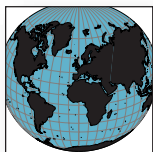




ONE COUNTRY

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Newsletter of the Bahá'í
International Community
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Perspective: Extreme poverty, moral imperative, and the new Millennium.



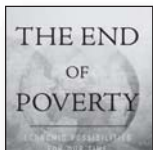
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At the UN, women rally to preserve advances gained in Beijing

Ten-year review of 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women finds a mixed record of gains and delays on women's rights worldwide and sees a large turnout of NGOs.

UNITED NATIONS — For two weeks in March, the stately halls of the glass and steel UN building took on a distinctly different look and feel.

Thousands of women representing grassroots organizations from all over the world descended on this center of international diplomacy, bringing with them a colorful diversity that was reminiscent of the vibrant atmosphere at a previous UN conference held some ten years ago in Beijing.

In multihued Indian saris, bright African print dresses, and modest Muslim headscarves, women packed the basement-level conference rooms and upper-level assembly halls here, anxious to ensure that governments do not roll back any of the hard-won rights and prerogatives promised at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

They succeeded, in large part, winning from governments at the 49th session of the Commission on the Status of Women a clearly worded declaration that reaffirmed the commitments made in Beijing, connected the Beijing promises to the Millennium Development Goals, and pledged further action towards their full implementation.

"The full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration," stated the Commission's declaration.

Held 28 February–11 March 2005, the Commission also adopted ten wide-ranging resolutions aimed at further improving women's status. They included texts on the possible appointment of a special rapporteur on discrimination against women, on trafficking in

Beijing + 10, continued on page 10



NGO women from Bangladesh take a break between sessions at the CSW in the United Nations.

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The challenge of extreme poverty

For as long as can be remembered, even people of good conscience have dismissed the challenge posed by extreme poverty as something too overwhelming, too vast, and too complicated to be solved.

But now a team of 265 development experts and economists has concluded that it is possible to end extreme poverty in 20 years.

The team's plan, outlined in the UN Millennium Project Report, which was issued in January, argues that the world now has enough knowledge about the methods and technologies of development to finally end the suffering of the poorest of the poor. What is needed, the Report says, is for the world to move forward in a unified and coordinated manner — and for the rich nations of the world to live up to financial commitments they have already promised.

It's a bold idea, though it should not be. Extreme poverty is condition faced by some 1.1 billion people, according to The World Bank. It is defined by a livelihood of less than US\$1 a day, and as Millennium Project leader Jeffrey Sachs puts it in his new book, *The End of Poverty* [see page 16]:

"Extreme poverty means that households cannot meet basic needs for survival. They are chronically hungry, unable to access health care, lack the amenities of safe drinking water and sanitation, cannot afford education for some or all of the children, and perhaps lack rudimentary shelter — a roof to keep the rain out of the hut, a chimney to remove smoke from the cook stove — and basic articles of clothing, such as shoes."

The expenditure of about \$65 per year for each could end their misery, according to the Project. That is enough to boost the poor to the first rung of the so-called development ladder, after which they can begin to climb further on their own.

Such an expenditure, which amounts to about \$150 billion a year for the next 20 years, is less than the 0.7 percent of the Gross National Product (GNP) that developed nations of the world have collectively promised to devote to overseas development assistance at various UN conferences.

Given even the remote possibility that this

new plan could end extreme poverty, the moral imperative for action becomes very high. Although the history of international development efforts is mixed, with the failure of various grand plans weighing heavily on the minds of donors, the sophisticated and careful analysis undertaken by the Millennium Project requires that we treat the plan very seriously.

The Bahá'í International Community has long believed that poverty can and will be eradicated. More than 100 years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, said that humanity has entered a new age of maturity, in which collective undertakings on a global scale would at long last become possible, to the degree that universal peace and prosperity are on the near horizon.

"The potentialities inherent in the station of man, the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality, must all be manifested in this promised Day of God," wrote Bahá'u'lláh.

In numerous statements, the Community has outlined principles that it believes are essential to the prosecution of successful social and economic development. Many of these are echoed in the Millennium Report.

The Report, for example, calls for an emphasis on education, the recognition of the importance of women in the development process, and the need to encourage grassroots participation and the engagement of civil society. The Report also stresses the importance of applying science and technology to the development process, and the need to encourage good governance.

These and other points have long been advocated by the Community as fundamental to any overall plan for development. One thing, however, that Bahá'ís view as essential and which is not quite so clearly addressed in the Report is the significance of spiritual principles in providing an underlying motivation and direction to the development process.

As the world considers the prospects for the kind of large-scale, globally coordinated effort that is proposed by the Millennium Development Project, it is worth reiterating the necessity of a spiritual perspective.

A purely materialistic approach to devel-

opment ignores the essential reality of human nature and so fails to draw on the motivational powers of the human spirit. Untempered materialism also opens the door to corruption, abuse, and other problems that underlie the failure of the grand development schemes of the past.

Bahá'ís understand that by starting with a spiritual framework, however, such problems can be better overcome. For example, Bahá'ís view the equality of women and men as something more than simply a matter of human rights. Rather, equality is raised to the level of spiritual principle. In this way, countervailing attitudes of superiority and submissiveness entrenched in many populations can be more easily transformed.

Likewise, the Bahá'í spiritual teachings elevate the idea of productive work to the level of worship. This concept, Bahá'ís believe, offers an important means for motivating those populations where an inadequate work ethic impedes development. “Please God, the poor may exert themselves and strive to earn the means of livelihood,” Bahá'u'lláh wrote. “This is a duty which, in this most great Revelation, hath been prescribed unto every one, and is accounted in the sight of God as a goodly deed.”

Or take the issue of so-called “popular participation,” which has become a buzzword for the idea that the target population must be engaged in the process of its own development. Bahá'ís wholeheartedly embrace this principle and more, long advocating that without the essential involvement of people at the grassroots, development efforts tend to be layered on top and, as such, nearly always falter and fail.

