

United Nations Association
Southern New York State Division

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

Newsletter
June 2007

Welcome to UNA-SNY YPIC's bi-annual newsletter, packed with information and events for the internationally savvy and UN policy curious professional. Enjoy!

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UNA-SNY-YPIC Newsletter Letter from the Editor

Welcome to the summer edition of UNA-Southern New York State Division YPIC's newsletter. As New Yorkers bare the heat with alfresco dining and mid-day picnics, they may ponder whether the warm nights or harsh sun are ominous signs of things to come. After all, in June's G-8 Summit, the United Nations Secretary-General advised that climate change is the "defining issue of our era." In this edition, journalist and author Michael Deibert tackles the impact of global warming - in both industrialized and developing cities - while analyzing the recent global change assessment conducted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). Also in this issue, YPIC Communications Committee member Reena Vadehra discusses the pros and cons of Microfinance, while Sander Kooijman debates the emergent rift between the European Union and its citizens. UNA-NY Board Member, YPIC Communications Committee Director, and fellow newsletter Editor, Sharlene Ratcliff-Korenica, provides insight into conditions in Kosovo, the role of the United Nations, and what's behind the rhetoric around resolution on Kosovo's final status. Thus, as the summer continues to sizzle, I hope you find the fruit of these writers' hard work to be a welcome distraction from the heat.

Faith-Ann Young, Editor-In-Chief

Microfinance: The Bottom-Up Approach by Reena Vadehra

Microfinance, the brainchild of 2006 Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus - and the developing world's new "it" measure for breaking the cycle of poverty - is based on a very simple idea. By allowing the world's poor access to credit, the entrepreneurial poor can lift themselves out of poverty and create a self-sustaining business to support themselves and their families.

Microfinance loans tend to consist of under US \$200 and support various low-cost, usually home-based businesses, such as handicrafts, roadside food stalls, or the purchase of a farm animal and sale of its products.

The spark for microfinance came in 1974, when Muhammad Yunus had a chance encounter with Sufia Begum, a poor single mother who wove bamboo stools for money in Jobra, Bangladesh. He was astonished to learn that, through borrowing money from middlemen for supplies, Begum brought back just less than US 2 cents of profit. He surveyed the village and found forty other people were in the same predicament - dependent on middlemen and needing just US \$27 to buy supplies and sustain themselves. Yunus lent the village the money and told them to pay him back when they could. Less than ten years later, microfinance was instituted with the founding of the Grameen Bank in 1983 by Yunus.

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Photo © Juan Carlos/WpN

Microfinance: The Bottom-Up Approach (cont)

Today, it is estimated that between 50 and 70 million people of the world's poorest families have access to microfinance loans. Countless non-profits, private institutions, governments and other organizations have followed the successes of Grameen Bank and instituted microfinance in their own development policies. In 1966, the UN affiliated microfinance arm, United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), was created and now works alongside the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to reduce poverty through microfinance and other development measures.

But is microfinance really the new silver bullet for development that it is cracked up to be?

There is no doubt that the advantages of microfinance are clear. This "bottom-up" approach provides needed financial services to the poor. Unlike traditional development practices where aid slowly trickles down from governments, microfinance can provide self-sustainability in a much quicker manner. In addition, microfinance can support other development initiatives. The Grameen Bank, for example, requires that each loan holder sign a social contract, known as "Sixteen Decisions," which include conditions such as having smaller families, sending all their children to school, drinking boiled water and not participating in child marriages. Also, microfinance leads to tremendous gains in female empowerment, since women make up the majority of borrowers around the world. Lastly, this development method is cost-effective – borrowers return their small loans at high interest rates (in some cases up to 40%), which directly benefits lenders.

Despite these headways, there are still a billion people around the world who have no access to credit. Critics contend that microfinance does not reach the poorest of the poor. Typically, microfinance programs target people living on two dollars a day. In addition, not everyone is suited to benefit from microfinance loans – the elderly, the sick, and those displaced by war would not generally be good candidates. Also, those whose entrepreneurial spirit is waning may find microfinance detrimental, potentially risking their livelihoods to indebtedness. In fact, little research has been conducted to measure the actual impact that microfinance has had in the developing world at the macroeconomic level. Equally as important, microfinance doesn't speak to overarching systemic problems in developing countries – such as corruption, political instability or lack of infrastructure.

Thus, microfinance should not be thought of as a solution in itself. It isn't the silver bullet of development that many make it out to be; at the same time, it shouldn't be discredited. Microfinance is a development tool to be used in conjunction with other development policies in order to provide a solution to a major hole in most development policies.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Reena Vadehra is a Marketing and Communications Committee member of UNA-SNY YPIC. She lives in Queens.



*Muhammad Yunus, founder of Microfinance, holding a child
(Source: Grameen Bank)*

More Information on Microfinance:

- Intro to Microfinance
(<http://www.microfinance.com>)
- United Nations Capital Development Fund
(<http://www.uncdf.org>)
- Grameen Foundation
(<http://www.grameenfoundation.org>)
- Grameen Bank
(<http://grameen-info.org/>)
- Virtual Library on Micro-credit
(<http://www.gdrc.org/icm/>)
- Village Banking
(<http://www.villagebanking.org>)
- Microfinance Opportunities
(<http://www.microfinanceopportunities.org>)
- Video on Microfinance
(http://www.grameenfoundation.org/resource_center/video_breaking_through/)

Reports Sound the Alarm on Global Warming

by Michael Deibert

Deep inside Mumbai's Dharavi slum, home to an estimated one million, Islam Hindh sits outside a small warehouse that he owns in a rubbish-strewn alleyway and shakes loose his hair that has been tied in a ponytail behind his head.

