the extension of the rivalries between the Tutsi and Hutu ethnic groups. The memory of the Rwanda genocide of 1994



Members of the Indian battalion of MONUC patrol the Virunga Market, in compliance with the January 2008 peace agreement.

should be a way to learn from the past. As long as both groups cannot coexist in peace, there will always be tensions and conflicts in the DRC. But at the moment the UN military operation should carry on its mission to protect civilians and prepare the field for a real Congolese army. The UN forces should help the government to train military personnel in methods of fighting rebels, assist them in the rebel's defeat and ultimately create a situation where the peace-keeping forces will be substituted by the national Congolese army. A hasty withdrawal can only lead to a worse situation in a country

where abuses still exist and millions of lives still depend on the security provided by the UN.■



Member of the Indian battalion of the Congo (MONUC) on patrol.

¹ The report can be found at: http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc1209web_1.pdf

² Laurent Nkunda, the founder of CNDP, was arrested in January 2009 and assigned to residence.

Further info:

- DPKO and OCHA report: "Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operation",

[http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/EGUA-7XVVSZJ/\\$file/dpko-ocha-protecting-civilians-nov09.pdf?openelement](http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/EGUA-7XVVSZJ/$file/dpko-ocha-protecting-civilians-nov09.pdf?openelement)

- Human Rights Watch report: "You Will be Punished" Attacks on Civilians in Eastern Congo, http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/drc1209web_1.pdf

Addressing Sexual Violence in Burundi



René Mbuli,
*Department of Peacekeeping
Operations, UNHQ, New York*

Burundi is one of the countries in the Great Lakes region of Africa that has been racked by conflicts since its independence in 1961. In 1993, Burundi witnessed a fierce Hutu-Tutsi ethnic clash that claimed the lives of close to 300,000 people. Thanks to the intervention of the African Union and the international community in April 2003, peace returned to the country. In 2000, the Arusha Peace Agreement was signed, which established a transitional government. The 2005 Presidential elections established a consensus government and provided a new vitality to the peace process. The UN deployed peace-

keepers in 2004 (ONUB) to monitor the peace, and after concluding its mandate in 2006, an integrated peace-building mission (BINUB) was set up in January 2007. By April 2009 the last rebel group Palipehutu-FNL (National Forces for Liberation) was formally disarmed and transformed into a political party under the name FNL in view of the upcoming elections in 2010. The international community has invested a lot of effort in the consolidation of peace, reconciliation and the reconstruction of Burundi.

But even though some political progress has been registered in the Burundian peace process, the human rights situation has become rather alarming. Rape, which had prevailed during the periods of war, has increased to such an extent that it is now commonplace in post-conflict Burundi. The trend has moved from being perpetrated by the military and rebels to being carried out by civilians. According to Ligue ITEKA, a local hu-

man rights organization, there were 1,930 cases of sexual violence in 2006 compared to 983 cases in 2003.¹ As of 30 September 2009, 55 cases were registered in the Muramvya Province alone, compared to 49 cases in 2008. In Bubanza Province the Ligue ITEKA registered the case of a two year old girl victim of rape.²

“...local culture considers rape as taboo.”

A lot of factors have contributed to the persistence and rise of this type of crime. Firstly, justice and security institutions have been weakened by 13 years of violent conflicts in Burundi, and this has led to a culture of impunity. Secondly, the participation of some government officials in criminal activity, as well as the incompetence of some officials due to inadequate training, has fostered administrative inertia in the treatment of rape cases. This has led to corruption and has

increased the population's mistrust of the judicial system. Moreover, the complicated procedure in establishing and proving a case of rape is a huge challenge. The need for victims to report within 24 hours and undergo clinical and medical tests in order to evidence the rape (which entails spending money) has helped to scare many victims away from reporting. In addition,



© UN Photo/Christopher

tion, local culture considers rape as taboo, something that must not be spoken about.

There has been progress and there are some national legal instruments such as the Burundi Constitution and the April 2009 revised penal code that condemns and punishes rape. To strike a genuine balance despite the discrepancies, it must be

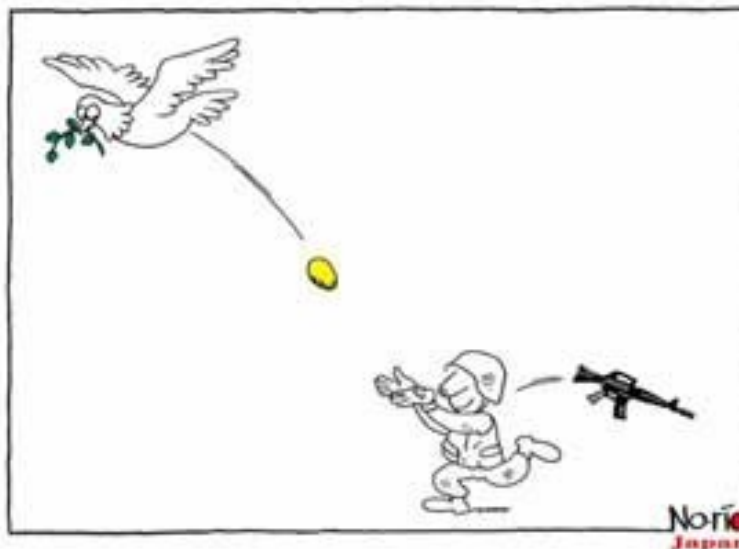
underscored that much has been done by the Burundian government and local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Burundi such as Ligue Iteka, Médecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) -Belgium, International Rescue Committee (IRC), CARE and the Society for Women Against AIDS in Africa (SWAA) to deal with rape cases. The efforts of these NGOs have increased the number of girls and women reporting their cases, thereby increasing the rape statistics. The government of Burundi has helped to deal with rape cases and some perpetrators have been found guilty and imprisoned.

However, more needs to be done to improve the security situation and reduce the rate of rape of women and girls in the country. More independent and anonymous reporting centres must be set up in provinces and communes where victims can report rape cases. Government and the civil society also need to organize more nationwide public awareness campaigns on the human rights implications of sexual violence and the legal punishments that apply. The judicial system

has to be made more accessible to the public and the training and transparency of judiciary officials has to be improved. This will help to bring more perpetrators to justice. The setting up of transitional justice mechanisms and of a national human rights commission could have a major impact on reducing sexual crimes. If greater attention is not given to sexual violence, the efforts to consolidate peace will only benefit the political class and a fraction of the population, while the female gender will be left fighting a physical and psychological war in post-conflict Burundi. ■

¹ IRIN news, "BURUNDI: Sexual violence, cultural prejudice put women in HIV cross-hairs". Available at <http://www.plusnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=74086>. Accessed on 05 November 2009.

² UN Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB), ABP News, "Violence sexuelles .Augmentation alarmante du nombre de cas de viols en Province Muramva", 1 October 2009.



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Terrorism, Counter-Terrorism and Human Rights in Mexico



MINUSTAH SWAT Team Participates in Drug Seizure Exercise

Evelyn Aguado

Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHQ, New York

On September 15th, 2008 at 11:05 pm, during the Independence Anniversary festivities, two grenades exploded in Morelia, Mexico. The first bomb exploded in the middle of the main square and the second blew up two blocks away. The explosion killed eight people and injured 106. This event was set up by a drug-trafficking group called Los Zetas, a group known by the U.S. government as "the most technologically advanced, sophisticated and dangerous cartel operating in Mexico" (Ware, 2009). They contract themselves to several drug trafficking organizations in Mexico. For the first time in the country, people participating in what was considered

an act of terrorism were convicted under the Federal Law against Organized Delinquency (FLAD). This law governs the investigations and prosecutions of crimes involving three or more perpetrators. The tragic events that occurred on this day served as an opportunity for the Mexican government to begin to assess their ability to combat terrorism and to analyze the degree to which their counterterrorism activities enhance the process of peace-building in Mexico.

