



Branch Invites UN Agency Reps to Help Explore Our Global Future

Shane Roberts

A crystal ball, tea leaves, a time machine -- how will we be able to predict the future? And what might the future hold -- an era of militaristic unilateralism, a "clash of civilizations" or a resurgent multilateralism spearheaded by a militant Euro-Canadian axis? Will climatic change and a scourge of drug-resistant epidemics redraw the map of the world's populations? Or will scientific breakthroughs and humanitarianism fuel a wave of global progress? And where is the United Nations in these alternative futures with its constellation of agencies and programmes -- in disarray or galvanizing the push for human security against the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse?

To look at some of the possibilities and foster debate on where we are going, on June 25 the National Capital Region Branch of the UNA in Canada is launching a series of public events dealing with alternative global futures for humanity, the United Nations, and what role we can and should play as Canadians and members of wider communities. We want you to join us in hearing and questioning representatives from organizations speaking on behalf of, or working for, the United Nations of today and tomorrow. *See page 2.*

President George W Bush,
March 17, 2003:

"Under Resolutions 678 and 687 -- both still in effect -- the U.S. and our allies are authorized to use force in ridding Iraq of weapons of mass destruction..."

David Malone,
former Canadian Ambassador
to the UN:

"[Not finding weapons] matters in terms of the extent to which the United States is going to be trusted in the future ... and it calls into question the basic honesty of at least some of the proponents of the war."

Who's right? See pages 6-9



Workers remove a body found in a field. UN warns of a possible Congo genocide. (UN Photo)

**NCR Branch
Annual General Meeting
and Panel Discussion
Wednesday June 25:
Three Visions of the Future:
What the UN Can Do for
Culture, Refugees
and Women
Details page 2**

THE FORGOTTEN WAR IN THE CONGO RAGES ON

Jacqueline Benoit

A world taken by the crisis in Iraq had all but forgotten the ongoing civil war in the Congo, where a deepening crisis persists, wrecking havoc in many of the Western regions of Africa. Last month, tens of thousands of fleeing civilians tried to escape out of the Congo city of Bunia following a bloody attack by rival ethnic militias. And a violent

struggle for power between Lendu and Hema peoples has left bodies strewn in the streets, following the May 7 withdrawal of foreign African troops. Currently, there are over 100 confirmed dead. However mayhem in the province of Ituri has made it impossible to count the overall toll.

In the four-year civil war, more than three million Congolese people have died, mostly of starvation and disease. UN officials warn of a possible genocide in Congo's Ituri province with this latest rise in violence. At the UN's urging, talks opened recently between Congo's president and the factions' leaders.

As many as 5,000 residents

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Branch Event

An invitation for Wednesday, June 25,
Auditorium of the Ottawa Public Library
(120 Metcalfe Street)

6:30 pm: Annual General Meeting of the
NCR Branch of the UNA in Canada
8:00 pm Public Event, A Panel Discussion:

Three Visions of the Future: What the UN Can Do for Culture, Refugees and Women

Judith Kumin - Representative to Canada for the UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) will speak on *Finding Solutions to Refugee Problems in the 21st Century*.

Kathryn White - President of the Canadian Committee for the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) will speak on *Multilateralism in an Alarming Geopolitical Landscape*. Kate White will address some of the emerging challenges of the new and alarming geopolitical landscape and pose an alternative post-Bretton Woods institution world approach, with particular attention to women in development.

Katherine Berg - Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of the Canadian Commission for UNESCO will speak on *UNESCO, Contributing to the Humanization of Globalization*. UNESCO's current priorities in its major programme areas include: basic education for all and support for the United Nations Literacy Decade (2003-2012); water and ecosystems: the ethics of science and technology, particularly bioethics; cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; and access to information (particularly in the public domain). In all of these areas, UNESCO is working in collaboration with other international organizations.

Communiqué

Newsletter of the United Nations Association in Canada (UNA Canada) - National Capital Region Branch
Bulletin d'information de l'Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies (ACNU),
Division de la Région de la Capitale nationale

Note: The views expressed by the contributors to Communiqué are not necessarily those of the United Nations Association in Canada - National Capital Region Branch. Articles, comments, suggestions, letters to the editor or enquiries about branch activities are always welcome:

Nota: Les opinions exprimées par les collaborateurs/trices ne reflètent pas forcément ceux de l'Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies, Division de la Région de la Capitale nationale. Nous invitons vos suggestions et vos opinions. Veuillez faire parvenir votre correspondance ainsi que vos demandes d'information sur nos activités, à l'adresse suivante:

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COMMUNIQUÉ
June 2003 juin
Volume 13 No. 1

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Editor's note:

Where did those accents go?