Too often, development protagonists from the outside are unwittingly responsible for this problem. Despite good intentions, they sometimes come with an attitude — often quite subtle — that they know what's best for people at the grassroots.

When the spiritual principle of the oneness of humanity is embraced by all participants, however, the genuine give-and-take that is necessary in any successful program of development assistance is better able to flourish.

Apart from making the Millennium Project plan more coherent, consideration of underlying spiritual principles provides another important contribution towards ending poverty. Chief among the conceptual elements of the Millennium Project plan is the importance of outside help. The plan's economists believe firmly that the extreme poor cannot lift them-

selves out of poverty on their own. In economic terms, the extreme poor don't have enough capital resources, whether fiscal, human, or environmental, to advance beyond the subsistence level. And because capital inevitably depreciates — money is used for subsistence or eaten by inflation, human capital deteriorates as people age or succumb to disease, and environmental capital depreciates when fields lose their fertility, etc. — they sink lower and lower without resources from the outside.

In other words, the poor cannot be expected to pull themselves up by their bootstraps if they don't have boots.

Yet the rich nations of the world have failed to fulfill the promises that they have made. On average, according to the Report, rich nations currently give about .2 percent of their annual economic output for international development assistance. Yet, when it comes to internal development, those same countries spend upwards of 30 percent of their GNP on education, infrastructure, health, and other “common goods” aimed at pulling their own societies even further up the development ladder.

The political reality is that rich countries' political leaders perceive that most of their constituents are not willing to make the sacrifice that would be required to send higher levels of aid to non-countrymen overseas.

Bahá'ís would suggest an understanding of spiritual principles could, again, provide motivation on this point. From a materialistic frame of mind, the only incentive to help others is self-interest. And, indeed, the Millennium Project appeals to this sense of self-interest by noting that extreme poverty ultimately contributes to global insecurity, environmental damage, and, even, terrorism.

Yet it does not hurt to be reminded that all of the world's religious systems have placed a high moral value on helping the poor. The Bahá'í Faith is no exception. “They who are possessed of riches, however, must have the utmost regard for the poor,” wrote Bahá'u'lláh.

All religions speak of the Golden Rule, asking us to consider the needs of our neighbor as much as ourselves. Bahá'ís believe that our sense of neighborhood must today be enlarged to encompass the entire planet. We now live in a global neighborhood, and the suffering of one is the suffering of all.

Consider the resources that might be unlocked if people in rich countries were to fully embrace this principle. In the words of Bahá'u'lláh: “The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens.”*

The Bahá'í International Community has long believed that poverty can and will be eradicated. More than 100 years ago, Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of the Bahá'í Faith, said that humanity has entered a new age of maturity, in which collective undertakings on a global scale would at long last become possible, to the degree that universal peace and prosperity are on the near horizon.

Copenhagen plus 10 fights to keep social development at center stage

Advocates for the world's poor, the unemployed, and the disempowered, laboring under the shadow of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and all that followed, indicated they were hard-pressed merely to hold ground on social development promises.

UNITED NATIONS – In 1995, in the glow of a post-cold war euphoria that the world's great social problems had at long last moved ahead of security on the international agenda, world leaders gathered in Copenhagen and forged a new global plan for “people-centered” development.

In February 2005, however, at the ten-year review of the World Summit for Social Development (WSSD), many suggested that security concerns have once again partly displaced compassion and social justice on the international agenda.

“A novel and disturbing component of the international climate for social development has been the reappearance of security issues on the centre stage of national and international debate,” said a report addressed to the Commission from UN Secretary General Kofi Annan.

Advocates for the world's poor, the unemployed, and the disempowered, laboring under the shadow of the 11 September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and all that followed, indicated they were hard-pressed merely to hold their ground in the new international environment.

For many, then, it was a victory that the nations gathered for 43rd session of the Com-

mission on Social Development (CSD) issued a declaration simply upholding the main principles adopted ten years earlier in Copenhagen with no dilution or retreat.

Meeting from 9 to 18 February 2005, the 46 nations that compose the Commission issued a 10-point declaration that, among other things, stressed that the Copenhagen commitments and the more recently agreed upon Millennium Development Goals “are mutually reinforcing” and “crucial to a coherent, people-centered approach to development.”

“We...dedicate ourselves, a decade after Copenhagen...to building solidarity, and renew our invitation to all people in all countries and in all walks of life, as well as the international community, to join in realizing our shared vision for a more just and equitable world,” the Commission's Declaration said.

“Therefore,” the Commission concluded, “we reaffirm our will and commitment to continue implementing the Declaration and Program of Action, in particular to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration to achieve stable, safe and just societies for all.”

The Social Summit, held March 1995 in Copenhagen, was at the time the largest gath-

Bahá'í International Community representative Bahiyyih Chaffers, center, chairing a discussion at the CSD Civil Society Forum on 8 February 2005. Left to right are: Denys Correll, executive director of the International Council on Social Welfare; Pamela Mboya, chairperson of HelpAge Kenya; Ms. Chaffers; Elsa Ramos, director, equality and youth, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions; Huguette Redegeld, vice president, International Movement ATD Fourth World.



ering of world leaders ever held. Some 115 world leaders pledged to make the conquest of poverty, the goal of full employment, and the fostering of social integration the overriding objectives of national and international development efforts.

Specifically, the Copenhagen Declaration and Program of Action called for a comprehensive, compassionate, and people-centered approach to social and economic development worldwide. It stressed especially the need to empower women and marginalized groups everywhere, and asked for the industrialized countries to devote more to the most needy, whether at home or overseas.

The Copenhagen agreements also urged governments to bring civil society and private enterprise into a stronger partnership, affirming the importance of involving people at the grassroots level in formulating local and regional development policies.

Secretary-General's Conclusions

Mr. Annan's report to the Commission concluded that, overall, progress has been mixed in realizing Copenhagen's goals. While some statistical indicators showed a reduction of poverty and an improved access to primary education, the overarching goal of creating a sustainable, people-centered, "enabling environment" for social development had fallen short, with international policy makers tending to focus more on economics than human beings and their needs.