While Mexico has had its fair share of violence, it has not been a major target of terrorist attacks. The most destructive bombings in Mexico, including the uprising of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR), took place in urban centres during the 1990's. The events on September 15th differ from the attacks perpetrated by the EZLN and the EPR in that in the

more recent bombings, by Los Zetas, terrorized ordinary citizens in order to get their message across, whereas neither EZLN nor EPR used the terrorization of innocent people as a tactic.

"(...) the bombings used the terrorization of innocent people as a tactic."

On November 7th 2008, the FLAD was enforced for the first time for terrorism reasons in response to the tragic events of September 15th; the perpetrators of the bombings were convicted on charges of organized delinquency, homicide, possession of exclusive military weapons, qualified injuries, intent of homicide and terrorism. However, the National Centre for Human Rights began an investigation shortly after the terrorists were apprehended, which exposed violations of human rights with regards to unlawful

confinement and torture in and effort to force them to assume responsibility for all the charges lobbied against them.

Mexico has occupied a leading position in the promotion of human rights with regards to counter-terrorism activities. In 2002, Mexico promoted a resolution at the U.N. Commission on Human Rights which included the need to counter terrorism within a human rights framework, and also opened up its practices to international scrutiny. This resolution was a fundamental part of the Resolution 1456 of January 2003, which declares that "States must ensure that any measure taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, and should adopt such measures in accordance with international law, in particular, international human rights, refugee, and humanitarian law."

The protection of human rights is an essential part of governmental structures supporting sustainable peace in states constantly threatened

by drug related violence, such as is the case in Mexico. The Mexican criminal justice system still needs to provide justice to victims of torture in investigation processes. For example, according to Human Rights Watch, some judges still accept evidence obtained through torture and other mistreatments. In fact, the events of September 15th gave the citizens of Mexico the opportunity to analyze how the Mexican government reacted to

counter terrorism with regards to human rights. Just like some high-level government officials have been praised for their diplomatic efforts to include a human rights framework in international counter-terrorism laws, this case is an example of how the institutional framework must reflect coherence between a country's leadership and the laws it stands for, in order to build a common path towards sustainable peace.■

"The attack in Algiers, the bombing in Baghdad in 2003, and this year's horrific killings in Afghanistan and Pakistan, point to a truth that we must face. The United Nations is now a target of terrorist groups."

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, on the 2nd anniversary of the bombing of UN premises in Algiers



© UN Photo/Evan Schneider

A view of the UN Headquarters complex in Algeria destroyed by the 11 December 2007 terrorist attack. The bombing claimed the lives of 17 United Nations workers.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

2015

Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education

Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women

Goal 4: Reduce child mortality

Goal 5: Improve maternal health

Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases

Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership

Interns Around the World



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Country: Mexico
Location: Leon, Guanajuato

It is interesting to say that whenever I have introduced myself to the other interns at NYHQ, they say "Oh, Mexico ... Mexico City? Cancun? Acapulco or Monterrey?" and my answer is always, "It is a small city, it's called Leon ... like lion but in Spanish ..." I say that hoping they will remember because of the translation. So, Leon is a city located 3 hours (by car) away from Mexico City, it is the capital of the state of Guanajuato. But, where is Guanajuato? It is right in the center of Mexico. The state has an important part in Mexico's history. In 1810 in the city of Dolores Hidalgo, the Independence War officially began when Miguel Hidalgo, a local priest, called people to fight for the independence. My state is composed of colonial cities, of which two are catalogued as UNESCO Patrimony of Humanity, they are San Miguel de Allende and Guanajuato City. Leon is a city known for its industry, shoes, although it has been affected by China's entrance to the market. It has almost 2 million inhabitants and the best things I love about my city are the street food, the weather (it is never too hot or too cold), the people, who are very friendly and its geographical location.

Evelyn Aguado, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, UNHQ, New York



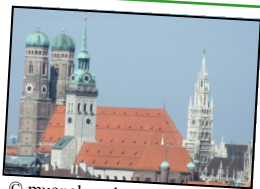
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Country: Brazil
Location: Niterói, Rio de Janeiro

Whenever I go to other countries or other Brazilian States I always tell people that I'm a carioca, which means someone who is born in the city of Rio de Janeiro. I have a carioca accent, I know Copacabana... But I'm not a carioca. In fact, I live in Niterói, a city just 13 km away from Rio. My city is largely unknown mainly because of its famous neighbor, which is a pity, because Niterói is simply one of the best cities in which to live in Brazil.

Niterói is located at the shore of the Guanabara Bay, with on one side Rio and on the other side there is my city. A bridge connects the two (or you can take a ferryboat) and, unfortunately, it is a daily activity for the people of Niterói to go to Rio. Most people work or study at the capital of the state, like me, who has to work AND study in Rio. Still, a lot of people prefer to waste hours in traffic and remain living at Niterói because the quality of life there is considered one of the best in Brazil. And if our famous neighbour is known for its beaches, Niterói has some beautiful beaches too and with fewer people, since the population is (only) of 480 thousand. Niterói is almost Rio, with the exception of all the problems, and here we can also appreciate the view of the Redemptive Christ and the Sugar Loaf from the other side of the bay. In fact, the view from Niterói is better than anywhere in Rio.

Vivian Macedo, UNIC Rio de Janeiro, Brazil



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Country: Germany
Location: Munich

Antonie Hutter, UN Regional Information Centre in Brussels

Munich, my home town, is the capital city of Bavaria, in Germany. It is located on the River Isar north of the Bavarian Alps. Munich is the third largest city in Germany, after Berlin and Hamburg.

The city's motto is "München mag Dich" which means "Munich Loves You". Before 2006, it was the "Weltstadt mit Herz" ("cosmopolitan city with a heart"). Its native name, München, is derived from the Old German word for Mönche, which means "Monks".

What I particularly like about it is its geographical location. It is located close to the Alps and many lakes, and has a lot of delicious beer breweries (of course there is also the Oktoberfest every year). It is not uncommon to cross people wearing "Lederhosen", the traditional leather breeches, or the "Dirndl", a patterned bodice and skirt outfit. People there are famous for being friendly; it is very international and open yet still maintains a lot of traditions.

Country: Kenya

Location: Kisumu



© Wikipedia/Obersachse

My home town is a city called Kisumu which is in the western part of Kenya; it is a port city, right on the shores of Lake Victoria, one of the African Great Lakes. It is the third largest city in Kenya and the principal city of western Kenya.

Kisumu is a city of great adventure, on a good day one can see up to 20 hippos at a time on Lake Victoria, not forgetting the crocodiles, which can be quite a sight. Apart from that there is the Impala park, hippo point and the Kisumu museum where lots of other animals can be seen.

At the museum you can also experience Kenyan culture; there are exhibitions of ancient weaponry, jewelry, farm tools and other artifacts made by the various peoples of Kisumu. In addition there are exhibits of stuffed animals, birds and fish. There is a very interesting full-scale recreation of a traditional homestead.

What I love most about Kisumu is the people, there are so many people and the streets are always full, furthermore the people are amazing and friendly, always ready to help. President Barack Obama's father came from Kogelo which is a village close to Kisumu, and people in Kisumu are very proud of this and always want to be associated with him, with many claiming to be his relative in some distant and unexplainable way.

There is nothing like Kisumu and all it takes is one visit to prove me right!

Patricia Connyino, Treasury Services Unit, Budget & Fincancila Management Services, UN Office Nairobi, Kenya

Country: Columbia

Location: Tunja



During my internship I have worked with people from different cultures and backgrounds and I was happy to learn a little bit about each culture and share the habits and tradition of my own country, Columbia. At Secretariat of Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues I had the opportunity to improve my understanding of UN's role on Indigenous topics and bring knowledge and reflections to help Columbia's indigenous people. On the other hand at Office of Legal Affairs- Codification Division I received training on international law which was perfect for my background and my knowledge of international issues.

In Colombia I come from Tunja, a small city located in the centre of the country, which is characterized by the indigenous heritage of a peoples called the "Muisca". Its history goes back to the colonial day and it has since become an important academic centre. The many universities and its cheap cost of life make it particularly attractive for students from all around South America.