Accents were unintentionally removed from the french language text, and other font changes were also made to several other articles in our last issue. This was due to last minute format conversions made by our printer. You can download the original version of the articles (accents included) at our branch website:

www.ncrb.unac.org/



Some 50,000 Congolese head south from Bunia to Beni, an administrative town just south of the Ituri district. The World Food Program was reporting that some 12,000 refugees had now crossed into Uganda. Shown are civilians fleeing the on-going violence. (UN Photo)

Congo crisis, from page 1

surrounded a UN compound while another 6,000 amassed in and around Bunia's UN-held airport, hoping for protection from 725 members of a Uruguayan UN observation force.

"While the world focuses on Iraq, the humanitarian situation in [Liberia] is getting desperate," says Muktar Ali Farah, Head of the UN Liberian office for humanitarian affairs. "Something has to be done."

Senior UN officials have declared the lethal conflict in Bunia a humanitarian crisis requiring the international community's immediate attention. On May 30, the Security Council authorized an multinational emergency force for the Congo (see sidebar at right).

Violence has been intensifying steadily since last year as Uganda's commanding officers had been controlling trade, allotting favours and providing support to local militia actions, which

significantly contributed to a worsening ethnic divide. Uganda withdrew 4,000 troops from the eastern Ituri province of the Congo on May 7.

To date, France, South Africa, Pakistan, Nigeria, Canada and Britain have expressed an interest in providing -- or have already sent -- security aid into the affected African regions.

Britain has taken the UN request under serious consideration. If Britain accepts the appeal, the nation plans to contribute an armed force of 1,000 for eastern Congo.

France has already offered to contribute, and renewal of Anglo-French military cooperation (if Britain agrees to send peacekeeping troops), it will mark significantly cleared air after the fierce diplomatic rows at the UN over the invasion of Iraq.

In an interview, Lady Amos, the newly appointed international development secretary told the BBC's

Breakfast with Frost programme that "the UK has made its priorities absolutely clear, which is to work on conflict resolution in Africa, particularly in the Democratic Republic of Congo [and] in Sudan, and helping to build the peace in Angola".

A small party from France and other countries visited Bunia to assess the likelihood of ending hostilities. The UN contingent there, part of the force sent to Congo to monitor and supervise a ceasefire in the war, does not have the capacity to impose a truce, but is sheltering about 12,000 refugees.

SECURITY COUNCIL AUTHORIZES INTERNATIONAL FORCE FOR CONGO

(May 30, 2003) The United Nations Security Council today authorized the deployment of an international emergency force for three months, until September 1, to help stabilize the situation in the Democratic Republic of Congo's (DRC) volatile north-east, where ethnic fighting has killed more than 400 people.

By the unanimous adoption of a new resolution, the Council authorized the deployment of an Interim Emergency Multinational Force in the town of Bunia, where an inter-ethnic power struggle has been raging for weeks, and empowers it to take all necessary measures to fulfil its mandate. The Force would also ensure the protection of the airport, the internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the camps in Bunia and, if the situation requires it, to participate in the protection of the population, UN personnel and the humanitarian presence in town.

The UNGASS Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS

David Garmaise

The Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS was adopted unanimously by member states of the United Nations in June 2001, at the conclusion of the UN General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on HIV/AIDS. The Declaration of Commitment sets out a comprehensive strategy for dealing with HIV/AIDS, with clear targets and timelines. The Declaration covers 11 broad areas: Leadership; Prevention; Care, Support and Treatment; Human Rights; Reducing Vulnerability; Children Orphaned and Made Vulnerable by HIV/AIDS; Alleviating Social and Economic Impact; Research and Development; HIV/AIDS in Conflict and Disaster-Affected Regions; Resources; and Follow Up.



The Declaration of Commitment is a resolution of the General Assembly. It does not have the same force as a treaty or convention that is formally ratified by individual member states. It is a statement of intent, a plan that governments say they are going to follow. Nevertheless, the Declaration has the potential to be an historic document. It could serve as a road map for the global response to HIV/AIDS for the next decade. Whether it does or not depends largely on how seriously countries take the commitments in the Declaration.

The Declaration of Commitment requires that governments conduct periodic national reviews of the implementation of the Declaration, with the participation of civil society and persons living with HIV/AIDS. The Declaration also requires that the UN Secretary General prepare an annual progress report for discussion by the General Assembly. The first such report was presented in November 2002. In August 2002, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) released a series of core indicators to help monitor the implementation of the Declaration.

