

IMPLEMENTING THE MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS: OUR HUMAN RIGHTS OBLIGATION

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Droits et Démocratie
Rights & Democracy

Centre international des droits de la personne et du développement démocratique
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Day One	7
Welcoming Remarks	7
<i>Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy</i>	7
Opening Address	8
<i>Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Africa</i>	8
Plenary Session 1 – Human Rights and the MDGs: An International Perspective	12
<i>Chair: Huguette Labelle, Chancellor, University of Ottawa</i>	12
<i>Carol Welch, Coordinator, UN Millennium Campaign</i>	12
<i>Patrick van Weerelt, Senior Human Rights Advisor, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)</i>	13
<i>Bertrand Ramcharan, Former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights</i>	15
Questions and Discussion	16
Luncheon Address	18
<i>Chairperson: Razmik Panossian, Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning, Rights & Democracy</i>	18
<i>Walter Reid, Director, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.</i>	18
Questions and Discussion	21
Roundtable 1 – National Case Studies: Successes and Challenges	22
<i>Chairperson: Lydia Hwitsum, Board of Directors, Rights & Democracy</i>	22
<i>China: Sharon Hom, Executive Director, Human Rights in China</i>	22
<i>Brazil: Luis Fernandes de Lara Resende, IPEA</i>	23

<i>Bangladesh: Kamal Hossain, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court, Bangladesh</i>	25
<i>Bolivia: Beatriz Muriel, Senior Economist, Grupo Integral</i>	25
<i>Bolivia: Carlos Antonio Carrasco, Ambassador of Bolivia to Canada</i>	25
<i>Mali: Tiébilé Dramé, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Mali</i>	26
<i>Mali: Mamadou Bandiougou Diawara, Ambassador of Mali to Canada</i>	26
Questions and Discussion	27
Closing comments	31
<i>Claire L'Heureux-Dubé, former Canadian Supreme Court judge</i>	31
<i>Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation</i>	31
Day Two	33
Keynote Address	33
<i>Chairperson: Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy</i>	33
<i>Ablassé Ouedraogo, Senior Advisor to the President of the African Development Bank</i>	33
Plenary Session 2 – Alternatives for International Cooperation	36
<i>Chairperson: Stephen Baranyi, Principle Researcher, Conflict Resolution, North-South Institute</i>	36
<i>Arjun Sengupta, UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty</i>	36
<i>Sigrun Skogly, Senior Lecturer in Law, Lancaster University, UK</i>	37
<i>Asbjorn Lovbraek, Senior Advisor, Evaluation Department, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)</i>	38
<i>David Moloney, Vice-President, Policy Branch, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)</i>	39
Questions and Discussion	40
Roundtable 2: Mobilizing Canadians: A Cross Sector Perspective on Achieving the MDGs	42
<i>Chairs: Wayne McKay, Chairperson of the Board, Rights & Democracy; Razmik Panossian, Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning, Rights & Democracy.</i>	42
Luncheon: Mobilizing Political Parties	42
<i>Aileen Carroll, Minister of International Cooperation</i>	42

<i>Helena Guergis, Critic for International Cooperation, Conservative Party</i>	43
<i>Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois</i>	43
<i>Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP)</i>	44
<i>Jim Harris, Leader of the Green Party</i>	45
Mobilizing the Private Sector	45
<i>Adine Mees, President & CEO, Canadian Business for Social Responsibility</i>	45
<i>Kaz Flinn, Vice President, Government Affairs and CSR, Scotiabank</i>	47
<i>Ed Broadbent, MP, NDP; Former President of Rights & Democracy</i>	48
Questions and Discussion	49
Mobilizing Civil Society	51
<i>Mary Corkery, Executive Director, KAIROS</i>	51
<i>Roy Culpeper, President, North-South Institute</i>	52
<i>Anna Nitoslawska, International Programme Administrator, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)</i>	53
Questions and Discussion	55
Closing	56
<i>Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy</i>	56

DAY ONE

Welcoming Remarks

Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy

Acknowledging that attendees had come from all parts of Canada and all parts of the world, Jean-Louis Roy thanked them for participating in Rights & Democracy's annual conference.

As this meeting is taking place in one of the richest parts of the world, hundreds of millions of others would spend the day fighting extreme poverty, searching for food, water, and sanitation, and trying to find access to health services and drugs. Some of these people will survive the day, while thousands will not. All would be deprived of their basic social and economic rights. "No food, no water, no health services, no drugs, no schools, no housing, no jobs, no recognition, no respect, no rights."

While this meeting is taking place, little girls would be raped in the Sudan, people would have their shelters burned in Zimbabwe, and children would see their mothers, fathers, or both, die from HIV/AIDS.

Poverty in Africa has doubled over the last 20 years. In addition, Africa's share of world trade has fallen from 6% to 2% in the last 10 years. Roy asked, "Considering these facts, how can we believe that democracy, the rule of law, and respect for human rights can take root and endure in these devastated human societies?"

He called on participants to provide answers to the people living in extreme poverty. "Do we believe that each and all of them share our common dignity or not? Do we believe that all of them have social and economic rights or not?"

No one can plead ignorance of the situation facing these people. “Mountains of reports” have been written and extreme poverty has been documented many times. “Extreme poverty is a violation of human rights,” Roy said.

It is a time to propose urgent action. It is a time to press the Canadian government to lead in the full realization of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)—“goals that can contribute to human rights, human security, and human development now.” Canada should recommit to the MDGs by developing a plan of action to reach the United Nations’ target of contributing 0.7% of the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by 2015.

The Canadian government should abolish all public debt for underdeveloped countries. Instead of waiting for the other G8 countries to act, Canada should act now—independently and decisively.

If an investment is not made now and if the MDGs are not reached, the world will have to be prepared to invest a huge amount of money in the near future to contain the spread of instability, to protect people living in fragile states, to rebuild large fragments of the world, and to try and protect people from the “despair and desperation of millions of educated young men and women who believe they have no future.”

Roy introduced Stephen Lewis, saying that his message is clear: “First get the basic rights, and never forget the hope in the midst of despair.”

Opening Address

Stephen Lewis, Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Africa

Stephen Lewis said he was pleased to be at the conference and to be able to speak with a certain amount of candour. It makes sense that his focus is on Africa, he said, because that is a continent where the MDGs are needed the most and where human rights are being violated.

Human rights have not taken a central place in the discussions around the MDGs. In general, human rights within a multilateral system are often an afterthought—something that is tacked on with a sense of “anxious obligation.” The UN Secretary-General has asked for—and will probably get—the formation of a Human Rights Council. While such a council is

necessary, it is a matter of process. Lewis added that discussions have not occurred about what exactly this type of council will address.

The MDGs have rarely been placed within a human rights context, and Lewis made a case for the centrality of human rights. “The MDGs have to have a human rights framework that is asserted with rigour and uncompromising commitment.”

Focusing on Goal 3—promote gender equality and empower women—Lewis said that many international instruments (including the UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) speak categorically of the equality of men and women. However, they have had little effect and are rarely adhered to.

A 1993 UN conference in Vienna had as its mantra “Women’s rights are human rights.” In 1994 in Cairo the emphasis was on women and the centrality of equality. This focus came to its zenith at the international conference in Beijing where women’s equality was the centerpiece. All of these conferences have made hardly any difference on the ground, Lewis said.

It is heartbreaking that very little national legislation is in place to protect the property and inherent rights of women, to protect them against sexual violence, and to help ensure their economic and social empowerment. Lewis said that “all matters of human rights are treated with colossal indifference and sublime male arrogance.”

Turning his attention to the Blair Commission for Africa’s report, Lewis said that the report has an appallingly insufficient focus on women. People are not drawing attention to this reality, he said. Of the 17 commissioners only three were women. The British Prime Minister could not even reach the 33% target that was set out in Beijing.

Lewis told the group that “the struggle around gender is the single greatest struggle on earth.” He spoke of the horrible effect of AIDS on women in Africa. The continent is being denuded of women, he said.

One country must take the lead and propose the formation of an international agency for women that is embedded into the UN fabric—an agency that has as much clout as the other existing agencies. There are agencies in place for children, governance, food, and health; however, there is currently no agency to deal exclusively with the issues facing half of the world’s population. Lewis appealed to the group to always remember that women’s human rights are being violated on every front.

International discussions have also been taking place for more than a decade relating to Goal 2—achieve universal primary education. The focus of these discussions (e.g., at a 2002 conference in Johannesburg) has primarily been on abolishing school fees. There are also binding international laws (Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child) that speak to this issue. Nevertheless, 123 million children are currently not attending school; 60% of these children are girls. There is a lack of adherence to the human rights principles that are already in place.

Lewis added that at a December 2000 African Development Forum in Addis Ababa, the Director of UNICEF made the statement that she would be leading a campaign to abolish school fees across Africa. She then returned to New York and spoke to her colleagues. Nothing resulted from that commitment. The UN agencies are charged with upholding the conventions and making the content of the articles a reality. There is no one accountable for ensuring follow-through on the statements that are made. Again, there is a need for leadership and a strong voice.

Speaking of Goal 1—eradicate extreme poverty and hunger—Lewis said the right to food is embedded in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as a host of other norms. However, nowhere is this right cast as a human right.

The World Food Program cannot find the money it needs to respond to the crises it faces, particularly those in Africa. Lewis said that if people living in southern Africa were asked what they want more than anything, they would say that they want food. Yet the right to food is not supported by the Western world.

Success in reaching the MDGs would mean that by 2015

- 500 million people would be lifted out of poverty;
- 300 million people would no longer be hungry;
- 30 million children would not die before the age of five;
- 650 million more people would have access to sanitation.

In light of the potential transformative power of the MDGs, Lewis said strong resolve is needed to activate the compendium of human rights.

It was a major setback to achieving success when President Bush recently “sent the Prime Minister of Great Britain packing”— the US President said he was not prepared to double the aid that is required or agree to

debt cancellation on the terms that were put forward by the British Prime Minister.

Canada has also abdicated its human rights obligations by refusing to set a timeline to reach the 0.7% target. Lewis said he shares the bewilderment felt by many about this situation. The 67 countries that have now committed to a timetable do not include the US, Canada, and Japan (which has recently doubled its aid and realizes it must meet its target in order to gain a seat on the UN Security Council). For issues like this, there must be a separation in public policy between the US and Canada.