Living in New York and working at UN, hearing different stories from so many different people, and yet working so close to my cultural roots situated thousands of miles away was as good way to realize that the world is big and at the same time small.

Miguel Eduardo Vargas Monroy, Office of Legal Affairs, Codification Division, UNHQ, New York



Country: Romania

Location: Bucharest

Bucharest is often mixed up with Budapest, which is in neighbouring Hungary. The capital of Romania was my home and my playground for almost 22 years. It is notorious for its hectic traffic and the countless stray dogs roaming its streets. Nevertheless, Bucharest has its own hidden charm. It is to be found in the cosy atmosphere of intimate little cafés and tea-houses, in the French-style houses from the '20s and '30s, a faint memory of Bucharest's former nickname "Little Paris", hidden between the soulless blocks of flats built by the communists. It is to be found in boat rides on the huge lake of Hertrastu park, in the peaceful bliss of the monasteries surrounding the city, and in the unique beauty of the Christmas lights and decorations. But can also indulge in the glamour of its posh nightclubs...the hippy-rock feeling of La Motoare open-air bar, the trendiest get-together spot for students...the passion and talent revealed almost every day on the scenes of its theatres and its opera house...and so many other small surprises. I leave it to you to discover the others, when you come to visit Bucharest.

Ioana Leu, UN Regional Information Centre in Brussels



International Human Rights Obligations on Asylum in Italy



Valeria Camarda

*UN Regional Information Centre
in Brussels,
Italy Desk*

In the context of its efforts to fight international terrorism and to counter irregular immigration, the Italian government has recently pursued policies that seriously undermine fundamental rights. As part of a strategy to ban irregular migrants, Italy began on 6 May 2009 to unilaterally ban boat migrants on the high seas, sending them immediately back to their home countries, in particular Libya, without any process of identification of those in need of protection, and this in blatant violation of the right to asylum of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. To be more precise, no screening policy was adopted to identify refugees, the sick or injured, pregnant women, unaccompanied children, victims of trafficking or victims of violence against women. As a wonderful icing on the

cake, a week later Libya and Italy announced the beginning of joint naval patrols in Libyan territorial waters, and in the first weeks after the ban was implemented about 500 boat migrants were summarily sent back to Libya, causing a dramatic cut in the number of boats attempting the journey from Libya to Europe.

The systematic turning back of immigrants without any form of identification of those in need of protection violates Italy's duty to ensure the right to seek asylum under the 1951 Refugee Convention, as well as its non-refoulement obligations under the Refugee Convention, the Convention against Torture, the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navya Pillay, has expressed serious concerns on Italy's hermetic immigration policy. On the occasion of her visit to the UN Regional Information Center in Brussels she clearly condemned Italy's behaviour towards immigrants who are "left or rejected" without their actual condition being verified, "as if they were garbage trucks." The European Court for Human Rights in Strasbourg has officially informed the Italian Gov-

ernment of its intention to declare as admissible 24 authorizations to appeal collected on behalf of the expelled by lawyers Anton Giulio Lana and Andrea Saccucci, members of the Directive of the Tribunal Union for the safeguard of human rights. The appeal calls on the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and more particularly on Article 3, which forbids torture, inhuman or degrading treatments or punishments, Article 13 that establishes the right to effective medical care before a national authority, and Article 4 of Protocol N°4, which clearly forbids collective deportations.

"(...) migrants are being denied the opportunity to land in Europe and receive much-needed humanitarian assistance."

Even if the Italian government policies to control the influx of migrants have led to a sharp decrease in the number of migrants and refugees arriving by boat in Lampedusa, an Italian island off the Tunisian coast, migrants continue to reach Italy by crossing the Sicily Channel but are being denied the opportunity to land in Europe and

receive much-needed humanitarian assistance. As a consequence, according to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Italy, while between May and October 2008 more than 21,000 migrants and refugees landed on the island after perilous sea journeys across the Mediterranean, over the same period in 2009 MSF teams saw fewer than 200 migrants. Many boats carrying migrants have been reported, intercepted at sea and forced back to Libya, exposing once again the refugees to the journey of violence and abuse they endured while trying to reach the North African coast.



During that journey many of them have had to cross the desert, were locked up in prisons where they were given no food or water; they were mis-

treated, beaten up, and in the case of women sometimes raped. When they finally manage to get on a boat to Italy or Malta, “they are sent back to re-live this nightmare all over again. This is a huge threat to their health and even their lives”, explains Antonio Virgilio, MSF head of mission in Italy and Malta. In 2008 alone, MSF provided medical care to more than 1,400 migrants and refugees who arrived on the docks of Lampedusa in need of urgent assistance. Most people seen by MSF came from sub-Saharan Africa but one third came from East African countries, including Somalia and Eritrea. They endured the particularly long and harsh journey to escape conflict, deprivation or widespread violation of human rights in their home countries.

Lampedusa has been a port of disembarkation for thousands of migrants and refugees who cross the Mediterranean Sea to Europe for years. However since May 2009 MSF has assisted fewer than 160 patients. MSF’s work is aimed at providing humanitarian assistance to vulnerable



migrants and refugees and yet the NGO faces increasingly restrictive policies from mainland Italy. MSF’s operations in Lampedusa were suspended in October 2008 when the Italian Ministry of Home Affairs refused to renew the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) that regulated MSF’s activities on the island, forcing the organization to withdraw its teams. After months of lobbying, a new MoU was signed in November 2009 which allows MSF to operate in collaboration with INMP, an Italian institute working on the health of migrant populations. Their activities are now being carried out independently from the Italian Government, and as such they are no longer eligible to the institutional funds which had previously allowed them to perform their work in Lampedusa. ■



© Médecins Sans Frontières

“While every refugee’s story is different and their anguish personal, they all share a common thread of uncommon courage – the courage not only to survive, but to persevere and rebuild their shattered lives.”

Antonio Guterres, U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees

Global Climate Change Voices from United Nations Headquarters

(GCCV-UNHQ)

"We must take action now regardless of where you are coming from. Rich and poor countries, we must address climate change together."

Ban Ki-moon, U.N. Secretary-General

GCCV-UNHQ was the first project of GCCV-Worldwide and its objective was to do some pre-Copenhagen interviews (2 November through 2 December 2009) with UNHQ visitors about their concerns and perceptions on climate change issues.

The project is managed by Global Climate Change Initiatives (GCCCI), a subsidiary body of Global Climate Change Open Research Initiatives (GCCORI). GCCCI was recently registered as an NGO in New York City. Global Climate Change Initiatives (GCCCI) is an independent not-for-profit, non-governmental organization whose mission is to partner with global institutions and individuals to develop new climate change initiatives. These initiatives will raise awareness, enhance behavioral change, empower bottom-up global governance and assess the effectiveness

of current and future climate change programs and projects.

The project was initiated by two UN interns, Xiaochen Zhang and Florian Lux, supervised by Mr. Kai-Uwe Schmidt and Ms. Gelila Terrefe, and implemented by UN interns and volunteers. This project has provided a forum for individuals from various sectors of the public to express their concerns, to share their insights, to engage themselves in overall global climate change discourse and to make their contribution to Copenhagen. The idea was to tap into this unique resource to access grassroots opinions and engagement on a UN priority issue.

After weeks of very enjoyable interviews, the team can share much of the project with the world.



Andrea Milan: I am glad I have had a chance to take part in this important project and it was a pleasure to see that most people were very willing to be interviewed. Some people did not know much about climate change but the main lesson that I learned from the interviewees is that people care about climate change, they would like to know more about it and they hope for a big commitment from Copenhagen.



Xiaochen Zhang: There were 50 days left before the Copenhagen Conference when I initiated this project. The world is looking to seal one of the most important deals in human history. It is a deal which will endow human beings with hope, protect us from danger and sustain the livelihood of our descendants. To make the change now or to live with regret for the rest of one's life, this is the time to make our choice.