David Garmaise is a consultant who works on HIV/AIDS issues. He lives in Ottawa.

Extracts from the Declaration of Commitment

By 2003, countries will enact, strengthen or enforce (as appropriate) legislation, regulations and other measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination against persons living with HIV/AIDS and members of vulnerable groups.
Paragraph 58

By 2003, countries will establish time-bound national targets designed to bring about a reduction of 25% in HIV prevalence among people aged 15-24 by 2005 in the most-affected countries, and by 2010 globally.
Paragraph 47

By 2003, countries will implement strategies to address those factors that make individuals particularly vulnerable to HIV infection.
Paragraph 62

By 2005, countries will implement strategies to build and strengthen governmental, family and community capacities to provide a supportive environment for orphans and children infected and affected by HIV/AIDS.
Paragraph 65

HIV/AIDS: Resources

⇒ **Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.** August 2001. This 48-page booklet, which provides the full text of the Declaration, was produced by the United Nations Department of Public Information and UNAIDS in English, French, Spanish, Russian, Arabic and Portuguese. Hard copies of the booklet can be obtained by contacting Kristen Griffiths, UNAIDS, email: <griffithsk@unaids.org>, fax: +41 22 791 48 35. Copies can also be downloaded in PDF format from the UNAIDS website at <www.unaids.org/UNGASS/index.html>.

⇒ **What You Need to Know About the UN Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS:** A Guide for Canadian AIDS Service Organizations. June 2003. This fact sheet explains how local AIDS service organizations can use the Declaration in their work. Available from the Interagency Coalition on AIDS and Development (ICAD), website: <www.icad-cisd.com>.

⇒ **Advocacy Guide to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS.** October 2001. This guide outlines strategies for using the Declaration to enhance the response to HIV/AIDS. Available from the International Council of AIDS Service Organizations (ICASO), website: <www.icaso.org>.

⇒ **UNA-Canada's Youth and the Global HIV/AIDS Crisis: A Toolkit for Action.** www.unac.org/en/link_learn/hiv_aids/en/index.asp

SARS and Toronto: Was the WHO right all along?

Erica Lobdell

When the World Health Organization pulled Toronto off its list of SARS-affected areas on May 14, Canada's largest city and financial capital breathed a collective sigh of relief. Three weeks of wrangling between Canadian officials and WHO authorities finally ended with the assertion that Toronto was, after all, safe to live in and visit -- something that Torontonians and city officials maintained was the case. But just when Toronto seemed to be getting back on its feet, the SARS virus re-emerged.

On May 22, four people who feared they may have been exposed to the virus were placed in isolation in a Toronto hospital. It was later revealed that one of them does test positive for the virus. In the following days, Toronto's SARS list grew with suspected and probable cases. Thousands of

"WHO doesn't make rash decisions"

people were put in quarantine and the city braced for its second outbreak.

Toronto was put back on the WHO's SARS-affected list on May 26. And Toronto finds itself where it was two

weeks earlier.

When Toronto was first put on the SARS-affected list, Canadian officials became furious -- calling the WHO's assessment uninformed and reactionary. Sheela Basrur, Toronto's medical health officer said it was a "gross misrepresentation of the facts". The virus wasn't spreading through the community as it had in China. Deputy mayor Case Ootes joined the critical attack on the WHO. "We're very upset at their advisory and feel that it was totally misguided, based on assumptions that are not factual," he told the media.

So was the WHO right in its initial assessment of the situation in Canada? After all, the current situation in Toronto points to the fact that the virus never left. Or was it a misguided decision as Canadian officials suggested?

The WHO isn't unfamiliar with criticism of the decisions and actions it takes. It's been down this road before. It has been blasted for reacting too slowly to the HIV / AIDS epidemic, accused of not addressing the underlying causes of global disease, and suspected of frequently getting tangled up in bureaucratic red tape. But while the organization has its harsh judges, it has a solid record when it comes to tackling the world's health issues. Established in 1948 as a UN agency, the WHO currently has more than 190 country members. It has responded to diseases like polio, leprosy, and cholera. Smallpox was eradicated in the 1970s, something that might not have been possible were it not for the work of the WHO.

The decision by the WHO to place Toronto on its list, not once, but twice, may appear to be reactionary, and on the surface, perhaps misguided and uninformed. But what has to be remembered is the role of the organization. Its purpose is to take measure to protect the health of the global population. The fact that this was the first time in 55 years that a travel advisory had been issued against Canada and Beijing is testament that the WHO doesn't make rash decisions.