Every witness before the Foreign Affairs Committee has begged Canada to set a timetable to reach 0.7%. The absence of such a timetable leaves Canada "subject to serious damage to our international reputation," Lewis said. This is particularly true because that 0.7% target is part of the Pearsonian legacy. It was Lester B. Pearson who etched the 0.7% target into the consciousness of the international community. "Canada has failed to put that target into practice." Gerry Barr, President of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, has said that, as things stand now, Canada will have only reached .42% by 2015.

Canada's good work in other international fora is being eclipsed in the minds of the international community by this failure. Even Canada's work in Darfur is being overshadowed.

Lewis called on the Canadian government to make a timetable public at the upcoming G8 meeting. "If that is not done, Canada will have a lot to explain to the international community."

Turning his attention to HIV/AIDS, Lewis said that the disease decimates every single human right mentioned in every UN convention. Human rights have to be at the centre of any response to the pandemic – be it a rights-based approach to combating the stigma and discrimination associated with HIV/AIDS, policies regarding sex workers, and preventive measures. In addition, the right to treatment is not enshrined. Lewis said he hoped that Canada could take a lead in all of these areas.

Achieving the MDGs "lies at the heart of ameliorating the excruciating vulnerability of humankind." He said it is imperative that there be a response because an entire continent is currently under siege.

Plenary Session 1—Human Rights and the MDGs: An International Perspective

Chair: Huguette Labelle, Chancellor, University of Ottawa

The MDGs are central to the world's future, said Huguette Labelle, and should be basic to all development policies and conventions. Passive resistance to the goals must be overcome and human rights accomplishments pushed higher on the agenda.

Carol Welch, Coordinator, UN Millennium Campaign

Human rights are both embedded in and essential to achieving the MDGs. Explaining that the MDGs are derived from the Millennium Declaration endorsed by all UN member states at the Millennium Summit in 2000, Carol Welch highlighted their values: Freedom, Equality, Solidarity, Tolerance, Respect for Nature, and Shared Responsibility. The UN Millennium Campaign's objective is to help citizens hold governments to account, free the world's people from extreme poverty, and ensure globalization benefits all people equitably.

Welch emphasized that achieving the MDGs are the right and responsibility of rich and poor countries as well as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international economic institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO). Moreover, the goals are interlinked and achievable, with their transparent and measurable outcomes useful for NGOs and civil society to campaign around.

Implementation relies on the nation state, with necessary support from international actors. The Millennium Campaign helps ensure the MDGs are nationally adopted, a sense of ownership is developed, and their implementation is driven by the country's citizens, using country-specific models and policies.

The human rights underpinning highlights that poverty is multidimensional and the MDGs indivisible, Welch said. Development is about freedom in a holistic sense: freedom from hunger, illiteracy, disease, suffering, insecurity, poor housing, etc.; and poverty is not just about income, or welfare and charity but rather justice and rights. Thus, the MDGs and human rights matter most to poor and marginalized people. As such, campaigners and governments must guard against piecemeal, single-issue solutions and recognize poverty's underlying causes, such as dis-

crimination and other injustices that also underlie most human rights abuses.

How can a human rights framework help achieve the MDGs? Welch said accompanying a legal understanding must be a political process that addresses the power struggles among actors. The Millennium Campaign aims to create the necessary conditions for creative political and moral pressure where no explicit legal provisions exist at the international and national levels for MDG enforcement.

Welch shared examples from Kenya, India, Philippines, and Chile, where civil society campaigns have successfully advanced the MDGs within a human rights framework. Enormous potential exists for human rights and development actors to collaborate within MDG campaigns, including inputting into national MDG reports, preparing “shadow” reports, and incorporating disaggregated reporting and reporting by vulnerable groups.

The Global Call to Action Against Poverty is a growing coalition bringing together program/operational NGOs, human rights NGOs, and new constituencies such as youth, parliamentarians, and local authorities. Those wearing its symbolic white bands call on world leaders to cancel crippling debt burdens and ensure trade justice.

Although many developed countries are starting to face up to responsibilities, much more work is needed. “We are the first generation that can actually end poverty,” concluded Welch, “and we should refuse to miss this opportunity.”

Patrick van Weerelt, Senior Human Rights Advisor, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Patrick van Weerelt noted that the Millennium Project, the upcoming Millennium +5 Summit in September, and rapid evolutions in human rights and development provide promising opportunities for moving beyond rhetoric and linking human rights and the MDGs in practice. However, the international community must still do better in defining achievement guidelines grounded in the human rights rationale. The MDGs are affordable and feasible, yet stressing the rights-based approach is essential for strengthening the legal authority, political legitimacy, and precision of strategies. This will ensure justice and fairness in the process as well as the outcome for all people.

Van Weerelt read several quotes representative of the current discourse, touching on the multidimensional nature of poverty, the MDGs' being a roadmap to rights and freedoms yet still only part of a larger development agenda, and the need to include the most vulnerable groups as states strive to meet targets. The quotes highlight the MDGs' holistic nature, linkages to other development topics, and the needed focus on process.

In his recent report, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security, and Human Rights For All*, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan emphasized that "We will not enjoy development without security, we will not enjoy security without development, and we will not enjoy either without the respect for human rights."

Taking this as guidance, van Weerelt said a rights-based approach to the MDGs is the only way to preserve, promote, protect, and realize development, security, and human rights for all. However, this requires a substantive increase in engagement, notably at the country level, as well as a different attitude from human rights practitioners. Beyond reaching the goals, MDG strategies must also be concerned with who is affected and how targets are reached, ensuring that the poor and disadvantaged are not neglected.

The UNDP stresses the rights-related issues of equality, non-discrimination, participation, inclusion, accountability, and the rule of law. The "what," "how," and "why" of development support are all important. Yet van Weerelt highlighted that a rights-based approach cannot resolve everything about poverty reduction. It is not a "solutions" approach, although it has an unprecedented advantage over all other strategies in advancing social justice, long-term effectiveness, and legitimacy.

Van Weerelt welcomed the historic resolution recently endorsed by the Mongolian parliament to adopt a legislative act on the MDGs which includes a ninth MDG on democratic governance and human rights. There are many promising signs bridging human rights and the MDGs, and van Weerelt expressed hope that they will translate into practical actions. All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights, he said, and urged world leaders to ensure that this dignity is respected, protected, and promoted through development assistance and national development frameworks in practice.

Bertrand Ramcharan, Former UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights

Politics and strategy are as important as idealism in advancing human rights and poverty reduction. Historically the human rights concept has contributed to development goals through norms, advocacy of these norms, supervision of their implementation, studies on particular issues and groups, and the activation of an international conscience. Moreover, human rights are impacted by six elements of the human condition: poverty, conflicts, terrorism, state violence, inequality (gender and race discrimination), and poor governance. But how can the human rights emphasis help implement the MDGs? And what practical and concrete approaches will contribute to their achievement?

Ramcharan provided six suggestions. The first relates to the national human rights protection system of each country and how it covers key economic, social, and cultural rights. Key government ministries, such as agriculture, health, and housing, should have focal points to advance a human rights approach and watch over equality and non-discrimination. There should also be greater emphasis on the role of the courts in protecting key economic, social, and cultural rights.

The second relates to the concept of preventable poverty. Each country should scrutinize what can be done to prevent and reduce poverty using all available national resources. Advocacy campaigns should also focus on preventable poverty.

Third is the principle of non-discrimination. The International Covenant on Economics, Social and Cultural Rights makes non-discrimination a mandatory obligation on States Parties. Alongside preventive human rights strategies, society must watch out for sectors of the population that are facing discrimination and urgently act to ameliorate and bring about tangible relief.

Fourth, Ramcharan said society must place a stronger emphasis on vulnerable groups of the population, such as minorities, indigenous populations, migrants, and historically disadvantaged communities. Society should monitor their situations, understand how to act for their benefit, and forge a national plan of action to ameliorate their situation and protect their rights.

The fifth suggestion relates to the concept of a consistent pattern of gross violation of economic, social, and cultural rights, such as systemic dis-

crimination in the workplace or in hiring. The United Nations Commission on Human Rights has adopted a decision to pay attention to this, alongside violations of civil and political rights. Society should apply the principle of protection on the ground nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Sixth, Ramcharan proposed the periodic publication of a world report on economic, social, and cultural rights, which would help show what could be done to prevent and reduce poverty and act for the relief of the vulnerable and poor.

In closing, Ramcharan said these approaches would help make the human rights contribution more tangible and give practical expression to idealism through doable politics and strategies.

Questions and Discussion

A delegate proposed transferring and targeting public resources toward the most vulnerable groups, with human rights obligations as a priority. He also raised the issue that equity in resource allocation is often ignored. Ramcharan cautioned that seeking more international assistance must be accompanied by realistic expectations and strategies that make the most of existing resources.

Van Weerelt reiterated that the rights-based approach cannot solve every issue. Improving equity requires better political decisions on setting priorities.

A participant commented that politics and strategy are fundamental, and big UN or international conferences could even hinder achievement by focusing on rhetoric and resolutions that do not translate to reality. He suggested focusing on poverty and on-the-ground improvements.

Another participant suggested that equity is the basis of human rights, encompassing transparency, rule of law, accountability, etc. The rights-based emphasis makes the MDGs a development approach that not only removes poverty as an outcome but does it through a process of eliminating inequalities in the system.

A delegate asked for strategies to create worldwide solidarity, in particular to help the severe famine and malnourishment in the Sahara. Another delegate appealed for a break in the silence surrounding the plight of the Kurdish people.

Ramcharan noted that the human rights programs concerned with justice and preventable poverty and conflicts, etc., are all about how to help those in need in terms of equity. He also commented that conferences can indeed help paint a vision for the future and pull toward practical strategies for justice and development. The media play an important role as well. And one of the most practical instruments for addressing equity is still the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Moreover, the UN has commented on the Kurdish, as well as the Armenian, situation, highlighting some of the problems they face.

Welch noted that creating a sense of global solidarity is a long-term effort, but progress is being made in both rich and poor countries to bring human rights into the discourse, especially in terms of assessing the impact of trade and identifying the winners and losers. In addition to promoting trade justice and increased and more effective aid, human rights has the most important impact to make in incorporating the needs of the poorest people.

Van Weerelt expressed optimism that the number of bilateral partners adopting the rights-based approach is rapidly growing, and good progress is being made in formulating feasible strategies.

Labelle summarized the major themes of the session. She noted that it is extremely important to strengthen international solidarity. Moreover, while ensuring the rights-based approach, it is important to be mindful of how it affects the way in which the MDGs will be achieved. Averages and aggregates are needed but can hide huge disparities. National ownership of a country's plan is essential, while support of special issues should not overshadow the multidimensionality of a country's development. Political will must be buttressed to transform idealism, concepts, and promises to action and real outcomes. A national protection system can protect key rights, but people must not be paralyzed while awaiting the transfer of resources. Finally, development is not about charity and welfare but the right to a decent quality of life and to life itself.