In a deal with hope, we need bigger mitigation commitments. We need more funds for installing new technologies. We need better institutions to facilitate the greening process. But what we need most of all is a grassroots voice.

We need their voice to be heard. We need their messages to be passed on to the policy makers. We need their actions to be integrated in the climate change solution basket to save us and to save the world.

The interviews turned out to be very productive and very interesting raising many questions for global leaders. Those interviewed also expressed their concerns on issues such as vulnerability in developing countries, consumerism in the developed world, climate financing, etc. These voices were uploaded to different channels and the messages were well received by the public.

The grassroots voices from UN Headquarters to the leaders in Copenhagen say: "Seal the Deal, we count on you".

The GCCV Management Team

This article was written just before the beginning of the Copenhagen Conference. For more information about the work of GCCI, please visit www.gccinatives.org

20 Triad



Go Green

Earthy Moods

Swaying in the Wind

Menka Bihari
Capital Master Plan, Department of Management, UNHQ, New York

LET'S HAVE A

The crucial UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen has just ended, and so we see the end of Coolplanet2009. However, **this is not the end – it's the beginning.**

Our actions matter! And in order to save our planet and future generations we all need to change our everyday routines and mind-sets. So why not start this Christmas - the time of year when our consumption is bigger than ever and our carbon footprints the size of elephants?



BUY SMART!

Give **'battery-free' gifts**. According to the EPA, about 40% of all battery sales occur during the holiday season. Discarded batteries are an environmental hazard.

Look for **locally made gifts** - many gifts in today's marketplace come from halfway around the world, and the impact of transportation contributes significantly to greenhouse emissions and global warming. Local craft fairs and artisan shops are a good source for gifts that come without the added costs of transportation.



DON'T BUY ANYTHING!

Think about it: Do the folks on your list really need more stuff? Be inspired by the International BuyNothingDay in November, by **buying nothing at all!**

Do like Coolplanet2009 and have your own **COOL FACTORY!** You can make homemade cards, cookies, a cake, etc. Your time, energy and culinary creativity are just as valued as that store-bought gift which they do not really need.

Give away **gifts of service**: Invite your friend to a dinner, a picnic, or offer to clean the house or help out with another service. It requires little or no use of natural resources, and is very personal and memorable.

GREEN CHRISTMAS!

Cool Girls



Trine, Kristin, Saija
UNRIC, Nordic Desk



RE-USE & RECYCLE!

The stores are filled with new, fancy Christmas decorations screaming, “be trendy, buy me!” But when you think about it, you probably have **more than enough** from last year...?

Pass on a gift you received but do not need. Sounds wrong? Re-gifting actually makes perfect sense. If you receive something you really don't need, look for ways you can re-use this gift by passing it on to someone who can use it.

Re-use gift wrap where possible - large wrapped presents usually have large un-creased sections to be reused for wrapping small gifts.



SMART DECORATIONS

Lights: Choose LEDs (light-emitting diodes) instead of incandescent bulbs to decorate your tree and home. They're more expensive, but last much longer and use 80 to 90 percent less power than conventional mini bulbs.

Use candles instead of electric lights.

Make your own Christmas decorations!

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT...

Each year, 50 million Christmas trees are purchased in the U.S. Of those, about 30 million go to the landfill (Environmental News Network).

In Australia, Santa delivered some 37 million stuffed toys (worth more than \$70 million) and 12 million dolls (worth \$54 million) in 2008 (The Australian Bureau of Statistics).

The Norwegians imported more than 4,000 tons of Christmas decorations and lights in 2007, which means nearly 1 kilo per person. Since 1999, import has increased by 70% (SSB.no).

The Portuguese are expected to spend around 390 Euros on Christmas gifts. In a European context, only the East-European countries, except the

Czech Republic, are expected to spend more (Deloitte).



Indigenous People and the United Nations



Luciano Barbosa de Lima

Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, DESA, New York



© UN Photo/Joseane Daher

Shavante Indians holding the arrows, which are part of the uaiwa' ceremony, a passage from boyhood to manhood.

In a small island a young boy was sent by his uncle, an indigenous community leader, on a mission to guide the community's children across the sea to the main city. After a long journey, which ended with the children reaching safety, the young boy received news that the military had stormed his village on the island and killed all those who had stayed behind to defend their homes, including his parents and his uncle.

On the other side of the world, communities of indigenous people unite and fight against the exploitation of their traditional land by a government that chooses to ignore their fundamental rights in a conflict that is leading to casualties on both sides.

Unfortunately, such stories are far from uncommon in the everyday lives of indigenous peoples all around the world. There are currently 370 million individuals representing more than 5,000 distinct peoples who classify themselves as being indigenous. The majority live in developing countries, but wherever they live, indigenous people are, or have been, unfairly treated on a regular basis. They are often excluded from political participation since their basic right of voting is ignored and violated. They are also affected by the lack of access to public services such as education, infrastructure, employment and medical care, and represent 5% of the world's population, as well as 15% of the world's poor.

To achieve effective development they must be included in countries' civil life through consultations and participation, as mentioned in the recent UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007).

Who are the indigenous peoples?

Some key issues discussed at the international level include the definition of "indigenous people", their right to land and natural resources, anthropologic data and the right to live according to indigenous cultures. Self-determination and autonomy, the right to participate in free elections and the importance of treaties between States and indigenous people are also matters of high importance.

There is no unique concept of "indigenous"; yet one common element is being part of historical continuity, with strong links to territory and natural resources. Other elements that characterize indigenous people include having a distinct social, economic and political system, as well as language, culture, beliefs and knowledge systems forming non-dominant sectors of society.

“Indigenous peoples’ rights to protect and control their territories and natural resources are often not respected.”

Land rights and access to natural resources are vital to indigenous people worldwide. Some countries are reforming their constitutional and legal systems after having recognized these rights, but there remains more to be done. Indigenous peoples’ rights to protect and control



UN Photo/F Charton

A Kirghiz family in front of their yurt in the Tchonkymyn Valley in the Tien Shan Mountains.

their territories and natural resources are often not respected as they impinge on the government’s ability to increase capital growth. There is often limited scope for them to express ideas and discontent, to access basic services and above all to take part in decision-making processes. Participation in political and social life is vital for the perpetuation of their lifestyles.

To improve and implement these concepts of indigenous peoples’ rights, the UN has created four international mechanisms specifically targeting indigenous peoples:

1. The *Permanent Forum*, a consultative part of ECOSOC composed of 16 experts. Since 2002 it has held annual meetings open to State representatives, UN agencies, organizations representing indigenous people, academics and NGOs. (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>)
2. The *Special Rapporteur*, who commenced work in 2001 acting on behalf of the High Commission for Human Rights to promote good practices and provide recommendations related to human rights on indigenous people. (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/rapporteur/>)
3. The *Expert mechanism*, which was established in 2007 by the Human Rights Council to provide thematic expertise to the Council on indigenous rights. (<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/indigenous/mechanism.htm>)
4. The *Second International*



UN Photo/Mark Garten

A view of indigenous children from the Embera people, displaced by armed conflict. There are over two million internally displaced persons in Colombia

Decade of the World’s Indigenous People, which promotes coordination worldwide for non-discrimination and the inclusion of indigenous people in development policies, decision-making processes, measurement and evaluation mechanisms. (<http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/en/second.html>)

Activities aimed at indigenous people are not limited to these mechanisms, and extend to various other initiatives of UN agencies. In recent years much has been done for the coordination and inclusion of indigenous peoples in development policies. However, this is an emerging area that is increasingly debated and there is still a long road ahead for the complete acknowledgement and protection of indigenous peoples’ rights. ■

After the Internship!