"[T]he all-encompassing approach to development as advanced by the Summit has been lost or severely weakened in the international policy-making arena," said the report. "While poverty has taken its rightful place of prominence, the comprehensive socio-economic understanding of poverty promoted by the Summit stands in contrast to the narrower concept and measurement currently used. In addition, the other two core themes of the Summit, namely full employment and social integration, have been by and large left aside, if not ignored."

Moreover, said the report, some regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, have, in fact, barely improved statistically, "and some indicators have regressed." Even though international development assistance increased to sub-Saharan Africa by a few percentage points from 1995 to 2001, the report said, per capita income economic growth in the region had decelerated, with per capita income in Africa declining from US\$520 to US\$469.

The report said that despite promises for increased international development assistance from donor countries, most have failed to meet the target of 0.7 percent gross national product in such assistance.

"On the positive side, democratization and the increasingly important role of civil society organizations as partners for social development, despite the decline in the role of trade unions, helped to promote transparency and accountability," the report said. "However, the actual implementation of policy still lags behind."

In the Commission's Declaration, governments not only sought to reaffirm the basic commitments at Copenhagen, they also included language aimed specifically at some of the more egregious failures in meeting Copenhagen's goals, specifically with regard to the spread of HIV/AIDS and deep poverty in Africa.

Governments also stated that they recognize that "ten years after Copenhagen, despite the efforts made and progress achieved in economic and social development, the situation of many developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries as well as countries with economies in transition, requires further attention and action...."

Governments speak

More than 20 government ministers addressed the meeting, an unusually high level for a UN Commission meeting, which reflected the degree of seriousness with which the UN approached the review of the Copenhagen accords.

At the center of many government statements — as well as in statements by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and UN agencies — was the need to link the Copenhagen vision for comprehensive development to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) adopted by world leaders in 2000. The MDGs set measurable targets for action against poverty, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation, and discrimination against women.

In the view of many at the Commission, the MDGs, while important, are too narrowly focused. "Social development...has a broad canvas beyond structured commitments and a set of goals and targets," said Zulfikur Rahman, Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Bangladesh. "We need to embrace a holistic approach for social development with all stakeholders on board and forgetting none."

"We need to embrace a holistic approach for social development with all stakeholders on board and forgetting none."

**– Zulfikur Rahman,
Counsellor,
Permanent Mission
of Bangladesh**



Dr. Haleh Arbab Correa, representing the Bahá'í-inspired development organization FUNDAEC, participated in a high-level panel on "Promoting Full Employment" during the UN review of the Copenhagen Social Summit.

"People should not be looked at as problems. People are resources. Development requires participation. People can take charge of their own development with proper education."

– Haleh Arbab Correa, Rector, University Center for Rural Well-being, Colombia

Civil Society Forum

The importance of keeping to Copenhagen's comprehensive vision was the main theme of the one-day Civil Society Forum held 8 February, which was attended by about 150 NGO representatives.

"Copenhagen provided us with a framework where we can take a global view," said Huguette Redegeld, vice president of International Movement ATD Fourth World. "Extreme poverty is not limited just to income but includes issues of access to health, and so on. It is also inseparable from human rights. We have to be sure that the Millennium Development Goals do not become a step backwards from the Copenhagen Declaration."

NGOs issued a declaration of their own, stating that "we believe that governments of the world by and large have neglected the commitments made ten years ago. It is shameful that in this age of extraordinary wealth and rapid technological progress 1.2 billion people live in extreme and chronic poverty, when measured by economics alone."

Bahá'í participation

For its part, the Bahá'í International Community was an active participant in the Forum — and in the Commission meeting itself.

Bahiyyih Chaffers, a Bahá'í International Community Representative to the UN, chaired one of the Forum's main panel discussions, a round-table on "Why Copenhagen Matters for the Millennium Development Goals."

A member of the executive committee of the NGO Committee on Social Development, Ms. Chaffers said the "age-old dream

of global peace" cannot be established without "a galvanizing vision of global prosperity" marked by the "material and spiritual well-being" of all the world's inhabitants.

On 10 February, Haleh Arbab Correa, representing the Bahá'í-inspired development organization FUNDAEC, participated in a high-level panel on "Promoting Full Employment," sitting side by side with ministers and ambassadors from more than 20 countries.

Dr. Arbab Correa also discussed the importance of taking into consideration humanity's spiritual reality in her comments.

Saying that education was key to promoting full employment, she emphasized the importance of training young people with the skills and capabilities they will need to create a better world.

"As a Bahá'í-inspired institution, we emphasize the importance of spiritual and moral values," said Dr. Arbab Correa. "Our program focuses on the spiritual, intellectual, and social aspects of the human being."

She said also that a key motivating factor in such training is to focus on the importance of service to humanity, more than merely self-enrichment.

"If we want to train human beings to participate in the construction of a better world, it is important to emphasize the service aspect," she said.

Dr. Arbab Correa also participated in a "side event" at the CSD, on "Participation Works: International Success Stories in the Fight Against Poverty," where she presented the experience of FUNDAEC, which is based in Colombia.

"People should not be looked at as problems," said Dr. Arbab Correa, who is Rector of FUNDAEC's University Center for Rural Well-being. "People are resources. Development requires participation. People can take charge of their own development with proper education."

FUNDAEC, a Spanish acronym for "The Foundation for the Application and Teaching of the Sciences," is a not-for-profit, non-governmental organization with 30 years of experience in rural Colombia.

Too often, said Dr. Arbab Correa, people are viewed as consumers, simply part of the market. But society is not a jungle, and development programs should aim at cooperation instead of competition.