Luncheon Address

Chairperson: Razmik Panossian, Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning, Rights & Democracy

Must we make a choice between economic development and environmental sustainability, asked Razmik Panossian. Conclusions from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment—a truly global scientific assessment—suggest that achieving the MDGs with the current policies of implementation is not necessarily environmentally sustainable.

Walter Reid, Director, Millennium Ecosystem Assessment.

Walter Reid applauded Rights & Democracy for including the issue of environmental sustainability on the conference's agenda. He said that many of the constituents of the two movements—environmental issues and human rights—are the same. These constituents include the poor, the disenfranchised, women, and indigenous peoples. There are also many overlaps between the agendas of the two movements.

At the Rio Earth Summit 13 years ago, Reid said he thought he had witnessed the end to the notion that environmental goals are at odds with development goals. He thought there had been widespread acceptance that there must be a link between the environment and development. Despite the rise of sustainable development, it has never achieved a central role in the coordination efforts around the development strategy.

Reid said the findings from the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment are very important to the achievement of the MDGs.

As background, in 2000 the UN Secretary-General called for an assessment of the health of the world's ecosystem. Such an assessment was authorized by governments through four international conventions and involved the participation of 2000 scientists from 95 countries. The project was modeled on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

The goal of the project was to provide an authoritative source of information that could be used by decision makers. The Assessment looked at the environment through a "people" lens, focusing on the role of the ecosystem in providing ecosystem services. These services can be divided into four categories:

- supporting (e.g., nutrient cycling, soil formation);

- provisioning (e.g., food, fresh water, fuel);
- regulating (e.g., climate regulation, disease regulation, water purification);
- cultural (e.g., aesthetic, recreational).

The project looked at how changes in the ecosystem were resulting in changes to the services provided as well as the resulting impact on people.

The Assessment found that over the last 50 years there has been a re-engineering of the planet. Reid said the scale of change has been phenomenal. While the population has more than doubled in that time period, the economic activity has grown six-fold. As a result, the potential pressure of humanity on the planet has grown twelve-fold. In real terms, this means that the following has occurred:

- five times as much water is now held in reservoirs as in rivers;
- carbon dioxide concentration is one-third higher now than in pre-industrial times;
- 35% of mangrove area has been lost in the last several decades.

In aggregate terms, these changes to the ecosystems have contributed to substantial net gains in human well-being and economic development. However, these gains have been achieved at a growing cost and, if not addressed, these changes will substantially diminish the benefits that future generations will obtain from the ecosystems. These costs cannot just be measured in terms of loss of wilderness, but in the loss of services that are essential to the achievement of the MDGs.

The Assessment looked at 24 different ecosystem services. Of those 24, only four had been enhanced (i.e., crops, livestock, aquaculture, climate regulation). Five of the ecosystem services had remained unchanged, and the remaining 15 had been degraded. Those degraded services include fresh water availability, capture fisheries, air quality regulation, and water purification and waste treatment. These degradations have real impacts on the populations. For example, in Asia, the degradation of mangroves and coral reefs means that more people are affected by tsunamis.

Generally speaking, Reid said the services that have been enhanced are those that provide private benefits to investors; while those that have been degraded affect the public good, but no individuals have incentives to protect them.

It is the poor who pay the greatest cost for these changes to the ecosystems. The Assessment found that 1.1 billion people are surviving on less than \$1 per day of income; 70% of these people live in rural areas that are highly dependent on ecosystems services.

Environmental degradation and the mismanagement of the ecosystems will be a barrier to the ability to meet the MDGs.

Of critical concern is the degradation of the dryland systems. These systems cover over 41% of the earth's surface and are home to 2 billion people. These people have a lower level of human well-being. In addition, as of the 1990s, these areas have experienced rapid population growth. It is not surprising that there is social instability and conflict in these areas.

The greatest challenge in the coming century will be climate change. The question is no longer whether the climate is changing, but rather how much it will change and what the impact of those changes will be. Some signs of climate change include the early arrival of spring in the United Kingdom and the collapse of a piece of the Antarctic ice shelf. As the climate continues to change, the sea levels will rise. There will also be a higher incidence of diseases and a lower level of agricultural productivity.

Again, these changes will take the greatest toll on the poor because, to a certain extent, the rich will be able to buffer themselves from the effects of climate change. While the wealthy will be the primary drivers of climate change, the greatest harm will come to the poor. "This is likely to be one of the greatest injustices of all times," Reid said.

Nutrient loading is another issue that will have to be managed in the coming years. Humans have already doubled the flow of reactive nitrogen on the continents, and the projection is that the flow will continue to increase in coming years. There is a need to correctly manage the application of fertilizer; mismanagement can lead to the formation of dead zones.

Reid warned the group that many of the short-term targets around the MDGs could be reached in ways that would be harmful to the environment and difficult to sustain over the long term. For instance, if it is not properly planned, infrastructure that is developed to help alleviate poverty could impact negatively on environmental sustainability.

Speaking of lessons learned from the Assessment process, Reid said that participation of stakeholders in decision making is one key to success.

Also, people need access to information to inform decision making and to hold decision makers accountable.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment is not just “doom and gloom.” Some of the best-case analyses conducted as part of the Assessment were ones that combined the goals of development and environmental sustainability. “We have to work together to ensure that we continue to meet our common goals,” Reid concluded.

Questions and Discussion

A participant asked about the feasibility of making the Earth Charter part of the UN Charter. He added that it might also be possible at the national level to entrench environmental provisions into a country’s constitution. This is an important target for people to have in mind, Reid replied. In fact, there is an active dialogue in Africa along these lines, where the timing is good because many countries are in the process of drafting their constitutions.

Cost and price issues should be tied together, a participant said. She added that the price paid by consumer nations for goods does not reflect their true cost. Discussion around this issue could be tied to Goal 7. Reid replied that there is an effort underway in some OECD countries to shift the tax burden to consumption. While some progress has been made, Reid added that the US will not approach this issue. “As long as we treat public goods as free and limitless, we will degrade them,” he stated.

In developing countries, the poor tend to pay more for things like water, Reid said. The programs that provide the water do not take into consideration the inherent right of people to water. The fact that goods have an economic value does not mean that people should have to pay more for them, he said. Water should be considered a public right, just like education.

Allison Coady, of Rights & Democracy’s Student Network thanked Reid for his lecture that highlighted the importance the environment and the centrality of the sustainability issue in the MDGs.

Roundtable 1—National Case Studies: Successes and Challenges

Chairperson: Lydia Hwitsum, Board of Directors, Rights & Democracy

Lydia Hwitsum introduced the panel and outlined the format for the roundtable. The focus would be on what can be learned to move beyond rhetoric to action.

China: Sharon Hom, Executive Director, Human Rights in China

Sharon Hom, Executive Director, Human Rights in China, discussed China's importance beyond its borders, its Millennium Development Goals 2004 report, and a number of problems with respect to the implementation of the MDGs. She explained that the focus on implementation was in keeping with the call to action, because, as she put it, "the finger pointing at the moon is not the moon, and the road map is not the landscape."

Over the past few years, China has become a global player and, therefore, it is very important to monitor its impact from a human rights standpoint. Hom referred to China's successful lobbying to cut labour rights from the platform of the World Summit on the Information Society. It has also blocked every Taiwanese NGO from accreditation to the World Forum on Information Society. She urged Canada to take a leading role in weighing the economic advantages of trade with China against its obvious human rights violations.

Hom said that the methodology of China's MDG report is suspect. The use of aggregated data at the national level fails to take into account the disparities between certain areas within the country and gives the false impression that China is making good progress on nine of the fourteen targets. Further, the assessment choices of "on track" and "maybe not on track" add to the vagueness. This is particularly significant with respect to education, gender equality, human rights abuses, and the environment, where China is definitely not on track and major intervention is required.

Turning to implementation, Hom recommended looking at the MDGs in a broader, international framework to help build on international trends and have different strategic interventions. The China report is misleading not only because it focuses on the macro national picture but because it

lacks input from civil society. Therefore, the information contained in it has to be viewed in terms of China's total control of information.

For Hom, it is necessary to use benchmarks to chart progress more accurately. The tremendous body of work that has already been done in this area can be used as a base to develop meaningful indicators to "measure, monitor, and therefore promote progress." As an example of the inadequacy of China's report on progress, Hom quoted from it, "The Chinese government is now more willing to talk about sensitive subjects." Hom's organization did an assessment to open dialogue, linking the benchmarks to human rights obligations and then linking these obligations to human rights indicators. Although data is extremely uneven, she found that once information was obtained about a particular issue, such as treatment of women, it was possible to discuss policy intervention.

An impediment to obtaining meaningful data is China's extreme policy of censorship. Hom noted that everything that matters is classified as secret. In fact, information can be reclassified retroactively depending upon consequences—e.g., a person may reveal unclassified information to a foreign journalist that results in criticism of China; at that point, the Chinese government may reclassify the information and imprison the individual without trial. In fact, Hom contended that in China this type of conference, in which information is freely exchanged and issues regarding how to improve are debated, would result in the imprisonment or disappearance of many of the participants.

Brazil: Luis Fernandes de Lara Resende, IPEA

Luis Fernando de Lara Resende of the Institute of Applied Economic Research, described how Brazil prepared its report on the MDGs. In May of 2004, the United Nations asked Brazil to prepare the report. Working groups composed of government and UN experts were established to look at each goal. Where possible, they considered the goals by race, gender, and region.

Brazil has committed to adapt the MDGs to the Brazilian reality. For example, Brazil proposes to eliminate hunger and extreme poverty before 2015. Although it is an agriculturally rich country, producing enough food to feed ten times its population, Brazil paradoxically has areas of extreme hunger.

De Lara Resende remarked that Brazil has already met the education goal. The major problem is improving quality and reducing each grade length, another case of adapting the MDGs to Brazil's reality.

Turning to the issue of gender equality, de Lara Resende reported that the participation of women in secondary and post-secondary education is higher than that of men. Unfortunately, women have a more difficult time in the labour market, and domestic violence remains a problem. Brazil has not met all of the specific objectives within the goal.

Although racial inequalities are not specified within the MDGs, they are extremely high in Brazil. De Lara Resende presented a chart depicting the hourly wages of individuals with more than 12 years of schooling. Not only white women are paid approximately 60% of the rates received by white men, similar discrepancy exists between the rate paid to blacks or mulattoes and that paid to white workers.

