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2mins. 33secs.

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3mins. 6secs.

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12mins. 7secs.

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News

State of the World's Children 2001

9mins. 26secs.

African nations today rank top among those that have wasted the opportunities of developing their children, as a result of wasteful policies, avoidable wars, and outright theft of national resources. This tragedy of wasted potential is the main thrust of the latest report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). The "State of the World's Children 2001" report lists the world's nations in order of progress to meet their obligations to children, which they committed themselves to during the world children's summit in 1990.

Carol Bellamy, who heads the children's body, states in the report that "the investment in the development and care of our youngest children is the most fundamental form of good leadership". In the report, she argues that unleashing children's brainpower through "effective" investments in health, education, nutrition, childcare and basic protection is not only a moral imperative, but also sound economics that must happen very early in a child's life. "The greatest tragedy is that most decision makers simply don't know how crucial those first three years of life are – childhood poverty is insidious and immoral. Child by child, mind by mind it leads to a vast loss of human capacity," she notes.

Sub-Saharan African nations remain the largest culprits on this score, trailing other regions and remain below world average in every category listed. Africa takes the lead in poverty, conflicts and HIV/AIDS statistics that have reversed most of the gains already made in promoting children's welfare. Africa accounts for a large number of the world's 40 million people displaced by conflict and human rights, half of which are children. The region also leads in the number of internally displaced people with about 6.75 million people displaced in Sudan, Angola, Burundi and Angola.

In terms of education, the UN Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) regional percentage figures indicate only a 55 percent average net primary school enrolment and attendance, in sub-Saharan Africa, compared with 83 percent in the Middle East and North Africa, 71 percent in South Asia, 96.5 in East Asia and Pacific, 89.5 in Latin America and Caribbean, and 91 in the Central and Eastern Europe and the Baltic States.

But perhaps the worst scenario of all is the millions of children orphaned by AIDS and whose future has been sealed by poverty. In parts of southern Africa, as many as 10 percent of children under 15, have lost their mother or both parents to the pandemic that has been termed the worst tragedy of our time.

And, if women's status equals children status, as the report suggests, then children in sub-Saharan Africa, where millions of women are affected by domestic violence and conflicts, have a long way to go before they can see much progress in their welfare.

If the report is anything to go by, African nations still have to do a lot more to improve the status of children and thus safeguard our future.

CFC

Invisible Threat to Muizenberg

10mins. 27secs.

A project heralded by the South Peninsula Municipality of South Africa, as exemplifying "the spirit of technology" could poison the air over the Cape Riviera with chlorine gas, one of the planet's most

lethal silent killers. When the local council meets, it will be presented with a recommendation for an optic fibre manufacturing plant at Capricorn Park in Muizenberg. The council's urban and environmental services committee has also recommended a zoning change to facilitate this job booster 350metres away from an overcrowded informal settlement and across the road from an upscale marina housing complex. Both, say detractors, will face the invisible threat of being blown into the Atlantic by the hydrogen gas and nitrogen stored on the site if the project goes ahead.

It's a tough call for Muizenberg, once the resort of choice for Johannesburg Jews. The factory will create an estimated 150 new and 250 indirect jobs in the first phase of building, which includes a 12-storey tower. The possibilities of chlorine leaks and hydrogen explosions have locals jittery. The Western Cape provincial government has the final say on the rezoning decision, but many people in Muizenberg, particularly in the Vrygrond informal settlement and nearby Marina da Gama, are unaware of the potential danger on their doorstep posed by what they believe is a "science park" despite the change in plans announced at the first public meeting on the issue in December.

Only two years ago South Africa's poverty hearings, chaired by Cape Town's Anglican Archbishop Njongonkulu Ndungane, questioned why noxious industries had always been sited next to the poorest of the poor without any consultation with the community. Indeed, in recommending the little-reported local amendment for the Capricorn site from use as a science and technology research zone to a "noxious industrial use zone" the municipal committee noted that "in future, and where necessary, more extensive and inclusive public participation should be undertaken". The only serious objection has been submitted by the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa, which argues the original rezoning application was for a light industrial "science park" alongside approved hotels, shopping and leisure facilities. By having changed the zoning conditions, the society says, a precedent is set by the municipality for other noxious industries.

