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WORLD NEWS

by Lydia Edwards, Kirk Herbertson
& Dave Karlinsky

AFRICA

USAID AND SHELL TO SPEND \$20 MILLION ON DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN NIGERIA'S NIGER DELTA

In February, the United States Agency for International Development ("USAID"), the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture, and the Shell Petroleum Development Company ("SPDC") signed an agreement to implement a \$20 million development program in the Niger Delta of Nigeria.¹ Shell is the largest producer of Nigerian oil.² The purpose of the program is to diversify the source of livelihoods in the impoverished region.³ Shell will contribute \$15 million, and USAID will contribute \$5 million, towards the development of a large-scale cassava enterprise.⁴ Shell plans to continue signing similar agreements with other international development agencies in an effort to ease the tension in underdeveloped communities in oil-bearing regions.⁵ The Niger Delta region has been the site of ethnic violence. In the past year, Shell was forced to evacuate its facilities due to violence in the Warri area.⁶

BIKES AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The International Bicycle Foundation ("IBF") is an independent, non-profit organization that promotes a sustainable, people-friendly environment by creating opportunities of the highest practicable quality for bicycle transportation.⁷ IBF efforts are found all over the world in such countries as Guyana, Ecuador, and India.

In Tunisia, IBF works with *Femmes pour le Développement Durable* ("Women for Sustainable Development"), a Tunisian social and environmental organization. Together they reach the needs of urban and rural women by encouraging the use of bicycles. This effort also encourages pollution control and generates income for many women. The IBF encourages women to use bicycles through games, theater plays, paintings, rallies, awards, booklets, conferences, seminars and workshops. To date, IBF has motivated over 2,000 Tunisian women to start cycling, a majority under age twenty-five.⁸

In Ghana, IBF provides bicycle trailers to women as an alternative to head portage. But the bicycles are also seen as a means to help democratization. In some districts, local government officials walk thirty-one miles to perform assembly functions. The bikes provide a means of transportation in areas that

are not easily accessible by car. So far, 200 bikes have been provided on a hire-to-purchase program.⁹

TENSIONS RISING OVER NILE WATER

A conference scheduled for March 2004 will attempt to settle brewing disputes over the use of the Nile River.¹⁰ Representatives of the Nile Basin nations (Kenya, Tanzania, Egypt, Uganda, Sudan, Burundi, Rwanda, Congo, Ethiopia, and Eritrea) will meet to discuss issues such as irrigation rights and potential hydroelectric projects.

A 1929 treaty between Egypt and Great Britain, who signed on behalf of its colonized regions, governs current use of the river. Under the treaty, Egypt has the right to veto any appropriation of Lake Victoria's water if it believes that Nile flows may be threatened. Nations in the river's upper-basin region therefore have little say regarding how this water is used. In recent years, several of these nations have experienced drought, famine, and extreme poverty. Soil erosion and deforestation plague the region. Many people wonder why they cannot use the waters flowing through their lands. They question whether they must abide by the terms of a treaty signed by colonial masters who have long since disappeared.

Some upper-basin politicians criticize the World Bank for perpetuating the treaty's terms. The World Bank has refused to provide loans to pay for water infrastructure projects in the upper basin until lower-basin nations (such as Egypt) consent. This is a significant obstacle. Egypt has obvious incentives to maintain its generous supply of Nile water. Over 95% of Egypt's water supply comes from the river. Furthermore, most of the country's population resides in the river valley, occupying only 4% of the country's territory.

U.S. COMPANIES WILL RETURN TO LIBYAN OIL

On February 26, 2004, U.S. companies with holdings in Libya were granted permission by the White House to resume deals that had been stalled by 1986 sanctions against Libya.¹¹ The Bush Administration lifted the ban on travel to Libya and invited companies to begin the process of returning but only after Moammar Gadhafi's government renounced weapons of mass destruction, allowed weapons inspectors to enter, and accepted responsibility for the 1988 Pan Am Flight 103 bombing.¹² Libyan oil production has declined to about half of its level of 1970. This summer Libya plans to allow foreign companies to bid on five exploration sites.¹³ If U.S. economic sanctions remain in place, any agreements made by American oil companies will require U.S. approval.¹⁴

ASIA

WOMEN TAKING INITIATIVE IN INDIA

Women for Sustainable Development (“WSD”) is an organization in India that promotes sustainable development to achieve its goal to assist women.¹⁵ They hope to help all women attain a minimum standard of human existence in their villages and towns, and to help set up a forum for women to meet, debate, and decide on matters concerning the development of their lives.

One way this organization has achieved its goal to assist women is through the running of a prototype carbon marketing facility in order to monitor and sell Certified Emissions Reductions (“CERS”) from global environmental services. Another aim of the organization is economic stability for poor rural women. Pursuant to that goal, WSD runs a loan fund for women to borrow money for dairy cows.

HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS EVICTED IN CHINA IN PREPARATION FOR OLYMPICS

The Geneva-based Centre on Housing Rights and Eviction (“Cohre”) announced on February 25, 2004 that China had evicted 300,000 people from their homes in Beijing in preparation for the 2008 Summer Olympics.¹⁶ Scott Leckie, Executive Director of Cohre, reported that such evictions often accompany large international events.¹⁷ Residents of Rome had also been evicted in preparation for the 2004 Summer Olympics.¹⁸

EXPANSION OF WATER PRIVATIZATION IN INDONESIA

The Indonesian legislature has endorsed a water bill allowing for the privatization of the water sector, even though price increases are expected.¹⁹ Providing clean water to municipal and industrial areas may become a profitable business for private corporations both in the United States and in developing countries.²⁰ Municipal governments throughout the world are increasingly having difficulties maintaining public water systems. In Jakarta, Indonesia, 90% of 300 province- and regency-owned tap water companies are on the verge of collapse, because they have been selling water at prices well below production costs.²¹ In India, though, there has been opposition to the idea of privatization of water. The Delhi Jal Board, which runs the capital city’s water supply and sewage disposal, and the Delhi government recently rejected a World Bank report’s suggestions for the privatization of the water sector.²² In the U.S., General Electric has already developed a highly profitable water processing division, GE Water Technologies.²³ Dow Chemicals has begun a venture called Filmtek, a water purification company, which is not yet making significant profit.²⁴ Private water corporations may have an increasing presence in the near future.

MIDDLE EAST

INVASIVE JELLYFISH THREATENS CASPIAN SEA

An invasive species of jellyfish, the “Mnemiopsis”, is decimating native fish stocks in the Caspian Sea and threatening

local fisheries that depend on the stability of the Caspian’s ecosystem.²⁵ Only two inches long, the jellyfish reproduces rapidly, producing up to 8,000 offspring per day. Mnemiopsis feeds on plankton, which are the primary food source of small native fish known as “kilka.” Caspian sturgeon, which feed on kilka, are threatened by the invasion. Local fishermen who harvest sturgeon produce most of the world’s supply of caviar.

Iran has proposed introducing a new fish into the Caspian Sea to combat the threat. The new fish is known as *Beroe ovata*, and is native to the Black Sea. Scientists hope that this new fish will consume the Mnemiopsis in great numbers and help preserve the Caspian’s native ecosystem and its valuable fisheries. There is uncertainty, however, whether this new species can survive in the Caspian’s less salty waters.

AMERICAS

BOLIVIAN INDIGENOUS POPULATION UNSEATS THE PRESIDENT

Following a hunger strike by the residents of El Alto, a Bolivian town populated by Aymaran Indians, the indigenous population of Bolivia began demonstrations which ultimately lead to the resignation of President Lozada.²⁶

The demonstrations began when the President announced that Bolivia would start to export natural gas to the United States and Mexico. The demonstrators alleged that the continued privatization of industry, cost cutting, and pro-U.S. policies advocated by the IMF and the World Bank have increased poverty in the country. They also demanded respect for land tenure agreements and opposed the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas.²⁷ The government believed that the gas exports would attract foreign capital, thereby boosting the economy.

The demonstrators piled rocks, blocking all streets that lead to La Paz, the nation’s capital. They continued for a month, essentially shutting down the city. Striking tin miners and peasants from the Yungas lowlands converged on the capital and continued the blockade of the capital.

The President’s power was very weak even before the protests began. While running for office, he received the same amount of votes as his left wing opponent.²⁸ He was appointed by the Congress. In February, his authority was weakened further as a result of protests against an IMF-backed tax.

President Lozada resigned on October 17, 2003, and Vice President Carlos Mesa was sworn in to complete his term.²⁹ Gas exports have been delayed until December.³⁰

U.S. LANDMINE POLICY ALTERED

On February 27, 2004, the Bush Administration altered the ten-year U.S. policy on eliminating landmines. The original policy began in 1994, when the United States became the first nation to call for the elimination of all persistent landmines. Landmines can lay active for decades before exploding. There have been over 300,000 victims of landmines and 10,000 victims are added annually.³¹ The call for the elimination of persistent landmines was part of a worldwide movement that cul-

minated in the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty. Currently, 141 countries have signed the treaty. Now, the United States will be the only member of NATO not party to the treaty.³²

The U.S. had planned to join the Mine Ban Treaty by 2006.³³ The new policy decision has pushed that date back to 2010. Assistant Secretary of State Lincoln Bloomfield has pointed out that the mines causing the injury toll are not from the U.S. armed forces with the exception of some left over from the Vietnam conflict.³⁴

The Bush Administration's new policy distinguishes between persistent mines and smart mines. While continuing to ban persistent mines, the policy allows for smart mines. Smart mines self-destruct within a certain number of hours or days. If the self-destruct mechanisms fail, then the battery will expire within 90 days.³⁵

Stephen Goose, Executive Director of the Arms Division of Human Rights Watch, criticized the U.S. decision, because the policy change allows U.S. forces to use smart mines indefinitely.³⁶ Assistant Secretary of State Bloomfield commented that the U.S. is still interested in decreasing mine use, and will work through the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons to end the indiscriminate use of all landmines.