On the MDG related to health, there is a great deal of work yet to be done in Brazil. De Lara Resende said child mortality has diminished especially due to vaccination programs, but it is still quite high compared to developing nations' standards. Although maternal health is still a concern as the mortality rate is quite high, de Lara Resende stated that this is not a good indicator in Brazil because the data is not precise. HIV/AIDS has been slightly reduced due primarily to a drug distribution program.

There has been some progress on the seventh and eighth goals.

Implementation of the MDGs in Brazil depends very much on the goal. Some areas are on target, while others will require a great deal of investment and policy adjustment.

While the follow-up of social indicators is a very important reference for determining how life conditions are developing, de Lara Resende said he believes that the figures are not broad enough to measure the complexity of people's life quality. They are just a reference to a national average rather than a precise picture of a nation's economic, social, and political institutions.

De Lara Resende then discussed Brazil's interest in MDG strategy. On an international level, Brazil supports global efforts to achieve MDGs, multilateralism, and the opportunity to have an appropriate forum to discuss matters of mutual interest. On the domestic level, the MDGs might be a notable pressure mechanism on the execution of government policy, and increase social control over government programs.

In conclusion, de Lara Resende observed that approximately 100 developing nations have already completed their monitoring reports. He stated that this might not be the best possible agenda, but it is a good agenda and certainly better than any other.

Hwitsum invited the panel to turn to the questions in the program description of the roundtable. These included how to explain the discrepancies between successful and less successful implementation of the MDGs, lessons to be learned, and the inclusion of human rights.

**Bangladesh: Kamal Hossain, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court,
Bangladesh**

Kamal Hossain, Senior Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh, commented that he had found the discussion of strategies for change useful. He described human rights as a powerful force in the development of political strategy. There are those who will try to protect the status quo, to impede change, and there will be others who seek to bring about change for the benefit of the disempowered. Both human rights and democracy are necessary to bring about the changes needed to meet the legitimate entitlements of those who have been deprived of their rights. Every person, by virtue of being human, has entitlements that no one can negate.

Bolivia: Beatriz Muriel, Senior Economist, Grupo Integral

Beatriz Muriel, Senior Economist, Grupo Integral, noted various important social reforms that have occurred in Bolivia. The most important of these was the reform of education that was undertaken in 1994. This reform contemplated all aspects that could improve education, such as constructing schools in rural areas and requiring education in Spanish and another language in the primary grades. Muriel stated that in the area of health, the government provides free health care for pregnant women; there have also been improvements in sanitation and infant mortality.

Bolivia: Carlos Antonio Carrasco, Ambassador of Bolivia to Canada

Carlos Antonio Carrasco, Ambassador of Bolivia to Canada, observed that globalization has produced two main consequences. It has provoked the economic integration of countries in order to compete as an economic unit with the larger countries. It has also promoted "particularism," the

revival of all human aspirations, such as cultural and ethnic rights. Referring specifically to Bolivia's three indigenous population groups, Carrasco remarked that the challenge would be combining the MDGs with the preservation of cultural identity. He reflected on the six conditions identified by Jeffrey Sachs to end poverty. These are: human capital, business capital, infrastructure, natural arable land, public institutional capital, and knowledge. Carrasco finished by quoting Jeffrey Sachs "The whole society is at risk when any segment of the society is poorly educated."

Mali: Tiébilé Dramé, former Foreign Affairs Minister, Mali

Tiébilé Dramé, former Foreign Affairs Minister of Mali, explained the significance of June 8 in the democratic history of his country and stated that it was fitting that he addresses the conference on this date. Dramé noted that Mali benefits from Canada's help, especially in the areas of health and education, but he stated that Canada could do more by encouraging donor countries to implement the Monterey Consensus. In addition, Canada could assist in much needed reforms in justice and administration within Mali. Dramé asked Canada to support the Blair Report and to work for the democratization of the UN.

Mali: Mamadou Bandiougou Diawara, Ambassador of Mali to Canada

The final speaker was Mamadou Bandiougou Diawara, Ambassador of Mali to Canada. He stated that three years ago Mali published a framework of policies and strategies for the MDGs. The three priorities it identified were institutional development, human development, and infrastructure development. Diawara observed that Canada has supported Mali in keeping with these three priorities, but echoed Dramé with respect to the need for assistance in justice reform. Diawara said the African countries face many difficulties with the MDGs. Mali depends on the efforts of the international community to assist it in achieving a strong economy. Although it is trying to eradicate its burden of debt, Mali will have to borrow to pay it off. Diawara reminded participants of the need to include human rights in all dimensions of the MDGs.

Hwitsum summarized the proceedings, referring to the need for reliable, extensive and disaggregated data, the need to link benchmarks to human rights, the need for disaggregated data, the need to strategize to bring

about changes in human rights, and the need to recognize the richness of cultural diversity. She noted that Canada has a role to play in mobilizing the international community.

Questions and Discussion

A delegate noted that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has committed gross human rights violations, yet many governments are reluctant to criticize due to trade and economic interests. However, since last November when *The Epoch Times* newspaper revealed these atrocities in a series of editorials entitled “Nine Commentaries on the Communist Party,” 2.2 million Chinese people have publicly withdrawn from the CCP. This peaceful grassroots movement is of historical significance, yet it did not catch world media attention until the previous week when a Chinese diplomat in Australia defected and publicly announced his withdrawal from the CCP. This was followed by news of another defection—that of a Chinese official previously employed in the 610 Office, an agency that oversees the persecution of Falun Gong. The delegate asked how human rights promoters and people in the government, business, and other sectors can play a positive role in this peaceful movement toward true freedom in China.

Sharon Hom noted that her organization, Human Rights in China, is making efforts to focus on different business sectors, such as information technology, to develop best practices when dealing with China. Businesses should be cognizant of possible complicity with human rights abuses and of opportunities to exercise corporate leadership to protect human rights. She invited industry sector representatives to join the effort with her organization to road-test these best practices in China.

Another delegate commended de Lara Resende for his MDG economic and social analysis report and the variants he raised due to race, age, and gender. He asked de Lara Resende how the process of achieving the MDGs can take into consideration the great physical and regional diversity of Brazil and the inequities among the wealthy and the extremely poor. In particular, since the Brazilian Constitution came into being in 1988 there has been tremendous democratic debate and great political diversity. The delegate further asked if de Lara Resende was confident that the old military influences have completely disappeared.

De Lara Resende responded that maintaining economic growth to avoid inflation, manage Brazil's significant debt burden, and reduce the very high unemployment rate require much greater investment, especially in Brazil's worst-off northeast indigenous Amazon area. For Brazil, the agricultural sector is an important focus, as is work on the financial system.

A participant noted that a great deal of interesting discussion has been heard on issues such as education, health, and various other objectives, but with the exception of Stephen Lewis who spoke eloquently on the subject, not very much has been said about violence against women. Emphasizing that this topic should be among the highest priorities on the world's agenda, she asked the presenters to speak about work in this area in their respective countries.

Hossain noted that Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries, has had remarkable success in reducing gender disparities in primary and secondary schools because of its strong women's rights movement, contributions from its large NGO sector, and significant public spending. Future projections show, however, that deficits in external financing must be addressed to ensure that this important progress is sustained.

Muriel said Bolivia has seen some reduction in the gender gap in schooling and maternal health. Institutions are promoting women's participation in political and social contexts, and there are anti-discrimination programs in place. In particular, more institutions are helping provide opportunities to indigenous women, who represent the most disadvantaged group, in education and the labour force.

An audience member stated that in Mali, women are better educated than men, with seven years versus five and one-half years of study, since men must leave school early to enter the workforce. Moreover, women retire five years earlier than men and their lower wages are reversing with time. However, domestic violence remains high and is a serious problem that is not easy to address. Women are reluctant to go to the police and file complaints.

The participant further asked what various countries are doing in terms of legislation to combat violence against women.

Hom said violence against women in China begins with girl children and even before, through infanticide, sex-selective abortion, abandonment of girl infants, trafficking of girls and women, etc. The UN's efforts to end child labour and its Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Com-

mittee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights put the onus on the Chinese government to provide answers. However, legislation is not enough—it is just the beginning. The challenge is to change the violence deeply embedded in the Chinese culture, language, and politics. For example, many shockingly negative cultural values about women are embedded in Chinese expressions. And in one project, Hom had to change the Chinese title of a workshop from “Women’s Human Rights” to “Women’s Rights and Human Rights” before being allowed to do the workshop. Therefore, Hom cautioned against taking it for granted that women’s rights will always be put on an equal footing with human rights.

Dramé pointed out that Mali has a process underway to take into account progress in international law in order to reread laws concerning families, and women’s and children’s rights. Notably, there are several well-known women involved from government, academia, and religion.

A delegate asked what types of relations exist among the developing countries represented by the panel. What types of support do they offer each other, and what results are there to the concept of South-South cooperation?

Dramé said that since the 1960s China has become increasingly present in Africa in its move to provide greater support for new developments in the world. In Mali, Chinese companies have been involved in industry, real estate, and public works, building many bridges and roads, and many Mali business people are going to China as well. African countries are also building new relationships with Brazil and other Portuguese-speaking countries. Although not yet very visible, more and more South-South links are indeed being created.

Hom noted that China has always had a global dimension, marked in the past by enterprise-building empires. For example, in the Ming dynasty hundreds of ships went to Africa and developed major trading relations. The Chinese were very respectful of the Africans, and it was not until the 19th century that the beginnings of a racist view of Africa were seen in China. Currently, China is often a very important leading voice for developing countries, for example at the WTO meeting in Cancun and in the UN’s inclusion of the contribution and participation of NGOs.

Developing countries are forging very important relations, Hom said. NGO counterparts work together to address a range of issues, from trade and state terrorism to collaborating across regional boundaries and learn-

ing from each other's experiences on dealing with different governments and different agendas.

One of the presenters said that to his knowledge not many Latin American interregional cooperative relationships exist, except in Brazil and Cuba and a small number of other countries. There are diplomatic relations made in the context of the UN, however, and there is trade competition with African countries on agriculture-derived products to enter the US and European markets. In Latin American, ignorance with respect to Africa is worrisome. There is a need for more cultural communication on both sides, as well as with Asian countries. Horizontal South-South cooperation should further be encouraged.

De Lara Resende said that Brazil is working in the multilateral sector on export action with Argentina, food security with China and India, etc. The government is proposing new ways to finance the fight against hunger, such as through taxation on exports.