Then there's the "extremely hazardous" chlorine, with a study showing a few breaths of concentrations of only a thousand parts a million proving fatal. In a dose of 10 parts a million, illness and breathing complications follow in half an hour. The society's letter of objection says: "Several factors may make the release of chlorine gas from the plant in dense settlements, like Vrygrond, more devastating to the community." And the release of "highly flammable and explosive" hydrogen gas from a storage tank, causing an explosion and fire, could lead to a ripple effect of massive destruction.

The developers on their part, argue that the optic fibre manufacturing process releases only limited amounts of chlorine gas and that the air released from the plant will be cleaned to remove the chlorine. The council has appointed local consultants to carry out a detailed environmental-impact assessment, including the investigation of chlorine, hydrogen and nitrogen emissions and the risks of their bulk storage on the site.

Mail and Guardian

UNDP Calls for Holistic Approach to Poverty Reduction

11mins. 57secs.

While there is consensus on key approaches for reaching the Millennium Summit goal of halving extreme poverty by 2015, the drive to reduce poverty must go beyond a focus on economic targets to confront poverty's human and global dimensions, says UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown. Nearly one in five people — 1.2 billion men, women and children — live in extreme poverty, subsisting on less than a dollar a day. The results are devastating.

The poorest 20 percent of the global population is 14 times more likely to die in childhood than the richest 20 percent. "Poverty and its handmaidens of disease and conflict can never be cut off and isolated from the rest of the world," said Brown. He said they inevitably spill over, whether in the form of international crime, wars of greed and grievance, the spread of HIV/AIDS and other diseases or waves of refugees and illegal immigrants from the poorest countries knocking on the doors of the rich world. "We must always remember that poverty is much more than just a lack of money: it is a denial of rights, of opportunities, of hope for the future," the UNDP Administrator added.

The three global issues to be addressed, include trade inequities, he said, pointing out that even as the oil price surged last year, prices for commodities like coffee, timber and coconut oil fell 40 percent or more, with devastating impact on dozens of developing countries. This problem is strongly exacerbated by rich countries' reluctance to open their markets, particularly in agriculture and textiles. Developing countries stand to gain as much as 20 billion dollars a year with the dismantling of agricultural subsidies alone, said the Administrator. The rich world has now committed to dismantling remaining trade barriers for the 49 least developed countries.

"Second and critically important we must guard against being overly dazzled by the current love affair with international capital flows," Brown warned. Large inflows one year can be rapidly followed by panic-driven outflows. Poor countries need to refocus attention on the neglected area of domestic capital formation and credit provision, with much more attention paid to encouraging domestic saving, unlocking capital in areas like informal housing and expanding micro credit schemes. Third, faster and more effective global technology flows to poor countries must be encouraged, said the Administrator. The most important of these, Information and Communication Technologies, carry the potential to help developing countries become full partners in the global economy. Also critical is increased work on treatments for diseases like malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS, which in the worst affected countries has already reversed decades of progress.

UNDP, the lead UN agency on poverty, is narrowing its focus towards providing key advice on democratic governance, trade capacity, and information technology. UNDP is also integrating related issues — notably empowerment of women and protection of the environment through areas like sustainable energy — into the fight against poverty. Analysis and advocacy, particularly through global and national Human Development Reports, is increasingly important.

The UN Secretary General recently appointed an international panel, chaired by former Mexican President Zedillo, and which includes former US Treasury Secretary Rubin, as member, to come up with recommendations on development finance for a landmark global conference. These could build on existing progress and lay a strong development platform for the new millennium linked directly to the Millennium targets. Good returns require good investments, argues Brown. "And if the world is farsighted enough to make those investments in the world's poor and combine them with some of the kind of changes I outlined above, I really believe the fight against global poverty is one we have every chance of winning," he added.