Behind him, in a sweltering room, a dozen men in his employ are busily crushing and pulling apart various pieces of plastic scrap with hammers or their bare hands. The scrap will be melted down and sold to middlemen who will proceed by selling the raw plastic to bucket and waste bin manufacturers, a job that finds many takers in this seaside city of 20 million. A short walk away, an open sewage canal that is hundreds of yards long is overlooked by fragile wooden shacks while, across a marshy, polluted expanse, the gleaming towers of the Bandra-Kurla Economic Zone rise in the distance. A visible brown tinge hangs in the air.

"The people aren't developing, the people aren't booming," says 32 year-old Hindh. "The upper-class and the government ministers are booming, but not the people."

Amidst Hindh's droll commentary about the state of India's political affairs, the aggressive pollution of burgeoning metropolises like Mumbai often leads visitors to bemoan the environmental impact of such unrestrained development. Indeed, in local terms, the results can be substantial and have resulted in Mumbai being labeled among the five most polluted cities in the world.

However, assessing its findings in the first major global assessment of climate change in six years, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concludes that with human activities continuing to cause the world to warm - and a marked increase in atmospheric concentrations of the greenhouse gases carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide since 1750 as the result of human activities - a greater culprit for global warming can in fact be found in the world's industrialized countries. With many industrial giants located in the northern hemisphere, it is nevertheless low-lying southern hemisphere areas, such as Mumbai itself, which may suffer the most immediate damage from global warming.

"The global increases in carbon dioxide concentration are due primarily to fossil fuel use and land-use change, while those of methane and nitrous oxide are primarily due to agriculture," the IPCC writes in its report, titled *Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis*. "The carbon dioxide radiative force increased by 20% from 1995 to 2005, the largest change for any decade in at least the last 200 years."

The alarming news doesn't end there. The report goes on to point out that eleven of the last twelve years (1995 -2006) rank among the twelve warmest years since the instrumental recording of global surface temperatures began in 1850, and that, while global average sea level rose at an average rate of 1.8 [1.3 to 2.3] mm per year over 1961 to 2003, the rate was much faster over 1993 to 2003, about 3.1 [2.4 to 3.8] mm per year.

With a high confidence that the rate of observed sea level rise increased from the 19th to the 20th century, with the rise between 1993 to 2003 measuring about 3.1 [2.4 to 3.8] mm per year, the report could not conclusively state whether the recent



*Residents of Dharavi, Bombay, India
(Photo courtesy of Michael Deibert)*

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Reports Sound the Alarm on Global Warming (cont)

spike reflected decadal variability or an increase in the longer-term trend.

"Developed countries tend to have higher greenhouse gas emissions but lower urban pollution levels than do developing countries because their industries are more advanced," explained Michael Williams, spokesperson for the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Switzerland (www.unep.org.)

"As countries modernize, their productivity increases, as does their energy use, and thus their greenhouse gas emissions," Williams says. "As India and other developing countries modernize their industries over the next few decades, their urban pollution levels will decline but their contribution to global warming will rise."

With the report concluding that anthropogenic warming and sea levels could continue to rise for centuries due to the timeframe associated with climate processes, even if greenhouse gas concentrations were to be stabilized, the trend has observers in the southern hemisphere concerned. Entire sections of India's capital Mumbai, the seaside slum of Cite Soleil in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, swathes of Rio de Janeiro's famous coastline in Brazil, sections of coastal Florida and countless other coastal areas could potentially be steadily encroached by water to the point of uninhabitability in coming decades.

In her current book, *Planet India: How the Fastest-Growing Democracy is Transforming the World* (Scribner), Asia Society fellow Mira Kamdar's writes that, indeed, global warming is "a process that will affect the tropical south much more negatively than the temperate north (and) has the potential to drown India's Maldives Islands and submerge coastal areas that are home to hundreds of millions."

With the IPCC concluding that it is "very likely" that the upswing in hot extremes and heat waves will continue, as will sea-level rise, the battle to combat global warming has hardly begun. The next step for the IPCC will be the Bangkok launch of its report on mitigating these environmental trends on 4 May, and the adoption of a synthesis report in Valencia, Spain on 16 November.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Michael Deibert is the author of Notes from the Last Testament: The Struggle for Haiti (Seven Stories Press). His blog of journalism and opinion can be read at www.michaeldeibert.blogspot.com.

Interested in facts about Global Warming or the IPCC? Feel free to browse the following websites:

- United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (<http://unfccc.int/2860.php>)
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (<http://www.ipcc.ch/>)
- Global Warming Information (<http://www.globalwarming.org/>)
- Convention on Biological Diversity (<http://www.cbd.int/default.shtml>)
- Environmental Defense Blogs: "Why IPCC Anyway?" (<http://environmentaldefenseblogs.org/climate411/2007/02/05/what-is-the-ipcc-anyway/>)
- NOAA Satellite and Information Service (<http://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/oa/ncdc.html>)

OpEd: European Union Versus Its People: A Historical Perspective From a Dutch Native

By Sander Kooijman



Source: www.historiasiglo20.org

What do you do when you have achieved everything that you were fighting for? It is a common phenomenon that organizations struggle to survive after they have reached their initial goals. They often have trouble redefining their mission and redirecting themselves, although the surrounding environment and economy may require such change. In the worst cases, after failing to adapt, the survival of the organization becomes the organization's sole remaining goal.