The travel advisories will involve a trade-off. Canadian governments will spend millions of dollars repairing the economic damage done to the City of Toronto and more money still for disease prevention. But if it is for the good of Canadians, and ultimately global health, is it not worth it? What price do we pay for the freedom of good health? This remains to be seen.

Coalition Intervention into Iraq was Illegal and Illegitimate

Robin Collins

The Americans and British, along with their coalition supporters, concentrated on two lines of thinking in justifying their war against Iraq. They argued that clear evidence was in hand proving that Iraq had failed to destroy its weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and that these stocks posed an imminent threat to international peace and security. They then presented their case to the Security Council. Some elements of their dossiers were immediately disputed, and additional claims have been subsequently challenged.

Was there a threat to international peace and security?

The subtext to whether there existed sufficient threat to justify military intervention was that Iraq's culpability was also being judged in the shadow of 9/11 terrorism and the "rapid collapse" of the Taliban in Afghanistan. The coalition leadership argued that a volatile mixture of weapons and a hostile and authoritarian Saddam Hussein regime made for a palpable threat: *Warnings had been issued, a last chance had been given (Resolution #1441), but insufficient compliance had occurred.* A contrary case has been made that says weapons inspectors had been making progress. And even if there was obsti-

nancy and deception by the Iraqi government, there was containment of the regime and no evidence of an impending attack by Iraq on its neighbours or any other target. Without an imminent threat to peace and security, evidence of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) does not equate to an automatic permission to invade. (One ob-

of the Security Council, the full 15-member Council, nor from the ~ 65 other diplomats that made statements to the Council on March 26 and 27. (For a tally of the "votes", see page 9.) Due process would require that if authority and legitimacy were to be clear and unambiguous, a new vote was necessary. Proceeding without



1992 UNSCOM inspection team in Iraq. (UN photo)

vious proof of this is that many states possess WMD -- notably, all permanent members of the Security Council.)

Due process not followed

US Secretary of State Colin Powell brought the American case for invasion to the Security Council on February 14, in an apparent effort to achieve a vote explicitly authorizing an armed intervention against Iraq. No subsequent vote was taken because sufficient support was forthcoming neither from the Permanent Members

a vote, or with full knowledge that the vote would have failed, was astounding, although not without precedent. The NATO intervention into Serbia/Kosovo also lacked an authorizing vote from the Security Council, and was therefore contrary to the U.N. Charter and illegal.

"17 resolutions"

In the absence of a fresh Security Council consensus, the US argued that a new vote was not necessary anyway, because the Council had al-

ready authorized intervention through “seventeen” previous resolutions addressing Iraq. Was this true? The seventeen resolutions (see pages 8-9) span a period from November 1990 (dealing with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait) to November 2003 (dealing with Iraq’s refusal to disclose all information about its WMD programs). Although US President Bush initially referred to “17” resolutions, subsequently coalition partners and supporters narrowed down the number to only three (or fewer). And indeed, it is true that only 3 of the 17 resolutions contain anything that could be loosely interpreted as providing authority for intervention. All of the other resolutions note only that the Security Council will “remain seized of the matter”.

Resolution #678 (1990) is the only resolution of the three that could be said to explicitly “authorize” the use of force. But even in its case, there is reference to authority for “all necessary means”. Those who recall the debate at the time (1990-1), will remember there was disagreement about what the word “necessary” implied. If Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait could be reversed without a military intervention, wouldn’t that have been sufficient? There was much disagreement as to whether sanctions had been proved unworkable. (See for instance UNA-Canada’s statements

of that period.) As significant, Resolution #678 is entirely concerned with Iraq’s invasion of Kuwait and there is no reference within it to weapons of mass destruction. Once Iraq’s forces withdrew from Kuwait, the primary contention had been resolved.

Resolution #687 (1991) requires Iraq to reveal and destroy its WMD and long range ballistic missiles. It lists



Dr. Hans Blix (right), Executive Chairman of the UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission (UNMOVIC) speaks with Mohammed Elbaradei (Egypt), Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). (UN Photo)

a whole range of weapons restrictions and declarations, but it also refers to the need for a zone free of WMD in the region (which would include Israel and other states suspected of, or known to be, possessing weapons of mass destruction). 687’s active phrase is that the Security Council remains “seized of the matter”, and is willing to “take further steps as required”. Those steps are not specified, but might be any action to establish monitoring,

surveillance and investigation procedures. Enforcement would necessarily require clear and unambiguous additional Security Council authorization.