PanAfrican News Agency

'Nobody Knows What It's Like to Have No Hope'

11mins. 22secs.

On a late afternoon in December, four years ago, Ncele Kgadima locked herself inside a long-drop toilet on a rural plot in Ga-Maribana, Moletji, outside Pietersburg in the Northern Province. The heavily pregnant woman, 20 years old at the time, gave birth in the fetid, dank and poorly lit toilet.

Then she walked away. The infant boy survived and, after brief treatment for hypothermia at a hospital, was placed in foster care. His young mother was found guilty of attempted murder and of contravening the Child Care Act by abandoning a child. In October last year more than three years after committing the crime Kgadima was sentenced to three years in jail.

In January 1997, the first time police arrived at her employer's house in Laudium, near Pretoria, to question her, she confessed that she had "thrown away" her child. She was arrested, released on bail of R500 and ordered to appear in court two weeks later. But several fees and taxi-fares to Pretoria later, the case entered its second year. By the seventh postponement in 1998, Kgadima resolved that she would not go to court again. She had pleaded guilty, so what was the delay about, she wondered. Moreover, she could not understand the court proceedings and nobody was bothering to explain anything to her. The lawyer was communicating through her employer. When she failed to show up at the court on the due date, the blue-and- white police van arrived and arrested her.

Kgadima had a constitutional right to a trial concluded "without unreasonable delay". She also had the right to an abortion. In terms of the Choice of Termination of Pregnancy Act of 1996, any woman can go to a government hospital and request a first-trimester abortion. But in practice women face countless problems in accessing the services. Women with little awareness of their options will end up choosing the backstreet route, putting their lives on the line through methods involving anything from Jeyes' Fluid to coat hangers to expel the fetus. Others, like Kgadima, will end up behind bars for attempting to kill their newborns and sometimes succeeding. Tiny corpses of infants smothered at birth or left to die in the veld occupy several trays in government mortuaries.

In court, the state prosecutor slammed Kgadima for her "lack of motherly instinct". But what the court never got to hear about was a life of abandonment, grinding poverty, lack of educational opportunity and, ultimately, a desperation that made Kgadima leave her newborn to die. Abandoned by her mother, whom she refers to simply as "a drinker", Kgadima has spent her life cleaning other people's houses to support her younger siblings, her 78-year-old "ouma", Rosina, and seven-year-old Josiah and 10-year-old Selina, her two other children.

In court, the lawyer asked the court to take into account his client's lack of education and that she could have been depressed, which was rejected by the prosecution and the magistrate. "You realized that a newborn baby could not get out of that hole by himself and would probably die, yet you walked away as if nothing happened. What a gruesome way to die," she told Kgadima.

What strikes one about Kgadima is that she readily admits to what she did and appears remorseful. But when social workers called her during the trial to ask her to take the baby back, she refused. "Nobody knows what it is like to have no money, and no hope, like I have," she says sadly.

*Not her real name

Mail and Guardian

Women Matter Too

10mins.

The rights of children cannot be realised if the health and well being of mothers are not given the priority it deserves. Women in their various roles play a critical part in the well being of children and the enhancement of the status of women and their equal access to education, training, credit and other extension services constitute a valuable contribution to a nation's younger generation. Women who are sickly, hungry, oppressed and discriminated against cannot have the ability, willingness and

motivation to nurture their children adequately. The 1990 World Summit for Children recognised this relationship between mother and child. The vital importance of gender equality for social development was affirmed in 1979 when the UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women.

Since 1990, the need to end discrimination and other practices harmful to women as the basis for gender equality, development and peace has been consistently highlighted in UN declaration and conventions like the Vienna Human Rights Conference in 1993, the Cairo Population Conference in 1994, the Beijing Conference of 1995 and its follow up session in New York 2000. Despite all these UNICEF, UNFPA, the World Bank and UNDP annually release horrifying statistics, confirming that the world is still a long way off from assuring women their rights to good health, gender equality and safe motherhood. If women are still not assured rights in these areas, how can a child be nurtured in these difficult situations? A child can only be healthy and educated if his or her mother is healthy and educated. Maternal health, nutrition and education are important for the survival and well being of women in their own rights and are key determinants of the health and well being of the child in early infancy.