"Human beings have a noble, spiritual aspect," said Dr. Arbab Correa. "The role of education and development is to bring out those potentialities." ❀

Bahá'í International Community dismayed at lack of human rights resolution on Iran as persecution worsens

GENEVA — The Bahá'í International Community has expressed its dismay and disappointment at the failure of the UN Commission on Human Rights even to consider a resolution on human rights in Iran this year.

"In view of the sharp increase of human rights violations against the Bahá'í community of Iran, it is nothing less than shocking that the Commission on Human Rights has for the third year in a row failed to renew international monitoring of the situation," said Bani Dugal, principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.

Ms. Dugal made the comments in a press release on 14 April 2005, the last day for the Commission to vote on country resolutions.

"Over the past year, two important Bahá'í holy places have been destroyed, Bahá'í students have been denied access to higher education, and, most recently, Bahá'ís in Yazd and Tehran have been swept up in a new wave of assaults, harassment, and detentions," said Ms. Dugal.

"All of this has come as part of a continuing pattern of religious persecution instigated and condoned by the Iranian government, which has in years past faced the clear condemnation of the international community for its actions.

"We are very disappointed at the failure of the Commission on Human Rights to live up to its mandate," said Ms. Dugal. "Unfortunately, countries which in the past have initiated resolutions calling for the international monitoring of Iran backed away from the table again this year."

In March, the Community strongly urged the Commission to put forward and pass a resolution on the situation in Iran, saying that "the gross, flagrant, repeated violations of human rights in Iran — including the abuses that target Bahá'ís in that country — warrant the re-establishment of a monitoring mechanism."

"For three years, this Commission has not been capable of presenting a resolution on Iran, while the situation there has gradually but steadily deteriorated," said Diane

Ala'i, the community's representative to the United Nations in Geneva, in a statement to the Commission on 23 March 2005.

"And now, over the past few months, we have had the impression of a shifting back in time, some 20 years or more, as we have witnessed a resumption of violent attacks on the Bahá'í community in Iran," said Ms. Ala'i.

"The most serious outbreak occurred in Yazd, where several Bahá'ís were assaulted in their homes and beaten, a Bahá'ís shop was set on fire and burned, and others were harassed and threatened, following a series of arrests and short-term detentions. The Bahá'í cemetery in Yazd was wantonly destroyed, with cars driven over the graves, tombstones smashed and the remains of the interred left exposed."

Ms. Ala'i also said that in March, in Tehran, Iranian intelligence agents entered the homes of several Bahá'ís and spent hours ransacking their houses before carting away their possessions and taking them into custody.

"Five Bahá'ís have been imprisoned just this past month," said Ms. Ala'i. "Two were finally released on bail, but family and community members have not been able to locate those in detention. Two others, who had previously been briefly detained for nothing more than distributing copies of a courteous letter to President Khatami, have now received the maximum sentence for this so-called offence.

"Six more Bahá'í families recently had their homes and land confiscated, depriving them of their only means of livelihood."

"Indeed, human rights violations in Iran have again become so grave that, in our view, they warrant a clear signal from the international community and a decision to reestablish international monitoring — now," said Ms. Ala'i in March.

Between 1978 and 1998, the Iranian government executed more than 200 Bahá'ís. While Iran has halted the most egregious forms of direct violence towards Bahá'ís in the face of international pressure, the government has nevertheless continued a campaign of social and economic restrictions that aim at slowly suffocating an entire religious community.*

"The most serious outbreak occurred in Yazd, where several Bahá'ís were assaulted in their homes and beaten, a Bahá'í's shop was set on fire and burned, and others were harassed and threatened, following a series of arrests and short-term detentions."

– Diane Ala'i, Bahá'í International Community

Two new members join the Universal House of Justice

Payman Mohajer and Paul Lample fill vacancies created by the departure of Ian Semple and Douglas Martin, who left after many years of service on the Universal House of Justice. Balloting was done by mail, with the nine members of each of the 183 national-level Bahá'í governing councils around the world serving as electors.

HAIFA, Israel – In a by-election involving the 183 national Bahá'í communities worldwide, two new members have been elected to the international governing council of the Bahá'í Faith.

The two new members of the Universal House of Justice, Payman Mohajer and Paul Lample, fill vacancies created by the departure of Ian Semple and Douglas Martin, who left after many years of service on the council.

The results of the by-election were announced on 21 March 2005, the first day of the Bahá'í new year. Balloting was done by mail, with the nine members of each of the 183 national-level Bahá'í governing councils around the world serving as electors.

Dr. Mohajer was born in Tehran, Iran, where he received his elementary education. He then went with his family to India where he received a degree in homeopathic medicine in 1984. After several years' work in his medical clinic, Dr. Mohajer completed a master's degree in psychology.

In 1996, his interest in the field of education led him to establish a Bahá'í-inspired institution, the Foundation for the Advance-

ment of Science.

He was appointed as an Auxiliary Board member in 1986, serving until he was appointed to the Continental Board of Counselors in Asia in 1991. He was called to serve as a member of the International Teaching Centre in 1998 and was reappointed in 2003. He and his wife, Svetlana, have three children.

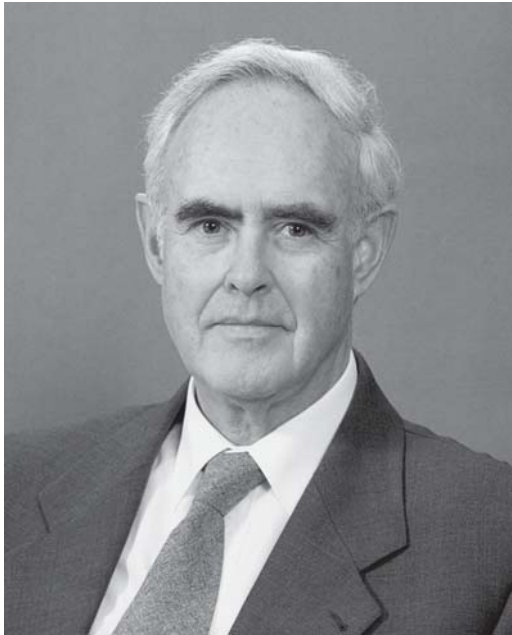
Mr. Lample, an author and educator, was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States of America. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in biology from Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, and a Master of Science from the National University in San Diego, California. In the early 1990s he served on the National Teaching Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States.