Fifty years ago, when the seeds were planted to create the European Union, the memory of World War II was still fresh in Europeans' minds; at the same time, a new conflict loomed as the major powers in the East and West were gearing up for what later became a not-so-cold war. Western European leaders of the time brainstormed that economically uniting would be a strategically prudent means of withstanding the fast growing economic power of the United States. So they started the Economic Community for Coal and Steel, the earliest predecessor of the EU.

Over the next forty-five years, this project of joining European forces proved to be extremely successful. In its history, Western Europe had not known such a long continuous period of peace and tranquility. During this period, European leaders guided their citizens through the fear and uncertainty of the Cold War while, at the same time, working to create more economic prosperity and social equality for its citizens.

The epitome of this success came when the Soviet Empire collapsed. However, somewhere during this period, the EU leadership in Brussels and its citizens became detached. While Europeans in each nation state enjoyed their prosperous and relatively carefree existence, a majority took for granted and gradually forgot what the EU had done for them. Also, while its citizens retained their senses of national pride, they never fully acknowledged or grew to accept their identity as part of a greater European force. At the same time, administrators in Brussels kept moving the structural development of the Union along, while failing to take the time to explain to their existing voters the successes, challenges and importance of the Union. Thus, despite successes such as the extension of the Union, as the European Union continued to expand, its leadership in Brussels and its growing constituents grew further apart until the gap became too wide.

In 2005, the voters of France and The Netherlands, in their respective referenda, voted against proposals for a joined European Constitution, in large part because they had no clue what the document was about. From many voters' perspectives, they felt their leaders only alluded to why the constitution would be good for Europe and for them, without clarity or detail. Meanwhile, the leaders issued presumptuous statements interwoven with political jargon and grand conceits, encouraging voters to trust the leaders' knowledge and belief in the constitution. After the Dutch 'nee' and the French 'non,' the idea of the constitution was put on the shelf.

Now two years later, the European constitution is very much alive again as the German Chancellor and current chairman of the EU, Angela Merkel, has made it her mission to push the constitution through. However, she should be careful not to repeat the

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OpEd: European Union Versus Its People (cont)

mistakes made in 2005 and widen the gap between Brussels and the European voters. Moreover, there is a genuine opportunity now to redefine the ideals and goals for the EU.

Since the fall of the Berlin wall, Europeans have not felt more cause for worries than they do today. Many worry about losing their jobs to the cheaper labor that is coming in from the new EU nations in the East. Others fret about their countries going along with the US in fighting in Iraq. But above all, Europeans feel anxious about the increasingly apparent failure to integrate Islamic immigrants into their countries and the resulting social tensions. Over the past decade, it has become abundantly clear that mere tolerance does not guaranty successful integration of these immigrants into society. In almost every Western European country, those of Arabic descent live in impoverished neighborhoods and compose the highest percentages of each nation's unemployment and crime. European leaders need to face this issue together if they want to regain the trust of their voters and maintain unity within the EU.

Having unity will be crucial as EU leadership faces its toughest challenge yet: convincing voters that the addition of Turkey to the EU is vital to the progress of Europe, and allowing Turkey to join. Turkey is geographically a part of Europe and for centuries has served as the bridge between Europe and the Middle East. Turkey is now one of the faster-growing economies in the region. With Turkish real estate prices on the rise, many European developers consider Turkey to be the closest emerging market in which to operate. For many, Turkey would be a welcome economic addition to the EU as it is, in many ways, further developed than other new members of the EU.

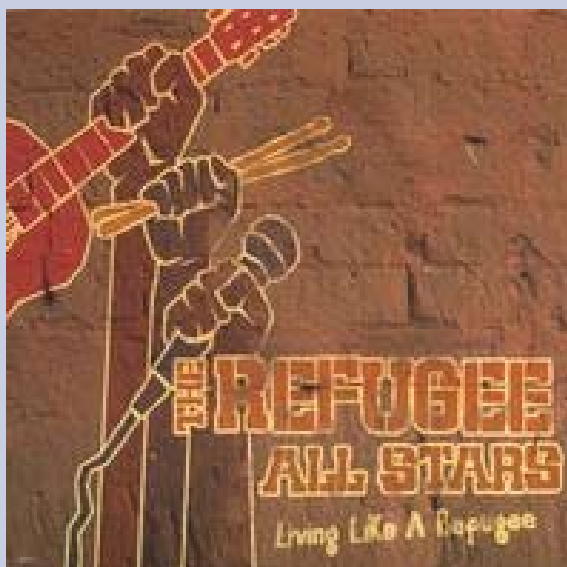
But economy is not everything. The EU needs to regain status on the international stage. During crises over the last decade, European countries have not managed to come together. An absolute low point was the lack of coordinated action concerning the wars in Iraq and Lebanon. It is paramount that the EU is a force in world politics and the inclusion of Turkey could help. The induction of Turkey into the EU would give the Union presence in the Middle East, and in so doing, commit the EU to a more active role in the peace process.