It is deeply ironic that despite widespread concerns about the lack of sustainable development in numerous countries around the world, government leaders, policy makers and development experts seem blinded to the one investment opportunity with almost guaranteed returns. That is, ensuring children a good start in life. But importantly one needs to know that unless women are ensured a good life, children would not get a good start in life. Mother and child in short are inextricably linked. The State of the World's Children 2001 focuses on children aged 0-3. So it is appropriate that the report looks into the well fare of women so that children can be adequately looked after. Part of early the childhood agendas of every government should be to incorporate educational scheme for women so that they can know about the importance of proper diet and health care during pregnancy. Men should also be educated on their important roles in caring for their pregnant wives and unborn babies. In the case of children of imprisoned mothers, governments should undertake special treatment to expectant mothers and to mothers of infants who have been accused or found guilty of infringing penal laws. They should particularly ensure that a mother is not imprisoned with her child. Empowering women leads to improvement in children's state of living.

allAfrica.com

Amputees Find Work, Aid in Sierra Leone

11mins. 9secs.

Victims of Sierra Leone's rebel terror campaign are being employed by international agencies to help care for the flood of refugees returning home from camps in the unstable border area of neighbouring Guinea. Three amputees, two men and one woman, are currently working with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to help with the reception and processing of Sierra Leonean returnees arriving in Freetown, the capital.

One of them is twenty-five year old Mohamed Bah, who began working last month. Bah is from Koidu, a town in Kono District, where he once worked as a hairdresser. In April 1998 his life was shattered when unidentified rebels severed his left hand with a machete. He told Chauzy part of his story: "They said I had to be punished for not supporting them," he said. "They were like madmen and I was lucky to survive the attack. After the amputation, I somehow managed to walk to a town called Yengema, where a doctor working for the West African Peacekeeping Force (ECOMOG) treated me for my injuries. I then fled Kono district and settled in Waterloo camp for displaced

persons in Freetown. On 6 January 1999, the rebels attacked the capital and my father was shot dead during the fighting.” For months on end, Mohamed had been looking for a job, but things weren’t that easy. “Short of begging, there are very little opportunities for people like us. We amputees feel useless, rejected. That’s why I couldn’t believe it when I was told I could get a job. It’s great to feel useful and help the community. And with the 1,000 Leones (US\$7) I receive for a day’s labour, I can support my four brothers and sisters.”

By mid January, IOM Freetown had hired Karatu Bangura. This 35-year-old mother of three worked as a trader in Kamaquay, a town some 190 miles from Freetown. On September 6 1998, she was ambushed on her way back from the market and consequently lost her arm. The local Red Cross made arrangements for her to be transferred to Freetown. Meanwhile, Bangura’s husband had gone back to Kamaquay to collect some of their belongings. She never saw him again. Karatu was left alone with her three young children. In January 1999, when the rebels attacked Freetown, Karatu was forced to flee Sierra Leone to seek refuge in neighbouring Guinea. Later on, she returned to a devastated city. She soon found herself in the Murray Town camp for amputees. “Life there was pretty dismal. I felt so frustrated. It was difficult to take care of my children”

Earlier this year, Karatu heard from the local Red Cross that IOM was recruiting people to work at the harbour. “At first, I thought I had no chance of getting this job. But a friend of mine who works for the Red Cross encouraged me to apply. So I went and much to my surprise, IOM hired me. My job is to make sure that returning families stay together once they have disembarked from the ship.” Karatu’s primary concern now is to give her children a good education. She is very proud to have been entrusted with this job. She is the first woman amputee to be hired by an international organization.

As of the middle of last month, Murray Town camp sheltered some 330 amputees and their families. Victims of the terror campaign are still arriving, albeit in smaller numbers.