In 1994 he moved to the Bahá'í World Centre to serve as coordinator of the Office of Social and Economic Development. He was appointed to the International Teaching Centre in 2003. Mr. Lample and his wife, Marcia, have three children.

The other members of the Universal House of Justice are Farzam Arbab, Kiser



Newly elected members of the Universal House of Justice, Payman Mohajer, left, and Paul Lample, right.



Former members of the Universal House of Justice, Ian Semple, left, and Douglas Martin, right.

Barnes, Hooper Dunbar, Hartmut Grossmann, Firaydoun Javaheri, Peter Khan, and Glenford Mitchell.

Re-elected to five-year terms in 2003, Messrs. Semple and Martin requested permission from the Universal House of Justice to resign their office owing to considerations of age and related needs of the Faith. Mr. Semple, 76, served on the Universal House of Justice since it was first established in 1963. Mr. Martin, 78, served since 1993.

Mr. Semple was born in 1928 in England. He did his national service in the British Army from 1947-50, during which period he earned a commission in the Royal Corps of Signals.

He studied at Pembroke College, Oxford, obtaining a BA in German and French Language and Literature in 1952 and an MA in 1955. He subsequently studied accounting in the City of London, qualifying as a Chartered Accountant in 1955 and becoming a Fellow of the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales.

Mr. Semple became a member of the Bahá'í Faith in 1950 and was first elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles in 1956. He served on that body, latterly as its secretary, until he moved to Haifa upon his election in 1961 to the International Bahá'í Council, on which he served as assistant secretary.

Mr. Semple has delivered many addresses on the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. He is married to Mrs. Louise Semple (nee Gloor), and they have three children.

Mr. Douglas Martin was born in 1927 in Ontario, Canada. He holds a Bachelor's degree in business administration from the

University of Western Ontario and a Master's degree in history from the University of Waterloo, Ontario.

Mr. Martin was a consultant in advertising and public relations until he devoted himself exclusively to Bahá'í administration and scholarship.

He was a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada from 1960-1985, serving as its general secretary from 1965-1985. From 1985-1993 he was director-general of the Bahá'í International Community's Office of Public Information at the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa.

With Dr. William S. Hatcher, he co-authored *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, published by Harper & Row and later by the US Bahá'í Publishing Trust. He has also published articles and scholarly monographs and lectured widely on the Bahá'í Faith.

He is a former executive editor of *One Country*. He also served as editor-in-chief of *The Bahá'í World*, a series of annual reference volumes. He was a founding member of the Association for Bahá'í Studies, serving on its international executive committee from 1974-1985. His wife, Mrs. Elizabeth Martin, passed away in 1999.

The Faith, which has no clergy, administers its affairs through democratically elected councils at the international, national, and local levels. Bahá'í elections take place without campaigning or nominations, the results being determined by plurality vote. Members of the Universal House of Justice are elected by members of all National Spiritual Assemblies.*

With no clergy, the worldwide community of the Bahá'í Faith administers its affairs through democratically elected councils at the international, national, and local levels. Bahá'í elections take place without campaigning or nominations, the results being determined by plurality vote.

At the UN, women rally to preserve advances gained in Beijing

Participants in the observance of International Women's Day at the United Nations on 4 March 2005. Second from the left is Bani Dugal, the Principal Representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.



Beijing + 10, continued from page one

women, and on the importance of gender perspective in relation to women's economic advancement.

"Without doubt, the participation of thousands of women activists in the Beijing review process had its impact on governments," said Bani Dugal, chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women. "The diversity of women represented from every region, along with the evident participation of younger women, demonstrated the strength of the global women's movement — and its commitment to seeing that the governments of the world fulfill the promises made in Beijing."

Ms. Dugal, who is also the principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations, said that more than 2,700 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations participated in the Commission, a record-breaking number for NGOs at a UN commission meeting.

Evaluating Beijing's milestone

The 1995 Beijing Conference has been widely viewed as a milestone in international efforts to promote the advancement of women. Representatives of 189 nations adopted a sweeping Declaration and Platform for Action that sought to launch a global campaign to bring women into full and equal participation in all spheres of public and private life worldwide.

Held 4-15 September 1995, the Conference was one of the largest international meetings ever convened under United Nations auspices, with some 17,000 people registered. Many were representatives of non-governmental organizations, which also held their own parallel NGO Forum, drawing more than 20,000 people.

In addition to an overall agenda for women's empowerment, the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action dealt with 12 critical areas of concern for women: poverty, education, health, violence against women, armed conflict, economic struc-

Held 28 February–11 March 2005, more than 2,700 representatives of Non-Governmental Organizations participated in the 49th Commission on the Status of Women, a record-breaking number for NGOs at a UN commission meeting.

tures, power sharing and decision making, mechanisms to promote the advancement of women, human rights, the media, the environment, and the girl child.

The Commission meeting in March 2005 was charged with reviewing the success governments have had in implementing the Platform for Action. By all accounts, the record was mixed.

Some 95 governments spoke at a high-level plenary session during the first week of the Commission, and the majority were represented at the ministerial level. For the most part, government representatives told of progress at implementing Beijing Platform for Action goals. But many were also frank about shortcomings.

"Despite many achievements in the implementation of the Declaration and Beijing Platform for Action, we have identified some gaps and challenges that persist, such as women's disproportionate representation among the poor; the high prevalence rate of HIV/AIDS among women; the low level of women's participation in decision making at various levels; continued violence against women, including trafficking in women and children; gender stereotyping; and lack of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics," said Meutia Farida Hatta Swasono, Indonesia's state minister for Women's Empowerment.