On the other hand, many native Europeans are weary of Turkey joining their Union. Looking at the problems in their own countries with Muslims, numerous citizens are distrustful of a large Muslim-dominated country joining the EU. It will be a challenge for European leaders to convince their citizens to accept Turkey into the EU, but one that is vital to the progression, unity and power of the union.

European leaders' best bet to regain voter trust is to confront the cultural and social differences within the Union with speed and resolve. If they don't, Europeans will lose the little interest in the EU that they have now and turn to their local governments once again to solve these issues.

Finally, a new ideal to fight for...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Sander Kooijman was born in Utrecht, The Netherlands, on December 3rd 1977. He attended high school at the Gemeentelijk Gymnasium in Hilversum, The Netherlands, where he graduated Cum Laude. At the University of Leiden in Leiden, he discovered the true Dutch college experience. However, frustrated with the direction that the European Union appeared to be heading, as well as with the comforts of his life in the Netherlands, he moved to New York in December 2003. In New York, he attended the New York Film Academy for 2 years and in December 2005, "embraced American capitalistic principals" by starting his own film production company, Elysian Entertainment. He is currently producing two feature films this year and at least two more in 2008.



(Source: www.afropop.org)

Album Review

Sierra Leone's REFUGEE ALL STARS: Living Like a Refugee (Feb 2007)

By Faith-Ann Young

Throughout most of the 1990s, while most of Sierra Leone was devastated by violent warfare, the original members of the Refugee All-Stars lived a relatively protected existence in the capital Freetown. However, this perceived safety was desecrated in 2000, when rebels attacked the city and forced most inhabitants to flee to neighboring countries. United at Kalia Refugee Camp in Guinea, Reuben M. Koroma and Franco (Francis Langba) began to experiment with musical arrangements together. When the Kalia camp was attacked by the Guinean army that thought the camps were being

used as staging grounds for rebel attacks against Guinea, the two talented musicians persisted to produce music despite their transfer to the Sembakounya Refugee Camp in a secluded section of the Guinean countryside. After a few months, with the modest donation of a basic sound system and some second-hand rusted electric guitars, the group was officially launched. Over time, the group expanded to include the talented rapper Black Nature as well as Arahim (Abdul Rahim Kamara) and Mohammed Bangura, both of whom endured grisly reminders of the war: amputated limbs.

Meanwhile, American documentary filmmakers Banker White and Zach Niles came to the refugee camps looking for a story. Inspired by the band's story and music, they followed the band for three years, chronicling the band's geographical shuffle from camp to camp, psychological and physical damage of the war, and eventually conclusive homecoming, where they faced the destitute state of their war-torn country and reunited with family, friends and former bandmates. The film 'Refugee All-Stars,' which premiered last year and has won various film awards, will be screened on PBS on June 26th, 2007.

Meanwhile, the 17-track album, *Living Like A Refugee*, produced by Chris Velan, represents the entirety of their experiences, tribulations, and survival lessons over those three years. Recorded between August 2002 and October 2005, at the same time as the film was being produced, each of the 17 songs is an original composition written during their years in exile. Though the lyrics document survival and emotional turmoil, replete with Congo drums and infectious beat, the album's cadence and character are surprisingly uplifting. Though the lyrics speak of the tragedy of the war, they also proudly portray the immense human will of survival and amnesty even in the most abject situations. The product fulfills the Refugee's goals, evoking dancing rather than tears, peace rather than hate.

This summer, Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars tour the world telling their lyrical tales of war and peace, over a musical synthesis of reggae, traditional West African music and traditional folk.

For more information about the album, summer festivals and film screenings, please visit www.refugeeallstars.org.

For more information on refugees, go to <http://www.refugees.org>

Book Review: Ishmeal Beah *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Child Soldier*

By Faith-Ann Young

Peering through the steam at Starbucks, you may spot Ishmeal Beah's *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Child Soldier*. If you do, buy it, relish it, and rest assured that \$2 of the book's profit goes to UNICEF. Before opening it, however, you may want to make your cappuccino a double.

I bid you to read this book, not because it is on the New York Times bestseller list (though it is), or because you seek poetic, expertly plucked prose that wraps around your psyche like velvet (you will find none). I recommend that you read this book because you are a world citizen, a UNA and YPIC member. Unequivocally interested in world affairs, you deserve to know this story, about Ishmeal Beah and the other 100,000 children, some as young as nine, whom are estimated to have been involved in armed conflict in mid 2004 (according to www.childsoldiers.org). Those victims and the hundreds of thousands since then, deserve the three to four hours it takes to furiously read *A Long Way Gone*. It doesn't matter that in truth, you may not be able to point on a map where Sierra Leone is. (No worries, did you know approximately 75 to 80 percent of Americans don't have passports? Just by showing interest in this topic, you are ahead of the game). Ishmael Beah portrays the incomprehensible details of war and child soldiering with humanity and honesty and realism to a worldwide audience.