Resolution #1441 (2002) gives Iraq thirty days to provide full reporting of its weapons of mass destruction. Any incompleteness would constitute a “further material breach” (the word

“further” implies that material breaches had occurred before, and without recourse to intervention). The Council decided to “remain seized of the matter” and recalled that it had “repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations”. There is no force authorized in this statement, nor a definition of what

"illegal" continued, page 8

serious consequences might be this time. We know that Russia, China and France did not agree that this phrasing automatically authorized intervention. We also know that 11 of 15 members of the full Security Council opposed intervention (and likely for this reason the coalition decided not to proceed to a "second resolution" in early 2003 -- knowing it would fail by a large majority.) Within the other 14 resolutions, (most condemning Iraq for its continuing refusal to cooperate fully with inspections), there are also occasional references to positive performance by Iraq. Resolution #1284 (1999), for instance, acknowledges "progress by Iraq" towards compliance. It also refers once again to the



Bulldozer crushes 500 kg bomb casings designed for use with chemical weapons. 1991-92 UNSCOM team. UN photo.

need to establish a zone free of WMD and missiles for their delivery in the region. Resolution #1134 (1997) acknowledges progress "nevertheless" by Iraq.

What can we conclude?

The UN Security Council did not authorize the use of force through its resolutions in connection with Iraq's WMD-related non-compliance. There is no convincing evidence that a coalition operating outside the authority of the Security Council was entitled to intervene into Iraq. The intervention was therefore illegal and -- considering other options available or in process, including inspections, "smart sanctions" and containment -- also illegitimate.

Did These 17 Resolutions "Authorize the Use of Force Against Iraq"?

#1: Resolution 678, Date: Nov 29, 1990

Is Force Authorized?: "all necessary means" authorized.
Focus: reverse Iraq's invasion of Kuwait; no reference to weapons of mass destruction

#2: Resolution 686, Date: Mar 2, 1991

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: preliminary statement to define end to hostilities; describes some of Iraq's obligations

#3: Resolution 687, Date: April 3, 1991

Force Authorized?: NO, "take further steps as required"
Focus: Iraq to destroy WMD, long range ballistic weapons; notes need for zone free of WMD in region

#4: Resolution 688, Date: April 5, 1991

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: condemns repression of Iraqi civilians and Kurds

#5: Resolution 707, Date: August 15, 1991

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: condemns violation of 678 as material breach; condemns incomplete WMD destruction, concealment; approves inspections

#6: Resolution 715, Date: October 11, 1991

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: approves UNSCOM/AIEA inspections

#7: Resolution 949, Date: October 15, 1994

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: condemns Iraqi military deployment in direction of Kuwait; Iraq must cooperate with inspections

#8: Resolution 1051, Date: March 27, 1996

Force Authorized?: NO
Focus: demands that Iraq comply with inspections; progress reports requested every 6 months

continued next page

#9: Resolution 1060, Date: June 12, 1996

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: demands access for inspections

#10: Resolution 1115, Date: June 21, 1997

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: condemns Iraq's denial of access as clear and flagrant violation

#11: Resolution 1134, Date: Oct. 23, 1997

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: notes progress "nevertheless" by UNSCOM and condemns Iraq's denial of access as flagrant violation

#12: Resolution 1137, Date: Nov. 12, 1997

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: demands that Iraq cooperate fully without conditions and opposes Iraq's denial of access to two UNSCOM officials

#13: Resolution 1154, Date: March 2, 1998

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: endorses Iraq signing a memorandum of understanding to cooperate; any violation would have severest consequences

#14: Resolution 1194, Date: September 9, 1998

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: condemns Iraq's suspension of cooperation on Aug 5

#15: Resolution 1205, Date: November 5, 1998

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: condemns Iraq's suspension of cooperation on Oct 31

#16: Resolution 1284, Date: December 17, 1999

Force Authorized?: NO

Focus: recalls need to establish zone free of WMD and missiles for their delivery in region; acknowledges "progress made by Iraq" towards compliance; establishes UNMOVIC to replace UNSCOM

#17: Resolution 1441, Date: Nov 8, 2002

Force Authorized?: "decides to remain seized of the matter", "recalls ... that Council has repeatedly warned Iraq that it will face serious consequences as a result of its continued violations of its obligations"

Focus: allows Iraq a final opportunity to comply; Iraq to provide full report within 30 days; Iraqi report incompleteness would constitute a "further material breach"



UN inspectors verify Iraqi claims to have unilaterally destroyed ballistic missiles. 1991-92 UNSCOM team. (UN photo)

Tally of March 26-27 Statement Positions to the Security Council

While no official Security Council vote was ever taken at the United Nations, many states made statements in the presence of the Council on March 26 and 27, 2003 indicating opposition, support or neutrality towards intervention into Iraq. They are summarized at: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2003/> For the purposes of this tally, "opposition" is recorded as indicating intervention into Iraq was opposed on the grounds of its being in violation of UN principles or international law. This tally is based only on the statements made on March 26-27, regardless of positions taken elsewhere.