by Antonie Hutter and Marie de Saint-Seine

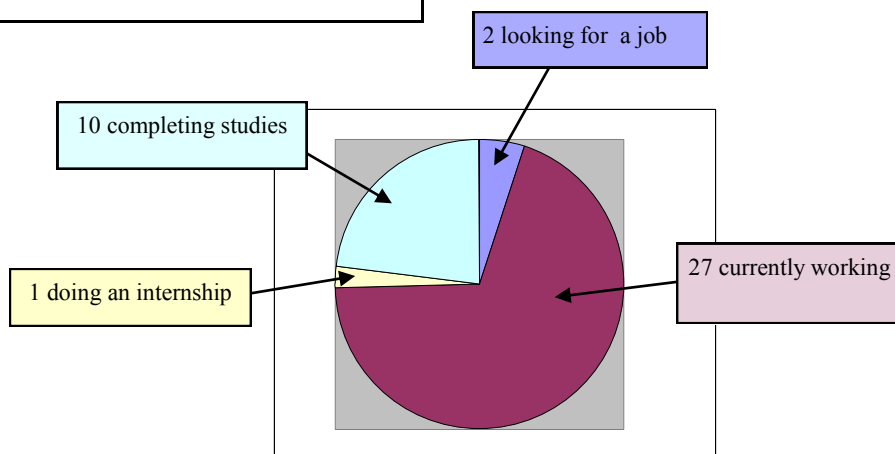
This survey will not give you miraculous answers on what you are meant to do after your internship, however, as indecisive interns, we thought it could be interesting to see what former UNRIC and UNHQ interns are doing now, if they think they benefited from their internship at the UN and if they had some little tips to give us...

Out of the 65 people we got in contact with, 41 people answered to our questions.

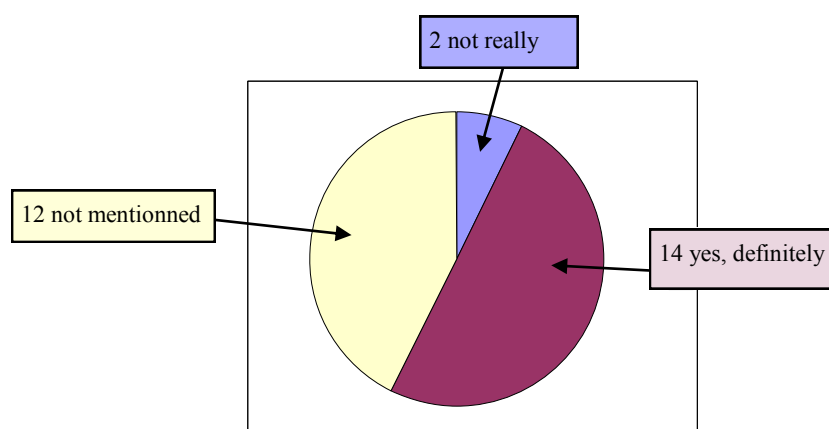
For those who are currently working (including as interns), where is it?

Administration (17)	NGO (4)	Private sector (3)
European Commission , Belgium and delegations (3)	Volens in Guatemala in the development aid sector	Runs his own consultancy firm in Dubai
French Development Agency (AFD) of Marseille, France, Consultant	Red Cross Belgium , project delegate in Burundi	Gallis Communication Agency , Brussels
Danish Parliament , Communication agent	Rural Energy Foundation (Dutch NGO), Country coordinator in Mali	Internship in risk management and insurance La Défense, Paris
King's College London , Research in Conflict Prevention.	Médecins sans Frontieres	

Walloon Minister of Economy , Belgium, Attaché
Flemish Ministry , policy officer
UNPOS (UN Political Office for Somalia)
Magazine of Europe "Café Babel" , editor.
UN Headquarter , Foreign Affairs, New York
East West Institute , New York
Norwegian Embassy in Sudan , trainee
UNRIC , Brussels Director's assistant
OIM Brussels , Project assistant (2)
United Network of Young Peace building , La Hague, Advocacy Coordinator
Permanent Mission of Iran at the UN
Slovenian Embassy in Stockholm , Administrative assistant
Egyptian Ministry , Consultant
Canadian International Development Agency , Policy Analyst
University Tuebingen , Assistant



What are you doing now?



Did your internship at the UN help you in your professional projects?

Good news! It seems that whatever the field, nothing is impossible for UN interns!

Thank you to all the former interns who answered and congratulations to all of you! Good luck to all the current hard-working interns!

Testimonies

What do former UN interns have to tell us?



“The tips I would give to interns is to use this opportunity to learn as much as possible about the UN and international affairs, and to get a better idea of what kind of carrier you wish to have. I also believe that internships are wonderful opportunities to have friends from the 4 corners of the globe. I am still keeping in touch with the interns of my generation, we regularly organize reunions and it’s always a pleasure to see each others. We also help each other to find jobs.”

Céline, UN Regional Information Centre Director’s Assistant

“What I think about the UN Internship: I loved meeting people from all over the world, who have now moved on to do interesting things in their own careers. I still keep in touch with many interns and certainly gained much from the internship. I think it was an experience of a lifetime. A great occasion to meet people from everywhere in the world and to live truly the multicultural environment.”

Courtney, Policy Analyst with the Canadian International Development Agency

“I consider the United Nations Headquarter Internship a turning point in my life, both as professional and personal aspects.

On the personal level it gave me my independence; living in New York was my first experience of living by myself, which was quite different from my life back home in Iran. I got to know myself better and this was a great opportunity to prepare myself for the professional phase of my life. On the professional level I have since had great work offers and a paid internship offer. I have also started a part time Masters degree in Middle Eastern Studies at The Graduate Center of City University of New York and hopefully by gaining more knowledge about middle east I can pursue my goal of combating female illiteracy in the Middle East and promoting the empowerment of Middle-Eastern women. To cut a long story short, accepting the UNHQ internship offer was the best decision I have ever made in my whole life.”

Avishan, working with the Permanent Mission of Iran at the UNHQ



“My experience with UNRIC was great (...) there is no doubt that this internship has helped me become a more competitive candidate (...) I was able to add to my CV participation in UNRIC Magazine, Internal Voices, Cine-ONU and attendance and support at SG visits to London, which of course adds tremendous value. I am very grateful for my time at UNRIC, both because of all the great people I met and the experience I gained while interning there.”

Helene, Trainee in the Norwegian Embassy in Khartoum, Sudan

“Among all the internships I have done, it was one of the best. I loved it! It’s a bit hard to compare different experiences but I had a lot of interesting tasks and responsibilities. My boss was though, but very honest and fair! Not to mention all the social aspects:) I haven’t found my dream job yet, which is to work with international development cooperation and human rights, but I have an enjoyable job as an administrative assistant.”

Ingela, Assistant at an embassy

Useful Links:

NCRE

<http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/examin/ncrepage.htm>

UNHQ Internship Programme

<http://www.un.org/Depts/OHRM/sds/internsh/index.htm>

European Commission Internship Programme

http://ec.europa.eu/stages/index_en.htm

European Parliament Internship

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/parliament/public/staticDisplay.do?id=147>

NGOs

Medecins sans Frontieres Internship

<http://doctorswithoutborders.org/work/office/internships.cfm>

Oxfam Internship

<http://www.iyp.oxfam.org/connect/involved/intern.asp>

Red Cross Internship

<http://www.redcross.org.uk/standard.asp?id=91300>



The New Shape of Globalisation



Andrea Milan

Department of Economic and Social Affairs

In 2006, Richard Baldwin wrote a very interesting paper called “Globalization: the great unbundling(s)”⁽¹⁾ on what he defined as the old and new paradigms of globalization. He explained that the old “unbundling” took place from 1870 to 1914 and from 1960 to 1995 and it consisted of a separation of production and consumption; the main cause of that separation was the sharp decrease in the cost of trading goods. On the other hand, the new unbun-

dling consists of the separation of the individual of the production process and an increase in trade; its main cause is the decrease in the cost of communications and the improvement in information technologies. The production process of a product is no longer linear and localized but dispersed and globalized.