(Photo courtesy of John Madere)

I am the first to admit, as a cappuccino-sipping Indie rock-loving twenty-four-year-old, I am completely detached from the harsh reality he has endured. The concept of inducting children into war is as nonsensical as playdoh was to my five-year-old-self: difficult to classify or comprehend and impossible to digest. (Ahhh the age-old analogy of war and toys.) However, Beah artfully leads readers through his emotional and drastic transcendence from boy to man, beginning with his youthful ambitions to be a rapper; depictions of rampant killing; watching his best friends slaughtered like flies; his induction into the Sierra Leone army and subsistence consisting of Rambo Film overdoses, AK-47s, and the wicked combination of gun powder and cocaine hits called 'Brown Brown'.

Interestingly, Ishmael Beah's fate was undeniably altered by the United Nations. At fifteen years old, he was taken to a UNICEF sponsored rehabilitation center. When asked to represent Sierra Leone's child soldiers on a trip to the United Nations, he came to New York in the dead of winter without a winter coat; the woman who donated him a coat to wear ended up becoming his adoptive mother. Over the years, he has assimilated well into American society. It was during English class at Oberlin College, after having written an assignment about the war that his teacher pulled him aside and said something along the lines of "either you are sick in the head, or this story is real. And if it is real, it must be told." Starbucks as his witness, Beah is following his mentor's advice.

Now, keep in mind, if you are looking for a political discussion of the United Nations' role in the war, or any political background, you will finish your latte and the book with your desires unfulfilled. The book begins in 1993, when Sierra Leone, a former British colony in West Africa, was overcome by a military coup, caused by rebellion in Liberia, Sierra Leone's neighbor.

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Book Review: *A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a Child Soldier* (cont)

It continues describing the R.U.F. (the Revolutionary United Front), led by Foday Sankoh, who took over the diamond mines in eastern Sierra Leone and whose brutal militia (with a horrible signature mark for amputating hands) moved on toward the country's capital, Freetown. However, Beah has chosen to concentrate on concrete images and instances, where the simplicity of his depiction emphasizes the shocking brutality of his tale. He writes as a little boy, holding a gun, hypnotized in a bloody hell, stating: "'I angrily pointed my gun into the swamp and killed more people. I shot everything that moved.'" The tale of incredible violence evokes a reader's most basic, human emotions, far more thoroughly than topography or dates could have done: "As we, and others, emerged from the bushes, we saw a man run from the driver's seat to the sidewalk, where he vomited blood...When he stopped vomiting, he began to cry. It was the first time I had seen a grown man cry like a child, and I felt a sting in my heart. ...People covered the eyes of their children" (Sarah Crichton Books, 2007).

In an interview with Powell Books, Beah expressed "people in Sierra Leone are human beings, just like Americans...They want to live in peace; they want to have their basic rights of life just like everyone else. I think we all owe an obligation to support people who want to do that." By writing this book, Beah has provided a means for Americans to see through the Starbuck's frothy haze and show much needed support.

Information on Ishmeal Beah: <https://www.powells.com/authors/ishmaelbeah.html>

For More information of Child Soldiers: <http://hrw.org/campaigns/crp/index.htm>

<http://www.un.org/children/conflict/english/childsoldiers21.html>

<http://www.child-soldiers.org/childsoldiers/>

Kosovo: The Time of Status Quo and Half Measures Is At An End

by Sharlene Ratcliff-Korenica

This topic is a moving target right now with daily developments. For updates (after the publish date of this newsletter), and for a timeline of Kosovo - and its region - from ancient times to present-day - please visit: <http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/kosovo.doc>

For more than a decade, Belgrade ran a policy of repression in Kosovo that culminated in a massive "ethnic-cleansing" campaign in 1999 that ended only with NATO intervention. Eight years later, growth, prosperity, and security in the region remain hostage to the uncertainty around Kosovo's status.

In June 1999, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1244, establishing UN administration of the province, the deployment of a NATO force (KFOR), and authorization for the UN to manage a process to determine Kosovo's status. In March 2007, UN Special Envoy Martti Ahtisaari presented his Final Comprehensive Proposal for a Kosovo Status Settlement and his Report on Kosovo's Future Status.

Serbia and Russia are angling to delay decision, with Russia threatening veto in the Security Council vote. Delay will not produce any viable alternatives. Rather, it will complicate the situation, squander agreement on critical terms, and likely facilitate a breakdown with dire political, economic, and humanitarian consequences.

Belgrade must deal with real-world scenarios and accept what they've lost, so that they can embrace what they will gain.

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Kosovo (cont)

Nationalism, dreams of a "greater Serbia," and whispered reminders of a former glory have brought Serbia nowhere. The international community must end the eight years of limbo, and should not allow Russia to play Kosovo as a bargaining chip in bullish dealings with the U.S., NATO, and the EU.

The UN must stand firm and deliver on its mandate in Kosovo. If not perceived as an effective force, the UN's ability to lead initiatives around the world will be significantly compromised. This could also lead to nations increasingly acting unilaterally - against world opinion - such as the U.S. in Iraq.

Abysmal Conditions in Kosovo

The number of Albanians dead through the events of 1999 is generally put at around 10,000 (exact accounting is complicated; there is incontrovertible evidence of grave tampering and the removal of bodies by Serbian and Yugoslav troops. 850,000 Albanians were also driven from their homes). Accounts of mutilation and rape are well documented.