Although language barriers exist and make communication difficult, a delegate pointed out some examples of relations through culture between Africa and Latin America: football and other sports, music and dance, the practice of voodoo, etc. With respect to Asia, a new phenomenon in many African countries is that there are now many more Chinese people. Starting out in the restaurant business, they are now engaging in small industries. Globalization is pushing everyone together, and more and more Southern countries at similar levels of development have interest in collaborating. More African heads of state are going to Asia to learn how things are done in those countries.

A participant suggested going beyond simple bilateral relations to focus on common causes that all countries defend—vital questions such as those of life, death, and survival. For example, in the conflict between Brazil and the US on cotton subsidies, African countries have been third parties suffering negative consequences. He predicted that on certain questions African and Latin American countries would increasingly collaborate with one another. He also noted that India and China are increasingly becoming non-regional shareholders in development banks that are in fact regional and sub-regional in nature.

Hwitsum wrapped up the session by thanking all for their valuable contributions and sharing their great depth and breadth of knowledge.

Closing comments

Claire L’Heureux-Dubé, former Canadian Supreme Court judge

The Honourable Claire L’Heureux-Dubé, former Canadian Supreme Court judge, noted the clear consensus from the conference that idealism and rhetoric must be translated into implementation and reality. Strategy and political will are fundamental, and a broader human rights framework will provide the needed common language—or common denominator, with justice and compassion at the forefront. In this context, she highlighted that basic human rights all relate to the inherent dignity of all people, whose claims to liberty, equality, and privacy must be inviolable by the state.

Moreover, a culture of human rights at all levels of society must be entrenched worldwide, including social, economic, and cultural rights, through legislation and other means. For example, some countries have made good efforts in education. However, central to human rights is gender equality, encompassing the issue of the feminization of poverty, yet countries still often pay lip service to international documents they have signed and ratified on this single biggest struggle in the world.

Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation

Gerry Barr, President and CEO of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation, reflected on Canada’s role in achieving the MDGs. He noted several upcoming salient moments for Canada to advance international collective action on global poverty and human rights: the G8 in June, the UN Summit in September, and the Development Round at year-end. Another key initiative is the Make Poverty History campaign, which, through its website and ad campaigns, aims to provoke political accountability and actions by governments worldwide on key poverty eradication targets.

As for what Canada can do, Barr first stressed that Canada must, beyond meeting quantifiable targets, provide more and better aid to ensure the MDGs address causes of poverty, such as the marginalization of the poor. Ensuring better aid practices requires legislation on aid spending that puts poverty eradication and human rights at the centre.

Second, Canada should commit to clear timelines for achieving the internationally agreed 0.7% of GDP target for international development assistance. There is an affordable way to do this. Barr suggested accelerating re-investment in aid spending, enhancing that increase as fiscally allowable, and rolling the increase into the International Assistance Envelope.

Third, Canada should become a champion of outright debt cancellation for the poorest countries in the world by creating a proposal that combines parts of the UK and US proposals. The global debt problem needs a permanent solution, and Canada can take leadership by pressing for 100% cancellation and using gold sales at the IMF, loan loss reserves of the World Bank, and aid as necessary. This must be accompanied by an increased aid flow.

Lastly, Barr urged Canada to advocate for international trade justice, in particular ensuring fair and predictable trade rules for developing economies, by applying its wealth of knowledge on mixed and balanced approaches to open markets and trade liberalization.

DAY TWO

Keynote Address

Chairperson: Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy

Jean-Louis Roy introduced Ablassé Ouedraogo, Senior Advisor to the President of the African Development Bank. Because of his experience on national, continental, and international levels, Ouedraogo is an excellent representative of the issues discussed at the conference, and it is a pleasure to have him with us.

Ablassé Ouedraogo, Senior Advisor to the President of the African Development Bank.

Ouedraogo's presentation covered the progress that has been made on the MDGs in Africa and the steps that must be taken to improve the situation. He spoke of the need to combine resources with good organizations and political will. As well, he stressed the importance of placing human rights at the centre of the MDGs.

Ouedraogo explained that, because there are 53 African countries, he was unable to give specific figures on the progress each nation has made with the MDGs, but he could offer some general observations. Implementation of the eight MDGs requires the approval of rational, well-placed policies that encourage broad economic growth. Since Africa is an area of particular poverty, it is extremely unlikely that it will be able to implement the MDGs unless there is vigorous intervention.

Ouedraogo addressed each goal individually and assessed the progress being made. He described the first MDG—eradicate extreme poverty—as the very basis of all the other goals, because “if you are hungry, you lack

dignity” and are unable to respond to the other goals. Unfortunately, although there has been some achievement, sub-Saharan Africa will not meet this goal by 2015 due to the lack of capacity in both the public and private sectors.

On the second goal—achieve universal primary education—progress has been as expected. Ouedraogo stated that success has been mitigated by the lack of opportunities for further study. There is a need to accelerate activities to develop infrastructures and improve the quality of teacher training.

Ouedraogo spoke of great strides being made in northern Africa with respect to the third MDG—promote gender equality and empower women. In Tunisia women are now present in all areas of public life. By contrast, other countries need to improve their capability in education and implementing policy on gender equality.

Progress on the fourth, fifth and six MDGs has been uneven and health care needs to be strengthened.

In the area of the seventh MDG—ensure environmental sustainability—poverty remains a great problem. In Africa it is a struggle for survival, for each person to have a glass of clean water.

With respect to the eighth MDG—build a global partnership for development—Ouedraogo termed the poverty and stagnation in Africa the greatest tragedy of modern times. Although Canadians have the necessities of life, it is essential that they continue to work to ensure developing countries have the same opportunities.

Ouedraogo concluded that despite advances in some of the African countries, the majority will be unable to achieve the MDGs by 2015, as the situation currently exists.

To ease the achievement of the MDGs, it is imperative for Africa to maintain peace and social harmony, because it is not possible to reach goals in a “situation of chaos.” Conflict is born where people have no hope; on the other hand, satisfied people do not want to go to war. On the economic front, to attract the private sector investment that Africa requires, it must reform its legal and judicial framework. It must also fight against corruption and reform the financial sector, as well as invest in health and education.

The role of the developed world is to mobilize finances and provide increased support to Africa. In addition, partners have to reduce the burden

of debt for developing countries. Currently Africa reimburses more than it receives. Further, developed countries must improve access to international markets for African nations.

Finally, the mission of the African Development Bank is to help African countries according to their specific needs. For middle income countries, for example, the Bank assists in administration and financial support initiatives.

The crisis of poverty is most extreme in Africa, where the people are the most marginalized, and there is the most conflict and disease. Ouedraogo added that it is very difficult to have stability if the world continues to move at two speeds, one for the haves and another for the have-nots. Developed countries must feel great pressure to find a mechanism to improve the African situation

The situation does not require large projects. It is not even necessary for the international community to bring new proposals. All that is required is an undertaking to live up to its current commitments. Such actions would help reduce the gaps between developed and developing countries. Canada must show the way in assuming its responsibilities and commitments, especially with regard to human rights.

In response to a question concerning the disparities in Africa, Ouedraogo noted that there are disparities everywhere, but the important issue is to find appropriate solutions, and Africans are trying to do this. Concerning agricultural subsidies, Ouedraogo replied that the subsidy issue is important, but that it will take time to resolve.

The final question related to the horrific situation that exists in the Great Lakes area of Africa. Although development has brought some measure of peace and has discouraged corruption, there are still incidents of conflict and even genocide. The United Nations has been involved to help solve the issues, but the inhabitants have to commit to resolving the situation. Africa has the first responsibility to ensure that the money it receives is used for development.

Plenary Session 2—Alternatives for International Cooperation

Chairperson: Stephen Baranyi, Principle Researcher, Conflict Resolution, North-South Institute

Stephen Baranyi introduced the four speakers, emphasising the importance of having different perspectives, and approaches on the issue of international cooperation.

Arjun Sengupta, UN Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty

Arjun Sengupta asked the participants to adopt a new platform: to devise a Canadian initiative for international cooperation that focuses on human rights. Such a Canadian initiative would be particularly fitting because it was Lester B. Pearson who changed the paradigm of international cooperation. Prior to Pearson, international cooperation was predominantly based on military and strategic considerations. It was Pearson who shifted the focus to the need for development as a way to create peace, harmony, and mutual interest. Pearson looked at the question of development as important in and of itself. It is this philosophy that is at the root of a human rights approach.

When there is an acceptance of human rights, there is also an acceptance on the part of the international community of an obligation to make sure those rights are realized. It is incumbent on the international community to create an environment that will help to realize those rights. Some of these enabling factors include trade, debt, technology transfer, and financial flows.

However, creating the appropriate environment and fostering the enabling factors is not enough and does not automatically link to the fulfillment of human rights obligations. For instance, free trade may exist, but the proceeds from that trade may go to a limited fraction of the country's population continuing to exclude vulnerable groups.

As a result, there is a need for the creation of national policies. It is difficult to talk about international cooperation without simultaneously talking about the creation of a development environment at the national level.

For the international obligation to be fulfilled, a number of factors must be present:

- There must be sufficient momentum.
- There must be a mechanism of assessment in place to determine how much aid is needed.
- There must be a national policy in place to ensure that the aid provided does what was intended.

These types of international obligations should be binding in a type of contract, Sengupta argued.

He also suggested the creation of a contingent financing body. All participating countries could pledge 0.7% of their GDP to a fund that would be invoked only when there was a need. This type of arrangement would help with burden sharing among developed countries. Such an initiative could be championed by Canada, taking the lead in a new international dialogue and subsequent activities.

Sigrun Skogly, Senior Lecturer in Law, Lancaster University, UK

Sigrun Skogly said her situation is unique; as an academic, she is “blissfully removed from the necessity to be diplomatic.” As such, she would play devil’s advocate.

Skogly is hesitant to distribute legal obligation based on the wealth of a particular state; instead, it should be based on the state’s level of commitment to international law. The obligation that is triggered in any state would be based on its activities and resources. To illustrate, she said that the first foreign country to offer the United States assistance after a series of floods was Bangladesh (which had experience).

Legal obligations to provide international assistance do exist in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, as well as the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The contents of these documents, however, are not as far-reaching as some people would want.

It is unrealistic to put a price tag on human rights obligations and tell wealthy countries that they have to pay. Human rights protection is more than resources, it is a question of quality (i.e., trade and military, diplomatic, scientific, and cultural cooperation). As such, she said that the 0.7% target (even if it is met by all countries) will not necessarily fulfill the human rights obligation.

Skogly turned her attention to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, particularly Article 2(1).

Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation, especially economic and technical, to the maximum of its available resources, with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the rights recognized in the present Covenant by all appropriate means, including particularly the adoption of legislative measures.

This article was not particularly controversial when the document was drafted. In fact, the United States thought that stating “economic and technical” was too limiting. This article outlines that not only do states have an obligation to provide assistance and cooperation, but that assistance and cooperation has to be in line with human rights considerations.

Essentially, states have an obligation not to violate human rights, to ensure that their cooperation is not making the situation worse, and to ensure that any third parties over which they have jurisdiction are not contributing to human rights violations.

Turning to the concept of the obligation to fulfill, Skogly said there should instead be an obligation to support fulfillment—an obligation to work in partnership with the recipient states.

Asbjorn Lovbraek, Senior Advisor, Evaluation Department, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD)

Asbjorn Lovbraek said that, in his previous experience with the Asian Development Bank, Canada and Norway were almost always in agreement about the principles of development policy. In the past, they tended to differ only when national security interests were involved.

Internationally, the emphasis is now on trying to achieve something even if consensus is not possible. In essence, those countries that are willing to do something should try. Norway has consistently been part of the process to try to make changes in development policy. In some instances, Canada and Norway have worked together (e.g., trying to get human security back on the international agenda, engaging in plurilateral dialogue on human rights in Asia).

Norway has exceeded the 0.7% target for quite some time; the issue now is how to get to 1% and beyond 1%. He added that the quality and effectiveness of the aid matters, as does the quantity.

Why was it possible to achieve the 0.7% target in Norway, while it has not been possible in Canada? Both countries are rich and have robust economies. Neither country has a budget deficit. One difference that deserves further examination is the fact that Norway has a vibrant civil society, and that a share of the money that goes to organizations in developing countries flows through NGOs and civil society organizations in Norway.

Norway developed an action plan to meet the MDGs. This plan was developed through a government-wide exercise, which means that coherent policy issues can now be put on the political agenda in Norway. Lovbraek added that a comprehensive development policy was sent to parliament in 2004. Discussions about this policy were framed in the context of the MDGs. There is also a commitment to address progress towards the achievement of the MDGs as part of the annual budget process. The development policy has also become an agenda for human rights because the 2004 policy paper focuses on human dignity, and because a Plan of Action for Human Rights was presented to parliament in 1999. The question before the country now is how to incorporate human rights into operational development cooperation activities. He said that a handbook of human rights impact assessments has recently been developed by NORAD.

He challenged Canada to join Norway, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands as a country that reports on its own national achievement of MDG 8. He added that the requirement for developed countries to report on MDG 8 should be expanded to include a full reporting on all of the goals.

David Moloney, Vice-President, Policy Branch, Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)

David Moloney recommended participants read some of the background information prepared for the conference. He said it posed a number of questions regarding human rights and development that many people are already struggling with.

Moloney added that the MDGs do not capture the full essence of the Millennium Declaration. If the focus remains on poverty reduction and fulfilling the MDGs, does that necessarily mean that progress will also be made on human rights?

Referring to the previous speaker and his assertion of a like-mindedness between Norway and Canada, Moloney said that CIDA has been reporting to Parliament about the effectiveness of Canada's responses to the MDGs. He added that there is a plan to publish a national report ahead of the Millennium Summit. This report will cover all eight goals.

It is CIDA's contention that the MDGs cannot be achieved without an examination of human rights. There are five sectors covered by the MDGs (good governance, health, education, environment, and private sector development) as well as gender equity. None of these areas can be examined in isolation. Moloney said there is a need for a coherent and integrated approach that looks at the linkages between the sectors, with a focus on developing well-functioning societies and communities.

He added that gender equality is vital to the achievement of the MDGs on a sustainable basis. Women need to participate in decision making and they need to be assured of their reproductive and sexual rights. They also need to have control over their individual financial assets and to be assured of basic education. Gender-specific concerns in terms of the environment are also essential, he said. A woman's ability to exert control over her own sexual and reproductive rights is a key aspect of making change permanent.

Moloney added that CIDA is putting a focus on children's participation in the decision making that affects their lives.

Questions and Discussion

A participant asked Moloney to explain Canada's decision to concentrate aid on 25 identified countries, each of which has a certain level of economic security. He said this approach can be contrasted to that of Sweden, where the focus is on providing aid to the least-developed countries.

While Canada is focusing on the human rights of people in other countries, Canada's own indigenous peoples continue to suffer from human rights abuses, another participant said. Indigenous peoples in Canada are trying to assert their rights to land and self-determination and to overcome the effects of colonialism. She added that Canada is currently ranked 47th or 48th in its treatment of indigenous people.

Another participant said he is frustrated by the fact that fundamental rights are consistently bypassed when trade deals are negotiated. He

added that there are a lot of legally binding elements to the various international covenants; however, they are not enforced.

Referring to the call for innovation, a participant said there are currently some innovative proposals on the international table to provide sustainable and reliable sources of funding. These proposals include the airline tax and the currency transaction tax. He asked if the governments in Canada or Norway were ready to join either pilot project.

A participant asked how Canada will implement a whole-of-government approach to its foreign policy. She added that some countries are upset because they are not on the list of countries put forward by Canada. She said there is a need for Canada to publish the criteria used to select countries for that list.

African countries are not waiting for other countries to meet their commitments for them; it is time for African countries to meet their own commitments, a participant said. She added that there is a need for some basic social development to occur in order to see human rights obligations fulfilled in Africa. It is important that CIDA work within the existing agendas of the different African countries. She said it is also important to have a thematic approach to aid rather than to simply choose some countries and not others. She added that it is impossible to speak about human rights without making a commitment to tackle extreme poverty.

Sengupta returned to the question of quality versus quantity of aid. He said the two are not independent. He also reiterated the need for a burden-sharing agreement.

Skogly said that as long as states treat human rights as something that arise periodically (e.g., during discussions in Geneva), any interventions will have no effect. The commitment to human rights needs to be carried out in concrete ways, she said. She added that there are not many incentives for states to deal with human rights; this is why civil societies are so important.

Lovbraek said that countries cannot forget their own national obligations. He said this was brought home to him when he realized that some of Norway's international obligations were not part of its national legislation. This is an issue the Norwegian government is currently addressing.

Moloney said the Canadian foreign policy document committed to focus two-thirds of Canada's bilateral assistance on 25 countries over the next 10 years. He added that the criteria used to select the 25 countries are in-

cluded in the document. He said the countries included on that list are among the poorest in the world. There is also a requirement for the countries to have a specific level of governance in place so that the aid will be used effectively. Canada has to focus where it can make a difference, Moloney said. However, it will continue to support countries not included on the list.

He said there is a need for open dialogue with countries receiving aid. It is imperative that recipient countries identify their own internal needs.

Roundtable 2: Mobilizing Canadians: A Cross Sector Perspective on Achieving the MDGs

**Chairs: Wayne McKay, Chairperson of the Board, Rights & Democracy;
Razmik Panossian, Director of Policy, Programmes and Planning,
Rights & Democracy.**

Luncheon: Mobilizing Political Parties

Aileen Carroll, Minister of International Cooperation

Aileen Carroll noted that reducing poverty is this century's greatest challenge, and achieving the MDGs will be a turning point in the international agenda. Canada is increasing efforts to focus aid where it has the expertise and resources to make a lasting difference.

Integral to aid programming are the MDGs, and integrated into Canada's action plan for cooperation and development is the principle of human rights. Reaching higher funding goals is a key issue, and Carroll highlighted the recent budget increase allocated to Rights & Democracy—by nearly \$3 million annually over three years. This funding will help support priority areas, including women's rights and Aboriginal rights.

Carroll underlined the importance of investing wisely while increasing aid. This is why Canada raised the aid budget by 30% last year and has committed to a minimum 8% annual increase in development assistance, more than tripling the aid volume between 2001 and 2015.

Moreover, Canadians demand sound fiscal management. Noting that Canada has a budget surplus and is the only G8 member not in deficit, Carroll emphasized that aid quality and effectiveness are as important as

quantity. Canada's International Policy Statement addresses this by focusing on key factors and countries to tackle poverty. These changes are essential for improving the aid program.

Helena Guergis, Critic for International Cooperation, Conservative Party

Helena Guergis said instead of breaking promises and misleading Canadians on the nation's finances, the Liberal government should live up to commitments and be fiscally responsible and transparent in meeting the 0.7% goal for international development assistance.

Extreme poverty in the world and enormous disparities between well-developed and least-developed countries cast a moral shadow on Canada and other developed nations. Canada must share its good fortunes and help others achieve sustainable socioeconomic goals.

In 1969, Canada signed onto Lester B. Pearson's development agenda, and it was the good and right thing to do. Yet in the last 13 years Paul Martin has slashed foreign aid by billions. The 0.7% target is an honourable goal, and Canadians are among the most generous givers to development projects worldwide, yet with an Official Development Assistance increase of only 8% annually, the Liberals will not reach the 0.7% target by 2015.

To restore Canada's reputation in international development and live up to responsibility to the MDGs, the Conservative Party is committed to increasing Canada's aid budget and reaching the 0.7% target. It has introduced a legislative mandate to ensure that annual reports to Parliament show how Canadian money is being spent effectively. However, Conservatives believe that Canada could do the right thing without the MDGs being legally binding.

Gilles Duceppe, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

The September 11 terrorist attempts also attacked the values of liberty, democracy, and freedom, said Gilles Duceppe. There may be a temptation to react strongly, yet restraint in the spirit of these values is itself a victory against terrorism.

Terrorism feeds on injustice, and global security inevitably goes through development. Moreover, the weapon of greatest destruction is poverty, especially extreme poverty, affecting health, education, the environment,

and children. Thus the MDGs are of enormous importance. In this context, Duceppe criticized the Canadian government's continuing refusal to fix a timetable to reach the 0.7% goal by 2015. The Bloc Québécois will continue to exert pressure on the Liberal government to commit to this goal.

On Canada's obligations toward human rights, Duceppe highlighted several cases, including those of Maher Arar and William Sampson, Canadians who were imprisoned and tortured in Syria and Saudi Arabia respectively. Duceppe said Canadian diplomatic efforts must become more efficient, as set out in the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Moreover, he called on the Prime Minister to improve appeal mechanisms in Canada, prevent the deportation of refugees at risk of torture, and live up to international promises to protect human rights and dignity.