Canada had one of the more ambiguous positions (It is entered here as "neutral" although Canada is on record as officially opposing the intervention.) In his statement, Ambassador Heinbecker expressed hope for the compromise resolution that Canada had presented and "that the Iraqi regime could have been disarmed without war. However that has not been possible"; thus now "the first duty was to meet the urgent needs of the Iraqis victimized by their own regime").

Total number of states making statements: 80
 Total opposed to intervention: 41
 Total in favour: 26
 Total neutral: 13

Of 15 Security Council members:
 Total opposed to intervention: 11
 Total in favour: 4

Of the Permanent 5 Security Council Members:
 Total opposed to intervention: 3
 Total in favour: 2

Security Council Played Its Intended Role

Steve Mason

The US-led war on Iraq brought, inevitably, renewed debate about the relevance of the United Nations. Both proponents and opponents of the war have made cases for UN irrelevancy based on its failure to act - either to sanction or prevent the war. The most common response to these accusations is to argue that the UN is only as strong as its members allow it to be - that it is not the UN which has failed, but its members which have.

Both of these arguments are built on the flawed premise that the significance and importance of the UN should be judged solely on its ability to enforce its resolutions. In fact, this ability is strictly limited under the UN's founding document, the Charter. This is because the United Nations is not a world government but an inter-governmental body composed of independent countries. These countries have agreed on a Charter, which sets the institution's goals of maintaining peace and improving the living conditions of people everywhere. They have also agreed on the machinery through which these goals can be realized. But the UN's 191 member countries have kept the final say on implementation of these goals for themselves.

Whenever the United Nations passes a resolution on an issue of global concern, it is the UN's member countries which must act to implement this resolution domestically - and they cannot be forced into doing so except under very specific circumstances. The reason is that when countries join the UN, they maintain their right to control their own domestic affairs. No country would have ever agreed to join an institution if it meant sacrificing its independence.

The only two cases in which the UN can authorize force to back up its resolutions are when it is responding to threats to international peace and security and acts of aggression from one country towards another, and this can only be done through the Security Council and as a last resort. In examining the situation in Iraq since the first Gulf War, the Security Council agreed that there have been serious concerns and passed a plethora of resolutions urging Iraq to comply with accepted norms of international behaviour.

But Iraq, like all other member countries, is independent. The Security Council determined that, egregious as Saddam Hussein's regime may be, it did not constitute a threat to international peace and security and no enforcement action could be taken.

In recent months, several countries, led by the US, pressured the Security Council to think otherwise. Arguments and evidence were presented and refuted and it became clear during the winter that the Council would not sanction a war. The US and Britain then opted out of the process. The Security Council played its intended role, but some of its members refused to play along.

In essence, the UN provides a framework through which countries can jointly address pressing international concerns. This framework has led not only to the establishment of many important norms and standards, but also to the creation of many highly successful specialized agencies: UNICEF, which protects the health and rights of children; the WHO which works to prevent, mitigate and eliminate disease; the World Food Programme, which works to ensure food security where it is needed most, to name but a few.

This framework has proved quite effective at enabling a much deeper understanding of key international problems and determining more concerted, practical and creative approaches to dealing with them. Since a majority of the world's countries must vote in favour of a General Assembly resolution for it to be adopted, the moral pressure brought to bear on those countries which act contrary to the majority is significant - not only are they susceptible to the condemnation of other countries, they are also open targets for the vast number of civil society groups who follow UN proceedings carefully and work to ensure the implementation of resolutions and treaties.

The relevance of the UN, then, lies most prominently in its ability to deepen our understanding of global problems, delineate viable solutions and create rules, mechanisms and dialogue which guide countries towards peace and people towards greater prosperity. Its relevance also rests in the moral weight and suasion with which it imbues its decisions and the ability of its specialized agencies and programmes to make significant inroads

in addressing human rights abuses, disease, food and water scarcity, lack of education and environmental degradation, among others.