Thousands of people are still missing from the war. Serbia has conducted no new [mass grave] excavations since 2002 and is not interested in strengthening cooperation in this regard. ("Open Wound", by Andrew Testa and Julian Berger, *The Guardian*, 24 February 2007, and "Amendments to Comprehensive Proposal For the Kosovo Status Settlement by the Negotiating Team of the Republic of Serbia", 2 March 2007 (General Principles, Articles 2 and 5)



Map of Kosovo

(Source: ipkitten.blogspot.com/2007/01/kosovo-update.html)

Kosovo's economy has been devastated by its unresolved status. Kosovo has a GDP per capita of less than 1,000 Euros compared to an EU average of over 20,000 Euros. The unemployment rate is a staggering 60 percent. (*Europa NY*, 20 April, 2007).

Lack of confidence in a stable and secure environment has made it extremely difficult to attract investment and loans. Despite bleak conditions - and with no clear light on the horizon - Kosovo Albanians have maintained commitment to good governance and inter-ethnic accommodation. There have been some setbacks, such as an outbreak of violence by Kosovo Albanians in 2004. At the same time, Kosovo Albanians have been provoked by Serbians, who aim to discredit plans for Kosovo independence by baiting Kosovo Albanians to lose patience and resort to violence.

President Ibrahim Rugova, a man called the "Gandhi of the Balkans," supported Kosovo's independence, while strongly opposing the use of force as the means of achieving it. Despite many radical alternatives from which to choose, Kosovans elected Rugova four times as their President.

The UN Special Envoy's Proposal and Report

In February 2007, UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari presented his proposal and plan. Ahtisaari states in the "Report of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Kosovo's Future Status": "The time has come to resolve Kosovo's status. Upon careful consideration of Kosovo's recent history, the realities of Kosovo today and taking into account the negotiations with the parties, I have come to the conclusion that the only viable option for Kosovo is independence, to be supervised for an initial period by the international community."

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Kosovo (cont)

The plan includes a set of compromises. Serbia has to accept the loss of Kosovo. Kosovo has agreed to accept a delayed and conditional route to independence, and limits on its sovereignty. Importantly, the plan offers Kosovo Serbs special protection zones; extensive rights; additional parliamentary seats and double-majority rules; and privileged relations with Serbia such as funding, cross-boundary cooperation, and protection for religious and cultural sites.

The Ahtisaari plan has a wide group of supporters: the Kosovo Albanians, the U.S., the EU Presidency, EU Council (at least for the Comprehensive Settlement Proposal), the European Parliament, NATO, and the UN Secretary-General.

What's Driving Russia's Threat To Veto?

Russia is a traditional protector of Serbia. Russia's public position is that a plan to resolve Kosovo status must satisfy both Kosovans and Serbs, and that Security Council Resolution 1244 must be fully implemented. Russian officials also worry that granting statehood to Kosovo will set a precedent.

Kosovo is also a bargaining chip for Russia in her dealings with the West. Russia opposes U.S. missile defense plans in Poland and the Czech Republic, and Putin is positioning himself as a leader unafraid to challenge NATO and the U.S. and to exert demands upon the EU (which is highly dependent on Russian fuel). "A Machiavellian Russia might even wish to see a botched Kosovo resolution create EU disunity, thereby undermining the Union's ability to conduct a common foreign and security policy vis-à-vis Russia on a range of issues, including energy, trade, the Black Sea and the south Caucasus." (Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007)

Serbia's Kosovan Conundrum: Can't Live With 'Em, Can't Live Without 'Em

Serb emotions over Kosovo run high. Kosovo is where Serbian Christian warriors fought the Muslim Ottoman. Serbs claim Kosovo as the "heart" of their political and religious life. However, Serbs have never constituted more than 10-15% of the region's population, despite Serb-orchestrated "recolonization" initiatives to balance the population. Belgrade politicians fear that caving on Kosovo is political suicide.

Serbia's public position is that the UN has no right to carve out a piece of Serbian territory to create a new sovereign state. Belgrade lost Kosovo in the 1999 war with NATO and previous to that, did not hold a lawful sovereignty over Kosovo. Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic unlawfully stripped Kosovo's rights of autonomy established in the 1974 Yugoslav Constitution. Throughout the 1990s, Belgrade denied Kosovo Albanians any part in public life. In 1999, Serbia rejected an accord that would have restored Kosovo's autonomy within Serbia, and then launched its ethnic-cleansing offensive.

Serbia's end game is clear: partition of Kosovo north of the Ibar River. "A senior figure close to Serb Prime Minister Kostunica shared the thinking now prevalent in Belgrade's policy circles: 'It must be divided. We want Mitrovica, the monasteries, a couple of enclaves, a humanitarian exchange of populations; then we put up barbed wire and tell them "don't phone us for the next ten years"'. (Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007)

And what of the Serb minority who live in enclaves in Kosovo, amidst hardship and strained relations with the broader community? Serbia and Russia both use the minority to bolster their agendas. "A prominent Serb official went so far as to say that he hoped Albanian attacks on the enclaves would result in columns of refugees on red tractors, their homes burning in the background, with KFOR standing helpless by 'under the watchful eye of CNN.'" (Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007)

(continued on page 12)

Kosovo (cont)

Kosovo Serbs are likely to be the first victims of stall tactics, a continuation of the status quo, or if Serbia's goal of partition were pursued. Ahtisaari's Proposal provides Kosovo Serbs with minority rights that go far beyond European standards, as well as a decentralization model and provision for an international presence – all aimed to protect and improve life for the beleaguered minority. (Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007)

The Time of Status Quo and Half Measures Is At An End

No good can possibly result from any further delay or decline in the Kosovo situation. Ahtisaari's plan is the best option for creating a multi-ethnic, democratic, and decentralized society in Kosovo. It also offers peace and security and a path that will avoid the "unraveling of borders along ethnic fault lines" in the region. (Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007.)