Jack Layton, Leader of the New Democratic Party (NDP)

Jack Layton noted that Alexa McDonough's recent presentation at the Foreign Affairs Committee of Parliament is to be celebrated. Her motion to put Canada on track to achieve the 0.7% goal by 2015 passed unanimously, a result of global momentum and efforts by all parties and NGOs across Canada. The motion requires legislation to ensure increased funding in the next federal budget. It will go to the House in the next few days, and Layton urged all parties to help pass the motion; additional money will save lives.

Noting that the international stage has been set for the MDGs, Layton highlighted the global Make Poverty History campaign. Its white band symbol calls for building political will to end extreme poverty. Instead of making speeches, Layton said Canada's government should act, just as Canadians acted in response to the December 2004 tsunami. The test of words will be how parliamentarians vote on McDonough's motion.

Layton also spoke on sustainability. The recent Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report shows the planet rapidly losing capability to provide the environmental services of life, and Canada's terrible record on climate change and greenhouse gas emission highlights the failure by its government to act.

Jim Harris, Leader of the Green Party

Instead of increasing spending on militarism, Jim Harris suggested that real defence is ending childhood poverty. Currently 1.1 million children still live in poverty in Canada, or nearly one child in six, 15 years after every political party committed to ending poverty among Canadian children. Similarly, real ecosystem defence is providing food and safe drinking water to all. As the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment report indicates, substantial change is needed to avoid significant ecosystem collapse. Developed societies are responsible, Harris said.

The above are real reasons the Canadian government must immediately meet the 0.7% of GDP commitment for international development assistance. Civil society organizations can also make a tremendous difference by investing in efforts such as eliminating hunger globally, providing reproductive healthcare for women, and ensuring environmental sustainability.

Harris underlined that there cannot be social justice without ecological security and elimination of extreme poverty. Those most at risk are the least advantaged groups. Measures of economic progress must take these considerations into account. The Green Party is representing ideas and voices not heard now as it works toward defining true progress.

Mobilizing the Private Sector**Adine Mees, President & CEO, Canadian Business for Social Responsibility**

Adine Mees explained that Canadian Business for Social Responsibility (CBSR) is a network of more than 150 companies, including large multinationals, working to improve their social, environmental, and financial performance.

The theme of the conference aligns with CBSR's work associated with the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) business network. Moreover, CBSR recently launched a project entitled "Human Rights: Everyone's Business," aimed at advancing companies' understanding and practice of human rights and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The project is comprised of a Business and Human Rights Summit in October, a research paper on business and human rights in the Canadian and interna-

tional contexts, and a practical workshop on incorporating human rights into existing management systems.

Mees then addressed the MDGs. Globalization has made Canadian companies influential in many developing countries. With the growing international demand for transparency and accountability in social, economic, and environmental practices, important opportunities exist for the private sector to develop policies and practices toward achieving the MDGs. The following issues should be considered while linking businesses to the MDGs:

- Businesses need targets and timelines and must be involved in things that work.
- Businesses need accountability and must understand what people are committing to and accountable for.
- The linkage of business goals to the MDGs must be clearly articulated.
- There must be a chance of success, and people must work together practically and functionally.
- Instead of taking pity, businesses prefer to tap into the remarkable resilience, ingenuity, enterprise, and drive of those living in poverty.

Despite excellent effort by a few, Canadian Corporate Social responsibility needs to be further developed. CCSR's 2004 feasibility study for the UNGC provided opportunities for raising awareness. Moreover, the International Business Leaders Forum and the United Nations Development Programme produced a report in 2003 entitled *Business and the MDGs: A Framework for Action*, which stated sound business reasons for contributing toward the MDGs:

- ability to operate in a secure and stable society;
- ability to manage costs and market risks and impact;
- ability to harness market reach potential.

Many of the MDGs fit into the business sphere of influence, Mees said, through the workplace, marketplace, supply chain, public policy dialogue, and advocacy activities. It is a good and smart business decision to align with the MDGs and human rights through CSR policy.

Kaz Flinn, Vice President, Government Affairs and CSR, Scotiabank

Kaz Flinn commended the cross-sector approach of involving government, NGOs, and large and small business in achieving the MDGs within a human rights-based framework. She noted that Scotiabank operates in nearly 50 countries and established CSR goals a year ago. Its CSR concept, which encompasses community, environment, employees, customers, and governance, is closely linked to the MDGs.

The main goals of Scotiabank's 2004/2005 strategic plan include building companywide support for CSR and establishing a CSR Advisory Committee consisting of senior representation from all business and support lines.

What role can a business play in achieving the MDGs? Flinn suggested devising a plan of how a company can contribute most effectively toward the MDGs, tying the plan to core business activities, and formulating solid business reasons to address social and environmental issues. For example, the health of a company is tied to the community where its employees live, high-calibre employees and people in general want to work for socially responsible companies, and the MDGs provide innovative opportunities for new markets and business.

The financial sector can address the MDGs through a number of tools and policies, including financial education seminars for the poor, best practices in project finance lending, and support of female employees and women generally. For example, Scotiabank engages in many philanthropic and development activities internationally and in Canada, including contributions to education, health, social services, arts and culture, and environmental protection and sustainability in the community.

Flinn listed three tools/policies most linked to Scotiabank's core business functions:

- Related to Goal 8, Scotiabank is helping build soft infrastructure for global commerce, following the "Equator Principles" approach for financial institutions, which sets safeguards for financing environmentally and socially sensitive projects.
- Scotiabank invests in microfinance, with strategies that include non-traditional forms of small loans and bundling of financial services for the very poor, most of whom are women.

- Scotiabank is also promoting gender equality and empowering women, aligned with Goal 2, by working toward increasing the number of women in senior management.

Flinn summarized that companies of any size can do their part, a company's financial success is directly linked to the wellbeing of the community in which it operates, and success stories are based on collaboration, with different stakeholders offering unique expertise and perspectives.

Ed Broadbent, MP, NDP; Former President of Rights & Democracy

Ed Broadbent spoke on the work of the Canadian Democracy and Corporate Accountability Commission, which completed a report three years ago. Broadbent was one of the co-chairs. The Commission's report, entitled *The New Balance Sheet: Corporate Profits and Responsibility in the 21st Century*, resulted from a cross-Canada tour reaching out to the business community and its critics.

Examining corporate activities and human rights in the context of globalization, the report discusses some real concerns, notably from the resource extraction sector in developing countries. Many corporate representatives indicate that, alongside maximizing profits, companies abroad should also realize international environmental and human rights laws, particularly the International Labour Organization (ILO) core workers' rights standards.

A poll of Canadians showed that more than 80% expected the government to make a global effort to have international human rights norms applicable to Canadian companies in their overseas operations. If this cannot succeed within three years, 84% of Canadians agree that the government should act unilaterally to require companies to adhere to standards.

The report made 24 doable and practical recommendations to the federal government in 2002, some of which many Canadian companies were already doing, yet today not much has changed. For example, the OECD guidelines for CSR remain voluntary despite the Commission's recommendation.

Addressing the argument that compliance should be voluntary, and companies should be persuaded in the interest of profits and moral obligations, Broadbent firmly argued that legislation is needed. Just as driving on the right hand side of the road is not optional, citizens cannot wait

for companies to do the right thing voluntarily when Canadian mining companies and others are doing serious damage abroad with respect to human rights and the environment. Broadbent underlined the case of Talisman in Sudan; a law should have been passed to deal with the situation, he said.

Broadbent noted that the previous week saw the first conviction and sentencing in a Canadian court of a Canadian who abused children abroad. A similar approach is needed in dealing with companies that abuse rights abroad. The fact that a domestic law was passed last year to make companies accountable for the health and safety of employees in Canada is a good start. This kind of law is needed to protect employees working for Canadian companies overseas. When it comes to upholding the core meaning of human rights and dignity, there can be no talk of voluntarism; Canadian companies must be required by law to do the right thing. Broadbent urged the Canadian government to take leadership on this issue.

Questions and Discussion

A delegate asked what legislation other countries have to enforce protection for workers abroad; another asked what specific legislation should be in place; and a participant gave some examples of companies promoting public awareness of the MDGs, such as via shopping bags and milk cartons in Brazil.

Mees pointed out that often companies are forced to sign agreements but the process does not consider what is required of that commitment, and then the expected change fails to occur. She suggested effective partnerships between companies and NGOs/civil society that include dialogue and trust will work better to institute change.

Broadbent recommended that the CSR function should be a senior position, CSR should specifically include human rights, and companies should have external rather than internal social audits. Moreover, the government should provide assistance through embassies abroad and through trade missions led by the Prime Minister. And companies should meet minimum CSR standards and goals in order to participate and derive benefit.

Flinn said companies should build MDG awareness, relate business goals around social responsibility, and focus on transparency in CSR reporting.

A delegate appealed for measures to encourage companies to be accountable abroad rather than exploiting riches, as in African countries. Another asked Scotiabank to take forward the human rights issue within the Equator Principles to the International Finance Corporation (IFC), which has been silent on this issue.

Another delegate supported Broadbent's view that in reality companies are not translating moral values and human rights principles into practice. For example, high-tech companies are selling surveillance software to China that will be used to suppress dissidents, and Falun Gong practitioners who are former prisoners in China report that Chinese labour camps are using forced labour to make products sold on the world market.

Flinn expressed confidence that the IFC will move incrementally to address human rights. She also expressed support for passing regulation to protect workers' rights, and she encouraged more financial institutions to adopt the Equator Principles and prevent loans for projects that may have detrimental social or environmental impacts.

Mees said an effective combination of legislation and voluntarism is preferable, since legislation will bring a minimum effect, and a compliance approach, rather than a best practices approach.

Broadbent reiterated the all-party agreement that enforceable Canadian laws are needed abroad. For example, China's record is reprehensible in terms of workers' rights and human rights. Its unions are not independent but run by the Communist Party, and there are valid concerns about exports produced by forced labour. He said he would welcome legislation for Canadian companies operating in China. They can perhaps use aspects of Chinese law to do advocacy work with courageous Chinese lawyers. The fact that Canadian law will apply to Canadian companies there will give these lawyers more leverage within their own state.

A delegate asked whether the Canadian government's arms-length relationship with Rights & Democracy can be used to support non-violent movements toward democracy in dictatorial countries like Burma. A participant appealed for help to further equality and freedoms in Kurdistan. Another asked for the banking sector's position on alleviating the debt that developing countries owe to private banks.

Broadbent said Rights & Democracy does work with dissident groups where there is manoeuvrability. Greater funding will allow it to do more.

Mees referred participants to CCSR's Good Company Guidelines posted on its website. Furthermore, she expressed hope that Canada will take greater leadership, including creating a position of Minister for CSR.