GRAY WOLVES CONSIDERED FOR DE-LISTING AS ENDANGERED SPECIES

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has moved to de-list the North American gray wolf under the Endangered Species Act claiming that the wolf has recovered successfully since being reintroduced into Yellowstone National Park in 1995.³⁷

The last native gray wolf in Yellowstone National Park was killed in the 1930s. In 1995, as part of an ambitious recovery program, the wolf was reintroduced into the park and protected under the Endangered Species Act. Since reintroduction, the wolves have prospered in Yellowstone's protected habitat. Wolf-watching now ranks as one of the park's most popular attractions.

Inside Yellowstone, wolves are well-protected, but some wildlife experts worry that de-listing the species is premature. The species' survival, they argue, ultimately depends on the wolves' ability to cross-breed among the different populations to combat threats of disease. However, many miles of rangeland and settled terrain separate these populations. Three distinct populations of gray wolves remain in the continental United States. In addition to the Yellowstone wolves, populations survive in central Idaho and northwestern Montana.

Only thirty-eight species have been de-listed under the Act since 1967. Over twelve hundred species are still listed as endangered.

COURT REFUSES TO ALLOW EPA TO EXTEND OZONE POLLUTION DEADLINES IN D.C.

In early February, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit ordered the EPA to impose more severe controls on ozone pollution in the Washington, D.C. metro region.³⁸ The Court refused to allow the EPA to give the region an extension until 2005 to meet the Clean Air Act 1999 deadline for ozone

pollution standards.³⁹ Washington D.C. has been a consistent violator of ozone pollution standards in the past, and is one of the worst U.S. cities for smog.⁴⁰ The EPA had attempted to extend the deadline after concluding that many of the ozone-forming particles in the city blow in from other regions.⁴¹ This court ruling may force city officials to enact more regulations or face federal sanctions.⁴² Areas in "severe" violation of EPA standards are supposed to reduce ozone-forming emissions by 3% each year until compliance is reached.⁴³ The suit was brought by the Sierra Club, its third successful suit against the EPA regarding ozone pollution in the Washington, D.C. area.⁴⁴

EURASIA

RUSSIAN RATIFICATION OF THE KYOTO PROTOCOL SOUGHT

On February 26, 2004, the European Energy Commissioner, Loyola de Palacio, asked Russia to clarify whether it intended to ratify the Kyoto Protocol, calling Russia's decision vital to the future of the treaty.⁴⁵ The Kyoto Protocol cannot be implemented until it has been backed by industrial nations that produce a combined 55% of the world's greenhouse gases.⁴⁶ Since the U.S. did not sign, Russia must sign for the treaty to come into effect.⁴⁷ By signing the Protocol, a country commits to scaling back emissions of six greenhouse gases to 1990 levels by 2012.⁴⁸ Recently, Russian President Vladimir Putin's economic advisor, Andrei Illarionov, said that Russia's ratification of the Kyoto Protocol would doom the Russian economy to "poverty, weakness, backwardness", and argued that while the Protocol is clearly favored by countries dependent on nuclear energy, it would be detrimental to the oil and gas economy of Russia.⁴⁹

BTC OIL PIPELINE THROUGH CENTRAL ASIA APPROVED

After years of debate, the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan ("BTC") crude oil pipeline has been approved.⁵⁰ The pipeline, due to be operational by March 2005, will transport one million barrels per day over the 1760km from Azerbaijan and the Caspian Sea to Turkey.⁵¹ British Petroleum ("BP") is the largest shareholder in the BTC Consortium, but the project is also being co-financed by the International Finance Corporation ("IFC") of the World Bank.⁵² The proposed pipeline has been the source of controversy between the Consortium and environmentalists. From one perspective, the pipeline will provide economic benefits to Azerbaijan, one of the world's poorest nations, and it will reduce U.S. and European dependence on oil from the Persian Gulf.⁵³ But on the other hand, it will pass through several environmentally sensitive regions, such as habitats of endangered species and a mineral water deposit.⁵⁴ The World Wildlife Fund has criticized pipeline constructors for placing an inadequate anti-corrosion coating on sections of the pipeline already buried.⁵⁵ Consequently, pipeline corrosion may be a problem in the future.



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