There were fourteen months of negotiations led by Ahtisaari in which a compromise was not reached by Kosovo Albanians and Serbs. It's been a very long eight years since 1999. Would we wait another eight? Ten? What are we waiting for? And why?

Author's note: The Permanent Mission of the Russian Federation to the United Nations was contacted several times for comment, but at time of publish, had not offered any perspective further than to what is stated in this article.

About the Author: Sharlene Ratcliff-Korenica is a UNA-NY Board Member and UNA-SNY YPIC Marketing and Communications Director.

Key Links to more information on Kosovo:

United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) <http://www.unmikonline.org/>

United Nations Office for the Special Envoy in Kosovo <http://www.unosek.org/unosek/index.html>

Kosovo: No Good Alternatives to the Ahtisaari Plan, Crisis Group Europe Report N°182, 14 May 2007
http://www.crisisgroup.org/library/documents/europe/balkans/182_kosovo_no_good_alternatives_to_the_ahtisaari_plan.pdf

Project Emerge

USA-SNY | YPIC | Latin American Affairs Committee

By Patricia Sacristan

One of the great things about being part of the YPIC community is that we are able to host events that enrich our minds and deepen our commitment to promote the work of the UN. It is always fortunate and shall I say serendipitous that here in New York, we have the opportunity to have a meeting of minds in that each YPIC committee relies on the great support of talented and dedicated YPIC committee members who are behind the scenes to make it all happen.

One such event was held at the beginning of March. The Latin American Affairs Committee (LAAC) held its inaugural Project Emerge kick-off event. The premise behind this event was to introduce Project Emerge, and most importantly, to provide our audience with an introductory crash course in microfinance, while enjoying the vineyard selection from the Wines of Chile Association in the com-

The Poverty Gap

- 40% of the world earns 5% of the global income.
- The average American is 61 times richer than the average Tanzanian.
- More than 98% of the 10 million children who die each year from preventable deaths die in poor countries.
- A child in Mozambique averages 4 years of education while a child in France averages 15 years.

(Source: UNCDF Presentation)

(continued on page 13)

Project Emerge (cont)

forts of Stefano Villa's sleek Tribeca restaurant, Industria Argentina.

Our speaker, Mr. Magnus Magnusson of the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), spoke about Microfinance – Towards Building Inclusive Financial Sectors. He provided us with an insightful view of microfinance, presenting compelling figures about the widening gap between developed nations and less developed nations (LDCs), to which the figures shown in the insert can attest.

Throughout his informative session, Mr. Magnusson highlighted the importance of lessening the poverty gap through microfinance and presented solid figures on the many achievements it has had to date. He further developed the notion that microfinance is a poverty reduction tool that is presently being optimized as it builds on its success as an inclusive endeavor from all sectors of finance. He noted that financial services such as remittances, savings, loans and insurance services are some of the key elements needed to successfully induct the poor within the financial system.

Project Emerge – Starter Kit

After listening to a gamut of information on microfinance and the widening poverty gap, everyone in the room had the same thought in their mind. How can we help?

The answer may not come easy, but the options are certainly within our reach.

Project Emerge – Engage

As we all know, one of the biggest challenges faced by the poor is the lack of seed capital for those with an entrepreneurial mindset to grow out of poverty. Time after time, we hear international studies that show a direct correlation between poverty and environmental devastation such as deforestation, water contamination and land degradation.

On a micro-level, thus far, we know what is needed and the answer seems simple enough -- educate micro entrepreneurs in LDCs on sustainable livelihoods and provide seed capital to emerge out of poverty. But where do we begin?

Project Emerge was conceived as a vehicle to promote the academic work of the UN as well as the fieldwork of two noteworthy NGOs in microfinance and conservation. This initiative is designed to effect change on a concrete basis, not just limited to an abstract concept in a lecture hall, but rather as an interactive experience. Thus, we want to engage our UNA-SNY members on a real-time basis by offering the opportunity to volunteer on a project where they can obtain a hands-on experience while creating a ripple-effect where it matters most -- in the field.

Project Emerge wishes to host a fundraiser gala by honoring the work of two NGOs devoted to conservation and microfinance. Proceeds of the gala will go to the Project Emerge Fund. The concept behind this program is to empower 100

Project Emerge – Microfinance

The exclusion of the poor from the formal financial system reaches a staggering 90% in Less Developed Countries (LDCs). Thus, the provision of financial services to the poor through microfinance is an effective poverty reduction tool that guarantees both financial and environmental sustainability; as demonstrated by the efforts of Mr. Muhammad Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, which specializes in microfinance. His work in microfinance is now widely recognized and he was granted the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize. (http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2006/)

Project Emerge – Conservation

Latin America is considered Earth's most biologically rich zone and home to its largest wetland, The Pantanal, and largest river, The Amazon. More than 20 percent of the world's oxygen is produced in the Amazon Rainforest. Yet, it is estimated that the Amazon rainforest is vanishing at a rate of 20,000 square miles a year. If nothing is done to curb this trend, the entire Amazon could be gone within fifty years.