Ideally, the world community should also be able to take action on rogue regimes which disregard the rights of their citizens and, indeed, there are international norms developing on the global 'responsibility to protect.' But these are slow in coming because the UN is, after all, a creation of intensely independent countries. It may be disheartening to realize that some of these, some of the time, will be immune to the opinions and arguments of their fellow states, but it should be encouraging to recognize that most countries play by the rules much of the time. In the context of the bloody history of nation states, this is indeed an accomplishment.

Steve Mason is the Executive Director of the United Nations Association in Canada. This article appeared in the April 24, 2003 edition of the Ottawa Citizen.

ACNU from page 11

• Le Canada doit jouer un rôle de premier plan en demandant la tenue d'une réunion spéciale de l'Assemblée générale, dont le but sera de tenter de résoudre la crise par des moyens qui seront conformes à la Charte des Nations Unies.

En 1945, lorsque les Nations Unies furent constituées, un système de sécurité collectif fut mis sur pied afin d'empêcher que les horreurs de la guerre vécues au cours de la Deuxième guerre mondiale ne se répètent. Pour être efficace, ce système a besoin de l'appui et de l'adhésion de tous les états membres de l'ONU et il est aujourd'hui sérieusement en péril. L'Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies fait appel au Canada et tous les états membres de l'ONU de réaffirmer leur appui aux Nations Unies comme mécanisme légitime de résolution des crises internationales.

ACNU: Déclaration au sujet de la menace de guerre contre l'Irak (le 29 janvier 2003)

À la suite de la remise du rapport des inspecteurs en armement du Conseil de sécurité de l'ONU, l'Association canadienne pour les Nations Unies demeure profondément inquiète des conséquences d'une guerre contre l'Irak. Plus précisément, une action militaire unilatérale se fondant sur une doctrine de prééminence enfreint les principes mêmes sur lesquels s'érigent les Nations Unies et risque de mettre en péril notre système de gouvernance mondiale. Seules les Nations Unies peuvent, en vertu de leur mandat, légitimer une intervention armée contre l'Irak et cette décision doit être justifiée par une agression claire et sans équivoque de la part de l'Irak.

Sans aucun doute, une guerre contre l'Irak menacerait sérieusement la sécurité humaine de millions d'Iraqiens, en particulier les femmes et les enfants. Le mouvement de réfugiés qui en résultera déstabilisera encore davantage cette région déjà instable. Si le gouvernement iraquien est renversé par un effort de guerre, le vide ainsi créé pourrait entraîner des menaces encore plus sérieuses à la sécurité humaine et des répercussions graves qui mineront, dans l'avenir, à la fois la lutte contre le terrorisme et la stabilité internationale.

Par conséquent, la guerre ne doit être sanctionnée que si toutes les autres solutions pacifiques ont été tentées. C'est dans le but d'éviter le pire des scénarios que l'ACNU fait les recommandations suivantes : - Les inspecteurs en armement de l'ONU doivent disposer du temps et des ressources adéquates pour mener à bien, et de manière approfondie, leur mission. Ce n'est qu'une fois le rapport complet compilé que la portée réelle de la menace posée par l'Irak ne pourra être évaluée et que les façons d'y réagir ne pourront être définies.

- Les solutions diplomatiques, telles que celles employées en Corée du Nord, doivent être utilisées comme des moyens de réduire la tension de la rhétorique et de désamorcer le conflit.

- Plutôt que d'opter pour la guerre, le Conseil de sécurité doit examiner d'autres options afin de tenir Saddam Hussein responsable du non-respect des droits de la personne et de la coopération internationale, ainsi que de sa violation possible de la résolution 1441. Cela comprend le recours aux "sanctions intelligentes" ciblées imposées à l'élite gouvernementale.

- Les organisations non gouvernementales qui œuvrent en Irak et dans la région devraient être intégrées au processus visant à trouver des solutions pacifiques à la situation actuelle. Ces organisations ont bien souvent une compréhension profonde de la situation régionale, des effets potentiels d'une guerre et des issues possibles quant à la résolution du conflit.

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Post-war Iraq, the Kurds and Risks of Instability

Gokselin Ondul

As humans entering the 21st Century, we try to solve some of our problems by creating useful organizations that help us live in peace. Recently the world witnessed a brazen act by the US through its launch of war on Iraq, in violation of the world's most important institution, the United Nations. Such disrespect for international law is also an unfortunate message to other countries that says it is "okay" for the powerful to declare war without the authority of the UN.

While the reason for the war on Iraq was said to be "getting rid of weapons of mass destruction", its mandate changed mid-way into the "liberation of the Iraqi people". Into this mixture, the question of the Kurds and whether there should now be a separate state of Kurdistan has again come up for discussion. It is relevant both to the sovereignty of Iraq and for countries neighbouring on Iraq.