As a consequence, goods can be produced in China, using a Korean software and Brazilian root materials and it can be sold in Europe; moreover, the firm selling the product can have its call centres in India and its Research and Development Department in the United States and so on. The competition that used to be at the level of firms and sectors is now at the level of the single tasks⁽²⁾ in the productive process, its individual components. The sector nations had

specialized in because of their cheap domestic costs, their comparative advantage⁽³⁾, change suddenly and unpredictably. This economic system might be the most efficient system to our knowledge (from a purely economic point of view) but it is becoming very unstable; this lack of stability was also highlighted, in the last years, by the food crisis and the economic and financial crisis.

“(...) we cannot afford the current patterns of production and consumption forever.”

Economic stability is necessary not only for society but also for the economic system itself: for example, people might be more reluctant to invest if the market becomes unstable and the

(1) **Unbundling:** Separation of production, distribution and consumption process and/or of the single segments of the production process.

(2) **Single tasks:** the competition at the level of single tasks comes from the dispersion of the production process: nowadays, even the most basic part of the production process can be purchased from an outside supplier.

(3) **Comparative advantage theory:** This theory explains how trade can create advantages for two countries even when one of the countries produces all goods at lower costs. It is called “comparative advantage” because, in theory, countries will specialize in the production of the goods that are the cheapest for them to produce, no matter if the costs of production are higher than in the other country.

financial system stops working properly. How can banks and financial institutions predict who is going to be solvent(5) in the case of very high labour turnover(6) and high business unpredictability?

Most scientists agree that climate change poses serious threats to the future of our planet and scholars and politicians now recognize that we cannot afford the current patterns of production and consumption forever; globalization will somehow change in the near future and the Copenhagen Summit is the first important step towards a new global economy.

The “new unbundling” of globalization can be dangerous for the future of our planet as international trade is increasing at unprecedented levels and transporting goods around the world

can be very damaging for the environment. Only great advancements in green technologies and substantial investments on them can allow us to improve the environmental efficiency of this kind of transportations.

We do not know whether we will see a greener “unbundling”, maybe we will only pay a bit more attention to the impact of our action on the environment.

A new “unbundling” would probably lead to a new international economic system with sustainable development at its heart; for example, in deciding whether to produce goods or to import them, we would take into account the environmental price the planet pays for the transportation of the good. We would also see a more ‘human’ economy that would put the social dimen-

sion at the heart of economics.

It seems that, at the moment, there is no international leadership for a greener globalization; however, as Kindleberger once said, “cooperation depends on positive leadership; the leadership role often goes un-applauded but, particularly in a time of crisis, the hallmark of leadership is the willingness to assume responsibility”.

We have challenging years ahead. ■

“(...) international trade is increasing at unprecedented levels and transporting goods around the world can be very damaging for the environment.”

(5) **Solvent:** An economic agent is solvent if it is able to meet its financial obligations.

(6) **Labour turnover:** Refers to the number of employees that change in a firm in a specific amount of time.

Further info: Richard Baldwin, “Globalization: the Great Unbundling(s)”

http://www.graduateinstitute.ch/webdav/site/ctei/shared/CTEI/Baldwin/Publications/Chapters/Globalization/Baldwin_06-09-20.pdf



© Menka Bihari

In(terning) the Kitchen!

A few recipes for Christmas!

Finnish Rice Pudding

Saija Ekorre, UNRIC Brussels



Ingredients:

- 1 Litre of full-fat milk
- 500g of rice that is not parboiled
- A little water, butter and cream
- 1tb of salt

→ Cook the rice in 1/2 Litre of water. Add 25g of butter to prevent the rice from burning.

→ Add 1-2 glasses of water, the salt and the rice. When the water starts disappearing pour the milk in slowly. Stir.

→ Heat until it boils, and then leave it on the stove at low temperature for 1h. If it's too water let cook; if it's too dry add water or milk.

→ Before serving add some full cream. Serve the pudding hot, check that there is enough salt, add cinamon, sugar and butter on top.

Enjoy!

We normally serve this on Christmas. Traditionally you add one almond in the porridge and the one who gets the almond will have good luck. He will either win a lot of money in the next year, get married or will have gen-

German Gluehwein

Antonie Hutter, UNRIC Brussels



Ingredients:

- 3/4 Litre of red wine
- 1/4 Litre of orange juice
- 1 teabag (black tea)
- 1 cinamon stick
- 2 cloves
- Sugar/honey
- 1 lemon
- 1 orange

Mit Schuss (with a shot) - for the stronger ones!

- 15cl Amaretto (or other liqueur)

→ Peel the orange and the lemon

→ Prepare 1/4 of tea (usually black tea, but you can use fruit tea as well)

→ Heat the wine in a pot, put everything inside except the sugar and leave it at hot temperature for 20min.

→ Add the sugar/honey.

→ Serve the Gluehwein hot.

We normally drink this outside when it's cold or at Christmas time.



CALENDAR



January

February

1	Global Family Day
2	
3	Festival of Sleep Day
4	Trivia Day
5	
6	World Day for War Orphans
7	
8	Bubble Bath Day
9	Play God Day
10	Penguin Awareness Day
11	
12	
13	Make Your Dream Come True Day
14	
15	
16	Nothing Day
17	Ditch New Years Resolutions Day
18	Martin Luther King Day
19	
20	
21	Hugging Day
22	
23	Measure Your Feet Day
24	Compliment Day
25	
26	Spouse's Day
27	International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust
28	Fun at Work Day
29	
30	
31	Backward Day

1	
2	Groundhog Day
3	
4	World Cancer Day [WHO]
5	Weatherman's Day
6	International Day Against Female Genital Mutilation
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	Don't Cry Over Spilled Milk Day
12	Opening of the Winter Olympics Games
13	Get a Different Name Day
14	Valentine's Day
15	
16	
17	Random Acts of Kindness Day
18	
19	
20	World Day of Social Justice
21	International Mother Language Day
22	Be Humble Day
23	
24	National Tortilla Chip Day
25	
26	
27	
28	Public Sleeping Day

If...

A short story by Pedro Eler,
UN Information Center in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The sounds at first were blurry.
Dew shakes in the leaves but it's not morning.
It might as well be blood.

If they were fireworks she would not have known at first, not when they were blurry. But that was long before, back when it still made her jump. After living in the same slum for the past twenty-three years she would not confuse the two of them. Fireworks were like jazz, they had no order and they happened intuitively. But not the sound of guns, not the bullets crossing the sky of Rio de Janeiro. They obeyed rhythm. They came and went and if it didn't hit the boy, then that was all she could hope for.

You can't control them, but you learn how to live with it. It happens all the time, everyday, in the slums of Rio de Janeiro.

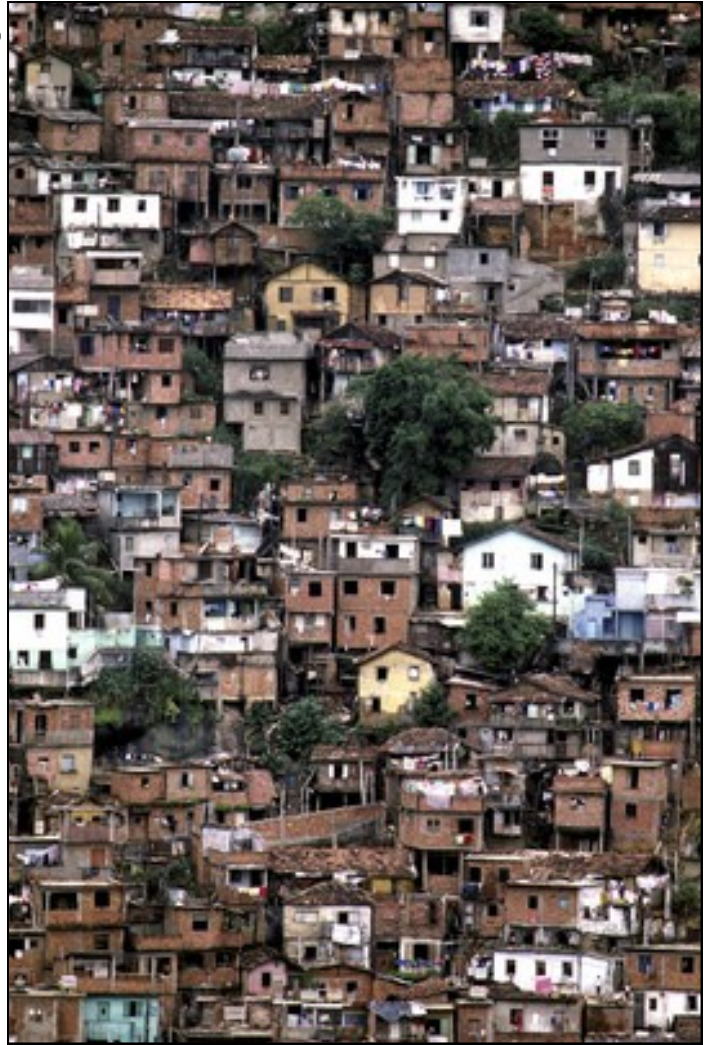
If it didn't hit the boy, that was all she could hope for.