At the center of many discussions was a report to the Commission by the UN Secretary General that sought to present an overview of progress and failure in meeting Beijing goals. On the positive side, the report said, Beijing had fostered a dramatic change worldwide in attitudes towards women's rights.

"Over the past 10 years, the status and role of women has undergone a significant change on a global scale although not at an equal pace in all regions," said the report, which was issued on 6 December 2004.

Yet, the report added, a "large gap remains between policy and practice in promotion of gender equality."

Positive trends detailed by the report included a greater emphasis on women's rights as human rights, a stronger commitment by governments to gender mainstreaming, and the passage of more national-level legislation to eliminate discrimination and promote gender equality.

"Many Governments also noted an increase in women's organizations and networks and their critical advocacy role, for

example in relation to violence against women," the report added. "They also reported enhancing collaboration with NGOs and civil society groups and networks."

As well, the report said, there have been statistical improvements in the number of girls in school, in women's poverty, in women's health, and in the representation of women in public life.

Shortfalls in implementation

At the same time, however, the report noted many shortfalls in implementation, including low levels of women's representation in decision-making positions, stereotypical attitudes and discriminatory practices, and occupational segregation.

"Violence against women, including domestic violence, was noted as a major challenge worldwide, with several African countries reporting continuing harmful practices," the report said. "In some regions, in particular in Africa, parts of Asia and Latin America and the Caribbean, Governments noted disproportionately high poverty levels among women and insufficient access to or control of economic resources."

Both the report and others at the Commission also identified several new areas of special concern in relation to women's rights and advancement worldwide. In particular, there was much discussion of the impact of HIV/AIDS on women, the impact of war and conflict on women, and the general acknowledgment that trafficking in women has emerged as a major global concern.

Bani Dugal, chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, speaking on International Women's Day, 4 March 2005.



Women from various organizations from around the world lined up to speak at the one-day NGO Forum, held at Barnard College before the Beijing Plus 10 meeting at the UN.



"The positive thing accomplished at the Commission is that all 191 member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, and stated that the MDGs cannot be met unless member states dedicate their efforts to advancing the status of women in their countries."

– Bani Dugal, chair of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women

"HIV/AIDS continues to pose serious global challenges to realizing the goals set for the advancement of women," said Glenda Simms, executive Director of the Bureau of Women's Affairs in Jamaica, in a speech on behalf of the Group of 77 at the Commission's high-level plenary. "The statistics are now showing that the rate of infection and spread of the disease is now more pronounced among the populations of women and girls in many countries.

"For the majority of women in the developing world, access to affordable drugs to treat the disease, the growing number of children being orphaned by the disease, or stigmatized for being infected with it remains problematic. We must therefore spare no effort in the battle to solve the problem of the spread of HIV/AIDS," said Dr. Simms.

Violence a concern

Dr. Simms and others also said that violence against women was a major human rights concern, and a high priority for international action.

"The acts of violence, be [they] in the public or private life of women, are a violation of their human rights," said Ambassador Juliana di Tullio, Argentina's International Special Representative on Women's Issues, also speaking on behalf of the Rio Group. "One of the principal goals of the countries of our region is to design adequate policies to eliminate all forms of violence against women, especially domestic violence, both physical and psychological."

Amb. Tullio said such programs must include a wide range of actions, including the integration of men and boys, community campaigns of public education, and the strengthening of social services. "We will not tolerate any form of violence against women and girls," she said.

The Declaration also establishes a link between the Platform and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), stating that "the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action is essential to achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration."

"The positive thing accomplished at the Commission is that all 191 member states of the United Nations reaffirmed their commitment to the Beijing Platform for Action, and stated that the MDGs cannot be met unless member states dedicate their efforts to advancing the status of women in their countries," said Ms. Dugal, of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women.

"Because we know that if the ultimate aim of the MDGs is to halve poverty by 2015, and we know that it is women and children who are the most marginalized in poverty stricken parts of the world, then it is important to recognize that unless countries act to alleviate the conditions faced by women, they cannot effectively meet the goal of halving poverty," said Ms. Dugal.

Unusual measures for NGOs

Among the most important features of the

1995 Beijing conference was the high-level of involvement by NGOs — and the subsequent commitment in the Platform for Action for on-going partnership with civil society in addressing women's issues.

The continuing interest and activism of women's organizations and other groups was clear at the Commission. Some 2,700 non-governmental organizations registered to participate in the meeting, a figure up by nearly 1,000 over the number of NGOs registered for the Beijing Plus Five conference in New York in 2000 and about 1,700 more than a typical Commission meeting.

In response to the record-breaking attendance, the UN took a number of unusual measures to accommodate their participation. Extra processing stations to provide building security passes were set up and kept open late on the night before the Commission. As well, special food service areas were set up within the building and on the grounds to accommodate the anticipated extra numbers of people. And several basement-level conference rooms were equipped with large television screens so that the overflow crowds of NGO representatives could watch the high-level session.

"The Commission's secretariat really worked hard to make NGO participation as effective as possible," said Ms. Dugal.

NGOs also organized a one-day Forum before the Commission. Hosted at Barnard College on the upper west side of Manhattan, the event showcased the degree to which women's groups have successfully organized to lobby the UN — and also reached high levels in governments and in the UN system itself. In some cases, women have moved back and forth between NGOs and governments in revolving door fashion.

For example, the Forum's keynote speaker was Ambassador Kyung-wha Kang of South Korea, the chair of the Commission. During the 1995 Beijing conference, she was a member of a Korean-based women's NGO.

Another speaker at the Forum was Patricia Licuanan, who represented NGOs in Asia and the Pacific. Ten years ago in Beijing, however, she was on the government delegation from the Philippines, and acted as chairperson of the Main Committee of the Fourth World Conference on Women.

Other notable women in attendance at the Forum included Zanele Mbeki, the First Lady of South Africa.

One of the main concerns of those gathered at the 2005 Forum was that governments not be allowed to re-open and retract any of the commitments to women's rights that were made in Beijing.