Turkey, Iran, Syria and Iraq are concerned about the impact of Kurdish ethnic groups, should they seek to join together in a new state of Kurdistan. As many have pointed out, creation of a new state, starting in Northern Iraq, may result in similar enthusiasm by other Kurds for an independent homeland, but also further instability in the region. The UN Charter does not encourage boundary changes that would worsen conflicts in a region.

This may be as good a time as any for the US to come to realize the importance of the UN -- and one reason why the Americans should leave postwar Iraq to the authority of an organization such as the UN. A collective body will likely be more effective because its motivations are different from that of any single state. And in fact many believe the US attack and occupation of Iraq was not about weapons nor liberation, but was self-serving.

When we consider the Kurdish issue, we should be constructive and consider the long term effects to the region. We should avoid self-interest that is likely to be destructive in the long run, and we must remember that it is much easier to declare a war than it is to reconstruct a country afterwards

Gokselin Ondul is a fourth year political science and economics student at the University of Ottawa

Literacy and Learning for All

United Nations Literacy Decade

Trudy Lothian

I met Todd in 1990, UNESCO's International Year of Literacy. He was a student in my adult literacy night class. He worked full time operating a forklift. His boss saw him as bright and hard working, and began assigning him different jobs. Over time, Todd was asked to do some paperwork. He trembled as he told me about hiding in a room to look words up in a dictionary so he wouldn't misspell anything on the forms. If his boss found out, he might be fired. If his co-workers found out, he would be chastised. Todd felt threatened at work. His self-esteem suffered, his productivity decreased and his voice, he felt, was being silenced. The new literacy demands at his work shifted him towards exclusion.



Literacy is about reading and writing. Even more, it is about reading and writing *something for some purpose*. It is about relationships with people and institutions -- how we communicate in the culture and society in which we live, how we access and use knowledge, and how we are included or excluded by day-to-day social practices around literate events.

In Canada, Todd has problems with literacy. He is one of the 48% of adults whose ability to understand and use texts ranges from very limited, to reading but not reading well. Todd is not "illiterate". Very few Canadians can read or write *nothing*. The term illiteracy is typically inaccurate in our context and it also has far reaching negative connotations. In much of the world, however, illiteracy is an accurate description. As

UNESCO reports, over 861 million adults worldwide are illiterate. Over 113 million children are not in school and therefore not gaining access to literacy education.

Making the world a more literate place is an immense undertaking, and one that UNESCO has been promoting and explicitly working towards at least since its Declaration of Human Rights over 50 years ago -- the Declaration stated that every individual has the right to an

education.

In keeping with its commitment to education for all, UNESCO launched the International Year of Literacy in 1990 and the literacy community has celebrated International Literacy Day (September 08) since that time. In 2002, The Canadian Commission for UNESCO launched International Adult Learners' Week (September 08-14). These very public examples of UNESCO's commitment to literacy education help bring literacy issues into the common discourse. With the current launching of *United Nations Literacy Decade* (2003-2012) we have an opportunity to make a sustained and global effort towards literacy education in those countries where adults have little or no access to educational programming, or where large numbers of the population are truly illiterate.

Literacy communities applaud UNESCO's consistent efforts towards literacy education and their specific focus on adults and parents. Yet, literacy for all is a difficult goal considering that the requirements for being literate vary from country to country and the measurement bar continually rises. While being able to read or write a short note was once a sufficient measure, today (at least in industrialized countries) one needs "to use written information to function in society, to achieve [one's] goals and to develop [one's] knowledge and potential" (*International Adult Literacy Survey*, Statistics Canada and the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 1994).

Being or becoming literate means having more choices. Todd is fortunate. When his literacy needs reached a crisis point, he had a program to attend. Through literacy education he could re-establish his voice in his workplace and advance his position.

UNESCO, through the United Nations Literacy Decade, is working towards sustained and sustainable

adult education programs in the countries of most need, so other adults will have programs to attend. The time to address literacy for all, education for all and voice for all -- both at home and abroad -- has arrived.



International Adult Learners' Week advocates, September 2002: Maria Makrakis, Ottawa-Carleton Catholic School Board; Anyle Coté, Communications Officer, Canadian Commission for UNESCO; and Trudy Lothian, OCCSB.

*UN Literacy Decade is at: www.unesco.org/education/litdecade/
Trudy Lothian coordinates the OCCSB Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Program and is a board member at the Ottawa-Carleton Coalition for Literacy .*