(continued on page 14)

Project Emerge (cont)

micro entrepreneurs in Latin America with a micro-grant of \$3,000, which will provide a year's worth of seed capital for their small business, while they are inducted in sound sustainable livelihoods and microfinance practices through the expertise of the two chosen NGOs.

In order to convey the forward thinking message that YPIC embodies, the gala will feature a Fashion Show to cater to the New York audience and present the craftsmanship of a carefully selected group of socially conscious international designers.

Today, we are in the preliminary phase with lots of interesting and fulfilling work to make this event a reality. If you wish to get involved and contribute to Project Emerge, please contact Patricia Sacristan, Director of YPIC's Latin American Affairs Committee at: ypiclatinamdir@unanyc.org

NOTE: To download Magnus Magnusson's presentation for UNA SNY YPIC and to see his recommendations on how we can get involved, please visit <http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/ypicevents.html> > look under Microfinance - Towards Building Inclusive Financial Sectors

The Numbers

- Proposed Date: TBD
- Guests: 800 – 900 New Yorkers
 - Honored NGOs:
Conservation & Microfinance
- International Designers: 4
- Corporate Sponsor(s): 1 – 2
- Fundraising Goal: \$300,000
- Passionate Volunteers: 60 +

Project Emerge

USA-SNY | YPIC | Latin American Affairs Committee

UNA-SNY YPIC CORNER

Intro to... our new Chair!

Beginning as an active member of the Economic Development Committee of UNA-NY YPIC in November 2005, Andrea Satter helped organize the Committee's Global Festival, which raised \$10,000 for UNA-SNY YPIC and UNA-USA's HERO campaign to provide quality education for HIV/AIDS affected children. Later, when appointed as the Director of the Economic Development Committee, she organized the successful Fair Trade Bazaar. In November 2006, Andrea attended the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) Conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as a delegate of the Project Argentina team. Inspired by that experience, Andrea is in the progress of creating an international young professionals network.

Andrea also sits on UNA-USA YPIC's National Leadership Council, reporting YPIC Chapter updates to the Leadership Council's Executive Committee.

Fluent in Italian, Mandarin and Spanish, Andrea holds a B.A. in International Affairs with a minor in History from John Cabot University in Rome, Italy and the University of Wales, Cardiff. Andrea currently works in Business Development at Proskauer Rose.

Find out more information about UNA-SNY YPIC COMMITTEES:

African Affairs Committee, Career Events, Economic Development, European Affairs, Human Rights, Humanitarian Affairs, Latin American Affairs, and Marketing and Communications

http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/ypic_committees.html

UNA-SNY YPIC EVENTS INFORMATION

<http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/ypicevents.html>

UNA-SNY Young Professionals for International Cooperation

UPCOMING EVENTS

Friends of Africa Awards Celebration

Thursday, June 21, 2007 | 7:00pm

Institute for International Education (IIE)
809 United Nations Plaza

Honoree Dikembe Mutombo, NBA All Star and Youth Em-
issary for UNDP. Mr. Mutombo will be honored for his
philanthropic work throughout Africa, particularly in The
Democratic Republic of Congo where he recently built the
state-of-the-art Biamba Marie Mutombo Hospital.

Keynote Speaker

Ms. Gayle Smith, Senior Fellow at the Center for Ameri-
can Progress. Ms. Smith served as Special Assistant to the
President and Senior Director for African Affairs at the
National Security Council from 1998-2001, and as Senior
Advisor to the Administrator and Chief of Staff of the U.S.
Agency for International Development from 1994-1998.

We will celebrate the many African cultures from dance
and music to the cuisines, art, and much more. African
cuisine buffet will be served.

A portion of the proceeds from this event will go to the
Dikembe Mutombo Foundation, which is dedicated to
improving the health, education, and quality of life for
people of the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Ticket price:

Non-members: \$65 | UNA members: \$50.00

Students; and employees of Non-Profit, NGOs, and the
UN: \$35.00

Dress code: Business formal or ethnic dress.

Register here: <http://www.unausa.org/friendsof africa>

For complete event, speaker, and honoree details,
please visit: <http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/FOAremind.pdf>

OPEN UNA-SNY YPIC LEADERSHIP POSITIONS:

- Secretary
- Humans Rights Committee Director

To find out more:

<http://www.unanyc.org/ypic/OpenPositions.doc>

*That's it for the fifth edition of the UNA-SNY YPIC
Newsletter.*

*If you have any comments or opinions about the articles you
have read, please email editor@unanyc.org.*

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ABOUT UNA-SNY YPIC:

*YPIC Southern New York State Division is a unique forum in which young
professionals can network and learn more about international issues,
the work of the UN, and the importance of multilateral cooperation.
UNA-SNY YPIC runs a year-round calendar of events and activities that
provide networking forums and education for our members, young pro-
fessionals, and students in the community. For more information visit
www.unanyc.org/ypic/ypic.html.*

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