Indeed, one of the key efforts undertaken by NGOs during the first week of the Commission was to convince the United States government to back away from language it wanted to insert into the draft Declaration regarding abortion. That language, which according to news accounts sought to state that the Beijing accords "do not create any new international human rights, and that they do not include the right to abortion," was viewed as a challenge to the overall advance of women's right by many groups.

In NGO caucus sessions during the week, NGO representatives were urged to call their governments to express concern about the US-submitted amendment. The tactics apparently worked, as by week's end, the amendment was dropped.

"One of the things we have shown, simply by the numbers of our registration, is that the women's movement is alive and kicking," said Charlotte Bunch, Director of the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University. "We are still a global force and the Beijing Platform for action has a constituency. It is not a document only. It represents the life, blood, sweat, and tears of women all over the world." ❀

"One of the things we have shown, simply by the numbers of our registration, is that the women's movement is alive and kicking."

**– Charlotte Bunch,
Director of the
Center for Women's
Global Leadership**



Among the performances featured at a national Bahá'í arts festival in the Philippines in December was this Ingorot dance. Bahá'í artists came from 20 localities in the country to perform, display their art, and encourage others to explore their own artistic skills and talents. Shown here are, left to right, Sylvia Tamangen, Tahirih Tamangen, Christine Luis, Zorba Tamangen.

Bahá'ís in three African nations celebrate 50 years of accomplishments

GABORONE, Botswana — Half a century ago, because of apartheid restrictions, the Bahá'ís of Botswana had to meet under the cover of darkness. Today, however, the community is well accepted — including by the Government.

Celebrations of the Bahá'í community's 50th anniversary here in December featured an address by Margaret Nasha, the Minister of Local Government, who praised it for its systematic training courses and its efforts to “further the development of Botswana along moral and ethical lines.”

Dr. Nasha spoke of the importance of Bahá'í capacity-building study circles, which enhance, for example, abilities to teach values to children, to express one's views more eloquently, and to assist others to independently investigate spiritual truths.

She also praised the Bahá'í children's classes, which are open to the wider public, as are Bahá'í study circles and devotional meetings.

Dr. Nasha said that Bahá'í children's classes teach “the oneness of humanity, the equality of boys and girls in the eyes of God, and the need for honesty and kindness in their dealings with other people.”

Two other Bahá'í communities in Africa also celebrated their golden jubilees in December 2004.

Rwanda

Commemorations in Rwanda also featured remarks by a government representative. Ndigabo Francois, a Rwandan government official from Nyagisagara, praised the

Bahá'í community for its efforts to build unity and understanding between Rwandans of different ethnic backgrounds.

Those efforts include a statement in March 2000 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Rwanda to the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation. The Assembly urged that consideration be given to making the principle of the oneness of humanity the basis for reconciliation in the country.

Uzziel Mihembezo, one of the early Bahá'ís of Rwanda, said that despite the genocide in 1994, during which Bahá'ís were among the 800,000 who perished, the Bahá'í community continues to grow. There are today 28 Local Spiritual Assemblies in Rwanda, with Bahá'í residing in 106 localities.

The 450 participants at the jubilee celebrations came from different regions of Rwanda, as well as from Burundi, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Zimbabwe.

Journalists from eight newspapers and magazines and from the Rwanda National Radio and Radio Flash FM covered the event. The three main newspapers in the country — one in French, one in English and one in Kinyarwanda — published articles about the jubilee.

The Gambia

In The Gambia, the 50th anniversary of the Faith's establishment there featured the opening of a new national center in the coastal town of Bakau, about 10 km from the capital of Banjul.

Among the more than 200 people attending the opening and dedication ceremony of the national center on 24 December 2004 were representatives of the Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, and Muslim communities.

Also present were the nation's solicitor-general, Raymond Sock, and his wife; the headman (Alkalo) of Bakau, Alhaji Luntung Jaiteh; a representative of the local mayor of Kanifing municipality; business people; and other dignitaries.

For more on all of these commemorations, visit <http://news.bahai.org>*

— From Bahá'í World News Service reports

Botswana government minister Dr. Margaret Nasha (center) arrives for the jubilee celebrations with the vice-chair of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Botswana, Sheila Barongwi (left), and Assembly member Esther Moncho. (Photo by Linda Blair)



The End of Poverty

Review, continued from page 16

international affairs, the first two parts of the book alone are worth the price of purchase. His explanations of how economic development works and why some countries over the last 200 years have pulled themselves almost entirely out of poverty while others — notably in Africa and parts of Asia — have lagged behind are clear and well-argued.

“[T]he single most important reason why prosperity spread, and why it continues to spread, is the transmission of technologies and the ideas underlying them,” writes Dr. Sachs. “Even more important than having specific resources in the ground, such as coal, was the ability to use modern, science-based ideas to organize production. The beauty of ideas is that they can be used over and over again, without ever being depleted... This is why we can envision a world in which everybody achieves prosperity.”

The middle of the book, outlining his experiences in promoting economic reform, further sets the stage for his bold claim that extreme poverty can be ended. His experiences in India and China, especially, give him great hope that extreme poverty can be eradicated. Both countries have vast populations of extreme poor but are now benefiting, he believes, from a trade-based, technologically driven rate of growth.

“Who would have guessed 25 years ago that impoverished India would burst upon the world economy in the 1990s through high-tech information services? Nobody.”

The final third of the book offers a clear outline and analysis of the grand plan devised by the Millennium Project, which operated under his direction. It calls for a scaling up of all that has been learned about international development in recent years and applying it, under the management of the United Nations and its various agencies.

It also calls for the scaling up of international donations to poor countries, to the tune of about \$150 billion a year for the next 20 years. “Although introductory economics textbooks preach individualism and decentralized markets, our safety and prosperity depend at least as much on collective decisions to fight disease, promote good science and widespread education, provide critical infrastructure, and act in unison to help the poorest of the poor,” he writes. “Collective action, through effective government

provision of health, education, infrastructure, as well as foreign assistance when needed, underpins economic success.”