Flinn said she did not know any specifics about the role of banks in relieving the debt of developing countries.

Mobilizing Civil Society

Mary Corkery, Executive Director, KAIROS

As a member of the faith-based organization KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, Mary Corkery emphasised the importance of mobilizing civil society as a vehicle for fundamental changes in power relations.

While most regard the question as whether or not NGOs can mobilize civil society in Canada and around the globe in support of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), Corkery said she believes it is important to stand the issue on its head. In other words, the question is whether or not the NGOs can mobilize the MDGs and the Make Poverty History campaign to help civil society work for deep and lasting structural change.

Corkery referred to the current demobilizing context in which people are working for change. For example, the United States administration frames an armed invasion to protect its economic interests as a war defending democracy. The struggle to respond within these frameworks, at times, disempowers and further impoverishes the poor and marginalized. Therefore, to achieve social justice, it is necessary to change the framework within which the struggle is waged. It is the responsibility of civil society organizations to lift the voices of the disadvantaged and strengthen their roles.

The struggle for justice will likely never be over, Corkery said. The fact that some will work within the system for change while others will "take to the streets" is a good thing. "Dissonance is a higher form of harmony," she stated. It is necessary to have all these aspects to make the MDGs work.

One has to frame ideas in the context of deep structural change over the long term. KAIROS's framework is ethically and spiritually based. It has a

rights-based approach to all development and a belief in the integrity of creation and the inherent dignity of every human being. The organization has given priority to three of the MDGs, the first (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger), the sixth (combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases), and the eighth (build a global partnership for development) and has identified steps to help realize them.

Corkery concluded by saying that civil society can mobilize the MDGs for change to benefit the poor and marginalized, who will ultimately be the judges of the success of these efforts.

Roy Culpeper, President, North-South Institute

Human rights and political freedoms are fundamental to any holistic conception of development. Culpeper referred to the third Arab Human Development Report, entitled *Towards Freedom in the Arab World*, which states that there can be no progress in human development in the Arab world without ending tyranny and securing fundamental rights and freedoms. Culpeper sees human rights as including the right to be free from hunger and the right to development. Therefore, human rights and development “are one and the same thing, integral to each other.”

In an appearance before the standing committee on Foreign Affairs and International Trade to testify on Canada’s International Policy Statement, Culpeper argued that it lacked an overarching policy framework at its core to inform all its international policies. He contended that the Millennium Declaration and the MDGs should “provide an overarching framework around which all of Canada’s international policies should be coherent.” This would involve enlisting the MDGs in terms of policy transformation within Canada and social and economic transformation abroad.

The North-South Institute recently launched a special report, entitled *Mobilizing for Change: Messages from Civil Society* which contains the results of a survey of over 400 civil society organizations over the world, working at global, national, and subnational levels. Culpeper stated that the MDGs represent the minimum agenda and, to a degree, retreat from the kinds of commitments that were made in the 1990s. Therefore, they need to be not only achieved but built on. The report identifies four key messages to be addressed to world leaders. These are: keep the promises made in the Millennium Declaration; go beyond the implementation of the MDGs to

attack the roots of the problems; strengthen the United Nations to ensure the development of social justice, peace, and security in the world; and commit the necessary human and financial resources to all of these ends.

Culpeper stated his belief that the 0.7% target of \$25 billion in foreign aid by 2015 is achievable. Although the Department of Finance has for the past 10 years claimed that Canada does not have the funds, the individuals at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives who prepared the Alternative Federal Budget claim that the government will continue to have an annual surplus of \$5 to \$10 billion. Therefore, Canada could honour its commitment by 2015 without incurring any deficit.

In his concluding remarks, Culpeper emphasized the need to go beyond the MDGs and attack the roots of poverty. Even in those countries where the use of aggregate data gives the impression that they are on target, there are huge pools of poverty and inequality. Unless these kinds of disparities are kept in mind, there is no surety that “the most seriously affected, the most marginalized, will find any promise or future for themselves or their families or for their future generations.”

Anna Nitoslawska, International Programme Administrator, Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)

The final presenter, Anna Nitoslawska, spoke of the labour movement’s views about the MDGs, as well as its actions on the MDGs nationally and internationally. Organized labour shares some of the concerns expressed during the conference concerning the MDGs:

- They were developed from the top down with little input or cooperation from civil society.
- They do not consider power discrepancies within and between countries.
- They fail to build on previous commitments made at UN conferences, especially the Copenhagen Summit of 1995, which recognized the importance of full employment as an indispensable strategy to eradicate poverty.
- They fail to take into account the fact that the policies of international financial institutions have contributed to the spread of poverty.
- They do not refer to the systemic weaknesses and structural barriers to development.

Nitoslawska stated the labour movement recognizes that this year provides a special opportunity for progress in achieving the MDGs, especially in the areas of debt relief and foreign aid. She stressed, however, that it is important to identify weaknesses in the MDGs in order to enhance the possibility of making a real difference. The labour movement emphasizes that decent, quality work must be an integral component of a global anti-poverty agenda. Anti-poverty work is at the core of labour union work. In its Philadelphia Declaration of 1944, the International Labour Organization (ILO) states that "poverty anywhere is a threat to prosperity everywhere."

In 1998, the world's governments adopted an ILO declaration on fundamental principles and rights at work as a commitment to uphold basic human values. The declaration includes eight key conventions in four areas: freedom of association, elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour, and the elimination of discrimination in the workplace. These are binding on all ILO member organizations even if they have not ratified one or more of these conventions.

Referring to Stephen Lewis's contention that huge resources are necessary to achieve the MDGs, Nitoslawska stated that the resources are there, but questioned the existence of the necessary political will. She made specific reference to a recent edition of *The Ottawa Citizen* in which two articles were juxtaposed. One reported George Bush's rejection of Tony Blair's proposal of more money for Africa; the other dealt with the \$1 trillion spent last year on military and security hardware, of which almost one-half was spent by the United States.

The labour movement supports the contribution of 0.7% of GDP, but it supports other anti-poverty initiatives as well. Among these are 100% debt relief for the poorest countries working to respect human rights, investing in people by providing access to education and health, and participating in the Make Poverty History campaign.

Nitoslawska expressed labour's disappointment that the current minority government had not put forward any significant, progressive legislation or social policies and that the recent international policy statement hides the human rights dimension behind commercial interests and the security agenda. She stated that the federal government is missing an opportunity by not tapping into the CLC's approximately three million dues-paying worker-activists involved in their communities and aware of international activities.

In closing, Nitoslawska noted that in 10 years' time, participants will gather to assess the world's progress with respect to the MDGs. She expressed her hope that rather than an autopsy or a post mortem, the occasion would be a celebration of the real achievement of making poverty history.

Questions and Discussion

A participant asked for comment on the misleading use of aggregated information in reporting on MDG achievements, and Canada's failure to apply the MDGs domestically.

Praising the work done by local churches in Peru establishing collectives to aid women and children, another participant remarked that there is a need to work together locally to identify root causes of problems and to effect change.

A participant recognized the importance of the first steps of having dialogue, but asked what specific actions could be taken by civil society on the issues discussed over the past two days.

Using the *West Wing* as an example of a genuine issue embedded in fiction, another participant questioned how entertainment could be used to support public awareness of the problems addressed by the MDGs.

Referring to the need for Canada to measure progress on the MDGs domestically to be credible on the international stage, a participant asked how Canada could be encouraged to adopt Norway's "umbrella approach," which requires all government departments to measure their endeavours against human rights and the MDGs.

Finally, a participant observed that the rights are in key covenants and labour standards. He stressed the importance of a national protection system for each country.

In reply, Culpeper agreed that disaggregated information would be powerful and cited the example of the Alternative Federal Budget to support this. He continued that democratizing policy, especially the budget process, would lead to disaggregation. With respect to monitoring the effectiveness of donor groups, Culpeper observed that more of this reverse accountability is needed and referred to the Independent Monitoring Group as a practical example.

Corkery discussed disaggregation in the context of the regular monitoring of the numerous conventions that Canada has signed. Corkery stated that while money is critical, new trade rules and debt reduction are imperative to ensure that developing nations eradicate poverty. Further, she stressed the need to rethink liberation theology because in order to liberate people one must liberate all of creation.

Nitoslawska noted that disaggregating data is necessary to tailor strategy and prioritize measures to allow the achievement of the MDGs. She agreed that art is a powerful tool in making people aware of issues, and cited working with CUSO in Mozambique on a project using art to increase women's awareness of HIV/AIDS. On the issue of applying the MDGs to Canada, Nitoslawska stated that civil society organizations are working on a whole range of issues, focusing on eliminating poverty at home, but observed that there is a great deal of work left to do.

Culpeper concluded by stating that the MDGs provide the agenda to hold governments and international agencies accountable. The MDGs provide the strategic opening, but civil society can mobilize to pressure the government and international organizations to go beyond the MDGs.

Closing

Jean-Louis Roy, President, Rights & Democracy

President Jean-Louis Roy thanked everyone who participated in the conference. He stated that while the current efforts with respect to the MDGs have been insufficient, success is possible, and a positive impact can be made.

Roy stressed the urgency of the situation. He contended that the most important message of the conference is that unless things change, unless there is new energy and new resources, the MDGs will not be achieved in 10 years. He stated that everyone involved in the conference wanted to participate in this new drive, and that the following months would be critical in ensuring progress.

Roy identified the need for national plans, and the need to invest in people to achieve success. Further, he reminded the participants of the recent comments made by Louise Frechette, the UN Deputy Secretary-General, that the world needs freedom from want, freedom from fear, and also

freedom from bureaucracy; too much money is being spent on bureaucratic measures and too little is going to those people who have a dire need for it.

In addition, Roy called on the Canadian government to hold a session on the MDGs, before the September summit, at which civil society organizations and others could be present and speak. He noted that before September 2005 there must be a mechanism to allow people to have a say in what the stand of the Canadian government should be. He stressed Canada's need to act independently of the United States, especially with respect to the abolition of the debt of the poorest nations.

Roy referred to the need for a new pact between developed and developing countries to help realize the MDGs before 2015. He reaffirmed the importance of human rights as a cornerstone of the MDGs, contending that the two are linked in process, results, and sustainability. Further, human rights should be a point of international coalition and that both human rights and the MDGs have a deeper source, which is human dignity.

Following some descriptions of situations of extreme poverty in developing countries, Roy concluded the conference with the passionate declaration "No food. No water. No health services. No schools. No housing. No jobs. No respect. No dignity. No rights. This is not acceptable!"