If it didn't hit the boy.

She never told anyone, they would call her crazy and doubt her love. But she had nothing else to do. It was just her and the boy, and if she had to leave to go to work, then who was there to look for the boy? She had once mentioned something about taking him with her but the lady had been quick, "Oh, I'm so sorry, Maria, but it's too crowded as it is", and that was it. The lady herself had four kids of her own and there was no room for more.

Maria thought there was room but said noth-

Rio de Janeiro slum, 1986
© UN Photo/Claudio Edinger



ing because it had been hard to get this job since she could not write or read or hardly speak in a way she thought proper. Better keep quiet and not mess it up. She needed the money. She had no-one. Lose the money and the street is all there is.

So every morning before she left to work at the lady's house she would leave a plate of food on top of the kitchen table and tell him to watch out and only eat it when it's time. And to all those people who would call her crazy if they ever knew, she wished they could for a moment know what it was like to kiss your boy goodbye, close the door and lock him in. It was hell. Yet she did it. She had no choice. There were no vacancies in schools or day-care centers for a kid of his age, no grandmother or willing neighbour. The best the old lady next door agreed to do was to listen closely to any shout for help, but that was it, she was busy herself with a bunch of dirty grandchildren from daughters who had to work somewhere to feed the tiny mouths of those unwanted kids.

She spent her days praying that the old lady would never have to hear him cry. Or that if he ever cried she would be able to hear him through the screams of kids of her own.

She prayed.

Maria prayed.

She never knew where the boy was or who he was with. Those slums had good people but not all people were good and she knew it. And she knew that when the police stormed through those tiny streets, especially at night, it did not matter if you were good or bad if you happened to be black.

It was late at night and he was not at home and coming back from work earlier she had seen the police at the foot of the mountain. They had been about to storm the slum. All night long she heard the shooting and the whole time she wondered where he was.

She prayed because there was nothing else to do.

Through brick walls she could not break, God's eye.

Through narrow alleys she could not pass, God's eye.

Through jagged barriers she could not climb, God's eye.

Everywhere else was darkness, but God's eye could see it all.

She could not guide her boy's every move, but God's eye would see him home, make sure that he would not lose his way from that completely different world. He worked there, a bus-boy at a fancy restaurant near Copacabana beach, but he was not from there and she knew that, and had thought that for his own good he should not lose his righteous way. "If's money you wan' then you work hard and earn it. Cause there's a lotta ways to make money in these mountains but hell those are not ways for my boy", she would tell him over and over again. "Make no mistakes 'cause there ain't no room for mistakes if you're black and poor. Just no room." She knew that there were ways in those slums that would make him rich.

She also knew so many other boys who had gone those ways, and none of them ever grew older than their mothers.

In the walls of the slum the heat takes place, and the sweat runs down your body. Dirt mingles, mud and skin. It's not a good place but you make a living; she had always told him that. You make a living. You put food on the table and you pay your bills and you work and come home and you drink some beer and dance some samba and have some kids. But drugs, you never ever touch that stuff, and even if they tell you it will make you rich, you still never ever touch it.

But she was not God, she could not know for sure. And even if he never touched it, she knew that

in this world and at this side of the gun barrel, it did make not much of a difference. So she prayed and she looked at the clock and it was almost dawn and he was not home yet.

It was four in the afternoon when Maria looked at the clock on the wall of her boss's kitchen. She had looked at that clock all day long, while cooking, cleaning, washing, ironing and dusting. She was counting the hours, ten minutes at a time. Now it was time for her to go home.

Everyday, as she stood for a long time at that crowded subway train, her stomach clinched and her heart accelerated, and it got worse and worse as she climbed the streets, walking her way up that slum, getting closer and closer to home. But it all vanished when she opened the door and he was there, a big smile and a larger hug.

She could relish in that relief before it all started again the next day.

But today, as she squeezed her self into a corner of the subway train, stretching up to find some thread of cool air in the midst of all those people and that heat, her heart thumped even faster, chaotic. Her stomach lurched and moved as though it would implode.

She knew something was wrong.

The hordes of people leaving the train forced her into motion and then she couldn't stop anymore. Before she knew it she was crossing the street and going up the main road that led to the slum.

Then she heard a noise that made her heart stop and her feet start racing.

Sirens.

Sirens.

Maria's heart stopped beating but her lips started moving. Oh God be with him. Oh God be with him.

God be with the boy.

May your eyes see the boy.

May your hands guide him home.

If...

God I will die.

Oh God be with him

God be with the boy.

May your eyes see the boy.

May your hands keep him safe.

May your hands keep him safe.

If...

God I will die.

Maria didn't even make it to the end of the street when strong arms held her back.

"Sorry ma'am, but you can't go up there", said a burly voice. She did not take her eyes off the sea of lights and tiles and naked bricks. She kept staring, straight ahead, oblivious to the voice. In the middle of that sea her boy was alone.

Only when the policeman spoke again did she take notice of him.

"It's too dangerous right now. The shooting is going on strongly. You'll have to wait."

She turned to him with bugged eyes, he would never understand. She tried to keep on moving but he threw her back. "What did I tell you? There's no going up right now! Do you want a bullet in your brain? They're shooting left and right and it's too dangerous."

She could have said something about the boy. But she could just imagine the response. Why not leave him at a day care centre? Like she hadn't tried that before. You had to know life in that place. So many kids, so few day care centres. So she said nothing. Her lips were still but tears rolled down her cheek.

Tears rolled down Maria's cheek.

She had been kneeling for nearly two hours now. The sirens had subdued, but not the shooting. Shooting, cold rhythm in the heat of war. It was war on those slums.

Casualties.

Innocent lives.

She knew that, had heard about it, had known

them.

But not her boy.

If...

God she would die.

There was a soaring pain in her back from kneeling at that hard floor for so long. He was so late now. The sound of every shot reminded her of the sudden existence of an aimless bullet, and all she could hope for was that it crossed the sky and found something that was not her boy on the other side; that he would not be a target.

She feared those bullets more than anything.

Maria feared those bullets more than anything.

The boy was just a baby. He could poke his head out of the window to look for the fireworks. But they were bullets.

He did not know that.

She knew that there were many other smaller streets and alleys that wended up to her street. Many paths she knew would be unblocked. So she moved fast, silently, unafraid. She could hear the sound of the bullets. They crossed the sky right above her head but to her they seemed so distant. She could only think of her boy.

Maria could only think of her boy.

He should have been home for more than three hours now. She had no more doubts that something had gone wrong. She had called the restaurant and the security guard on duty had told her that no, he left when he normally does, I'm sure nothing is wrong with him ma'am.

But she knew something was wrong and there was no point in pretending anything else.