The problem is that rich nations have resisted giving that level of assistance. On average, ODA amounts to about .2 percent of gross national product — rather than the .5 percent called for by the Project. But, writes Dr. Sachs, “The effort required of the rich is indeed so slight that to do less is to announce brazenly to a large part of the world, ‘You count for nothing.’”

Dr. Sachs is quite sharply critical of specific governments at times, accusing some countries of a “disconnect between foreign policy rhetoric and foreign policy follow-through” when they promise international aid but fail to deliver it. He is also critical of military intervention, offering up a table linking such interventions to “failed states.”

From a Bahá’í perspective, Sachs’ book has much to recommend it. While Bahá’ís would not necessarily agree with every detail, and would distance themselves from views that veer towards political partisanship, they have long felt that the problem of global poverty should be given a high moral imperative. They also believe that only through a concerted international effort, undertaken in a spirit of unity and sacrifice, can poverty be eradicated.

Much of Dr. Sachs’ analysis, too, will resonate with Bahá’í thinking. To give but one example: Dr. Sachs’ comparison of development to the human body in its complexity.

One cannot help but recall Bahá’u’lláh’s words: “Regard the world as the human body which, though at its creation whole and perfect, hath been afflicted, through various causes, with grave disorders and maladies. Not for one day did it gain ease, nay its sickness waxed more severe, as it fell under the treatment of ignorant physicians, who gave full rein to their personal desires, and have erred grievously.”

For Bahá’ís, as for Dr. Sachs, the answer to such challenges is to be found in unified action on a global scale. “The well-being of mankind, its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established,” wrote Bahá’u’lláh.

Dr. Sachs’ book should be required reading for anyone concerned about international development, global poverty, and even peace and security. The high quality of the economic and political analysis he offers demands a serious discussion, and everyone must ask him- or herself whether we can at long last bring about “the end of poverty.”*

“[T]he single most important reason why prosperity spread, and why it continues to spread, is the transmission of technologies and the ideas underlying them... The beauty of ideas is that they can be used over and over again, without ever being depleted... This is why we can envision a world in which everybody achieves prosperity.”

– Jeffrey Sachs, *The End of Poverty*

Clinical economics for the global emergency room

In an early chapter of his bold and thoroughly engaging new book, Jeffrey Sachs says he has learned much about development economics from watching his wife practice medicine.

"I have watched in awe...how she approaches a medical emergency or complicated case with speed, efficacy, and amazing results," writes Dr. Sachs in *The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time*.

In contrast, he says, "today's development economics is like eighteenth-century medicine, when doctors used leeches to draw blood from their patients, often killing them in the process."

"In the past quarter century, when impoverished countries have pleaded with the rich world for help, they have been sent to the world's money doctor, the IMF. The main IMF prescription has been budgetary belt tightening for patients much too poor to own belts."

What is needed instead, he writes, is a new method for development economics, which he calls "clinical economics."

"Development economics...can improve dramatically if development economists take on some of the key lessons of modern medicine, both in the development of the underlying science and in the systematization of clinical practice," Dr. Sachs writes.

With that analogy, he begins to lay out a broad plan — which was devised in part with the help of some 260 other economists and development experts under the aegis of the UN Millennium Project — that he believes could end extreme poverty in 20 years.

Such an idea — that it might be possible to end the misery suffered by the world's extreme poor — is dramatic, to say the least.

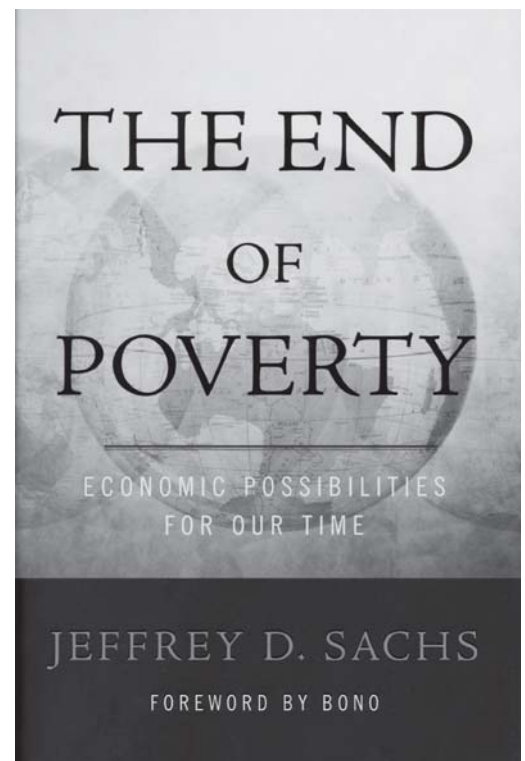
The history of international development is littered with the failure of grand ideas, most notably the huge infrastructure projects of the 1960s and 1970s, which has caused many nations to go slow in the provision of so-called Official Development Assistance (ODA). More recently, some say too much development assistance is diverted into the hands of corrupt governments.

There is also considerable debate about the direction and philosophy of development. Some say trade and private enterprise

are the best engines for pulling the poor out of poverty; others say such an outlook only boosts the fortunes of multinational corporations to the detriment of the world's poor.

Dr. Sachs, who is widely considered one of the best minds in the field, carefully marshals his arguments in favor of his new, clinical approach — and the financial implications it carries. He builds his case in three parts.

First, as might be expected from a former Harvard professor, he offers a primer on economics and his history of development. Second, he offers up his resumé, so to speak, recounting his experiences as an international advisor to the economic reform efforts (some successful, some not) in Bolivia, Poland, Russia, China, India, and select countries in Africa.



Finally, he unfolds the dramatic plan, known as the Millennium Project, that he and a team of other economists and experts have devised at the request of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. [See page 2.]

For anyone interested in development or [Review, continued on page 15](#)

The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time

By Jeffrey D. Sachs

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