Read the rest of the story on our blog! Visit: <http://internal-voices.blogspot.com>

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Infernal Voices

Newspaper Headlines, gathered by Ioana Leu, UN Regional Information Center, UK & Ireland Desk

HO WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS: A beer advertisement featuring a ranchy version of Snow White has reportedly raised the ire of Disney. The x-rated advertisement, for Jamieson's Raspberry Ale, depicts the fairytale heroine, nicknamed "Ho White" blowing smoke rings while lying in bed with seven semi-clad dwarves. (Telegraph, London)

IT'S A CORPSE...REALLY!: The body of a 75-year-old man in America was left decomposing on a balcony for several days because neighbours thought the corpse was a Halloween display. (Telegraph, London)

TO BEARD OR NOT TO BEARD: Some questions raised by David Beckham's beard (making its debut on Wednesday night at the England v Belarus match): what does it mean? How long does it take to grow one that enormous? Why is it so bad? Because, let there be no mistake, this is a disastrous beard. It's the way it reaches far down beneath his chin and his neck, over his Adam's apple, toward the top of his chest, like an unstoppable hairy fungus, that especially bothers me. It's colonizing him. That beard looks like it leads a sinister life of its own, after dark. (Times, London)

CAT TALES: A cat rode two miles through New York City while stuck in the engine compartment of an SUV - and survived. "He seems pretty calm, like he's not in any pain," Mr Ziegler of the Center for Animal Care and Control said. "But he's mean. He has been growling." (Telegraph, London)

RABBIT-THROWING COMPETITION: A rural town in New Zealand has been forced to cancel its annual rabbit-throwing competition after complaints from animal rights groups. In the contest, which is held each year to coincide with the start of the pig hunt, children see how far they can throw a dead rabbit. But the RSPCA said the rabbit-throw sent a message to children that dead animals were fun and could legitimately be used as a form of entertainment. (Telegraph, London)

BREAKFAST AT HARBOUR BRIDGE'S: There was only one place to be seen for breakfast in Sydney yesterday: 100 metres above the sparkling blue water on the Harbour Bridge. Gone were the eight lanes of traffic; in their place, a carpet of newly laid lush grass was dotted with tartan picnic rugs, food hampers and the odd cow. (Independent, London)

OOOOO...SHOWER MIO: Hugo Chavez, the Venezuelan president, has called on his countrymen to stop singing in the shower to help save water and electricity. (Telegraph, London, 26 Oct)

DUMB AND DUMBER: Two hapless robbers in America, Matthew McNelly and Joey Miller have been arrested with the "worst disguises ever" after trying to hide their faces with permanent marker pen. Police discovered the drunk hapless pair - nicknamed "dumb and dumber" - complete with makeshift disguises, which some commentators described as "the worst disguise ever". (Telegraph, London)

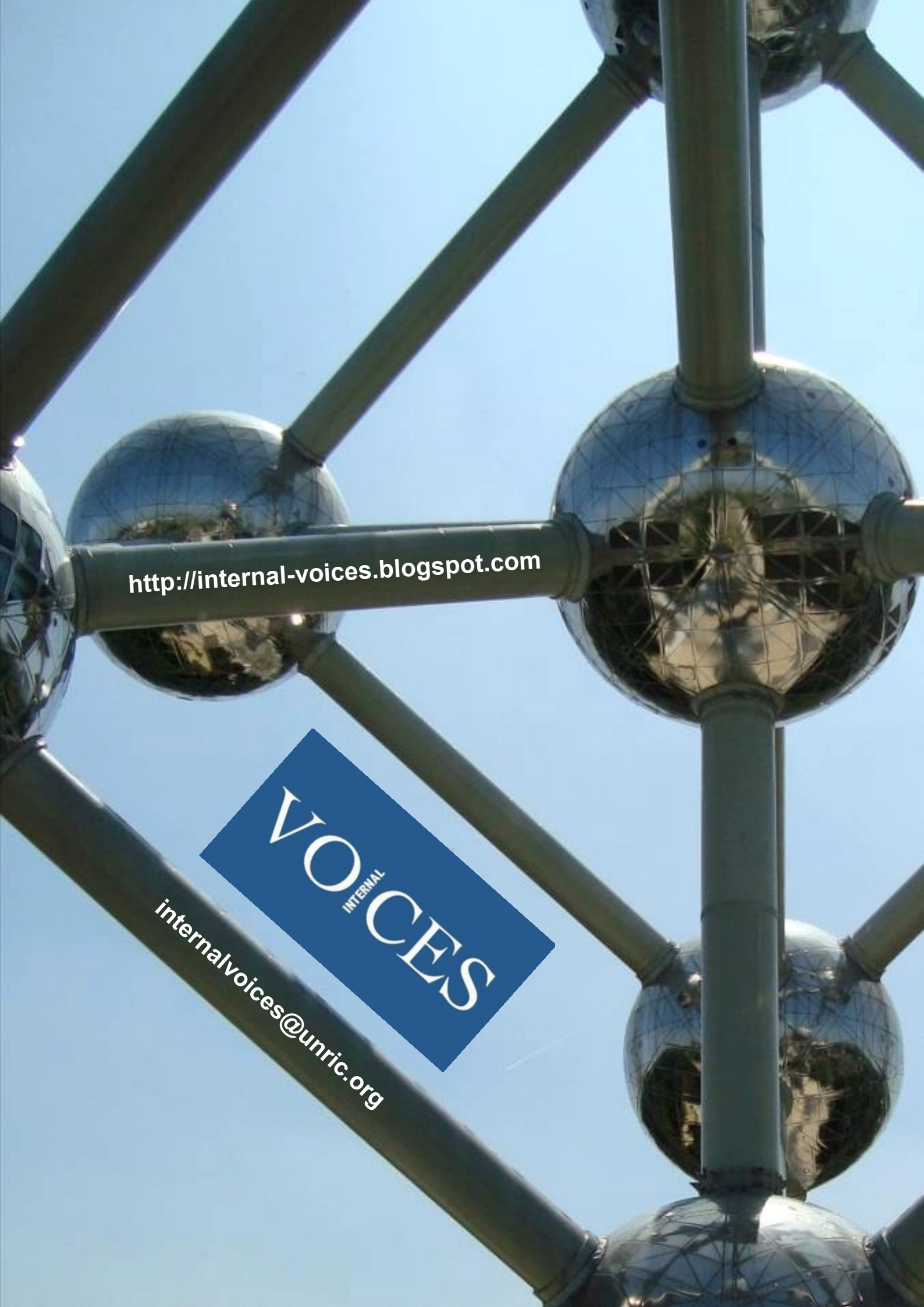
MEEEEEEH....BURPI: Farting cows and sheep have been blamed for most of the methane emissions that have helped take Australia to the top of the world's carbon footprint league table. But Australian scientists have their own cunning plan to stop global warming - breed a sheep that doesn't burp. (Times, London)

HUSH, HUSH, MY BABY, DON'T SHUT THE DOOR: Mrs. Kilgour, from Mt. Eden in Auckland, New Zealand, had to be rescued after spending seven hours trapped inside a tiny wardrobe after her 14-month-old son Harry shut the door on her. (Times, London)

CAMELS TERRORISE AUSTRALIAN OUTBACK COMMUNITY: An Australian Outback town is under siege from thousands of feral camels that have invaded the area in search of water. Up to 6,000 of the animals have caused chaos in the Northern Territory town of Docker River, trampling through homes, breaking water tanks and disrupting the emergency airstrip. (Times)

THE WORLD'S OLDEST SHEEP DIES: Lucky, the world's oldest sheep, has died after succumbing to the effects of a heat wave in southern Australia. The 23-year-old ewe, recognized by the Guinness Book of Records, died peacefully on her farm at Lake Bolac, 57 miles west of Melbourne, after a short illness. (Telegraph)

REDUCING STRESS LEVEL: Beer after work is good for work efficiency, and it considerably reduces the stress level of the workers. Those who don't ever take even a single sip tend to be more frustrated and exhausted at work, compared to those who treat themselves with a pint or two after work with their colleagues. (Hufvudstadsbladet, Finland)



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