IOM

Climate Change To Cost 300 Billion Dollars Annually **6mins. 16secs.**

Global warming may cost the world several billion dollars a year unless urgent efforts are made to curb emissions of carbon dioxide and the other gases linked with the “greenhouse effect,” says a report. The report by insurers and members of the UN Environment Programme’s (UNEP) financial services initiative, indicates that losses due to more frequent tropical cyclones, loss of land as a result of rising sea levels and damage to fishing stocks, agriculture and water supplies, could cost around 304.2 billion US dollars annually.

In some low lying states such as the Maldives, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia, the report notes, the losses linked with climate change could by 2050, exceed 10 percent of their national wealth or Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Commenting on the report, Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of UNEP, said: “The time to act is now. We must all work to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases.” But mitigation is not enough, he observed. The world has already signed up to a certain level of human-induced, climate change, as a result of over a century of industrial emissions primarily from the developed world.

Toepfer said the latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report, jointly sponsored by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organisation, had also underscored the need for swift action. The panel, made up of thousands of scientists from around the world, believes that average

temperatures across the world could climb by between 1.4 and 5.8 degrees Centigrade over the coming century.

“We must move ahead boldly with clean energy technologies, and we should start preparing ourselves now for the rising sea levels, changing rain patterns, and other impacts of global warming,” said Toepfer. He further stated that it was crucial for countries to re-start the climate change talks which were stalled in The Hague at the end of 2000 so that nations can take the first steps to deliver meaningful emission reductions.

PanAfrican News Agency

Positive Change And The Media

4mins. 50secs.

Kabral Blay-Amihere, President of the West Africa Journalists Association (WAJA), has cautioned journalists against allowing cronyism to influence their day-to-day relationship with government. He said since journalists supported the national movement for change they would have no place to hide if the new government fails to deliver the positive change it promised. Mr. Blay-Amihere was delivering the keynote address on the topic “Positive change and the media” at the annual general meeting of the Ghana Journalists Association (GJA) in Accra at which a new seven-member executive was sworn into office for a two-year term.

“The government should be made to know that the mandate given to it by the people is not an invitation to a tea party,” the WAJA president said. Journalists, he said, should avoid sycophancy in order not to undermine their value as watchdogs for society. Mr. Blay-Amihere pledged the GJA’s assistance for President Kufuor’s administration “if it shares information with the media, repeals the criminal libel law and passes the Freedom of Information Act.”

Mrs. Gifty Affenyi-Dadzie, GJA President, said the growing public recognition of the power of the media must spur journalists onto greater heights. “We must guard against complacency and always strive for excellence, by upholding the ethics of our profession.” Mrs. Affenyi-Dadzie said the GJA is setting up an observatory to monitor ethical violations.

GJA is among four West Africa journalists associations benefiting from the self-regulatory exercise being sponsored by the International Federation of Journalists with funds from the European Union.

Accra Mail

Nobel Laureates Speak On Press Freedom

3mins. 16secs.

Two Nobel laureates, the Tibetan spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and Bharat Ratan Amartya Sen, have urged the press to use its freedom to transform society and highlight narrow thinking that still prevents the world from becoming a global village. The two addressed the concluding session of the International Press Institute (IPI) World Congress and 50th General Assembly.

The Dalai Lama noted that the world had become highly interdependent but people minds were still ruled by ‘old thinking’. He said the press could make use of its freedom to bring about greater harmony among people. Mr. Sen on his part said press freedom must be unconditional despite risks like misquotations and invasion of privacy. He said a free press ensured freedom of expression for all. In a democracy he said it had the potential to prevent catastrophe like famine.

The Dalai Lama said education could not spread without a free press. The press, he said had a right to investigate religious leaders, politicians and even Nobel laureates.

The Independent (Banjul)

Rawlings becomes UN Spokesman for Volunteerism

5mins. 39secs.

Sharon Capeling-Alakija, Executive Co-ordinator of the UN Volunteers (UNV), has said that former Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings was made a UN Eminent Person for Voluntarism on merit and his deep commitment to basic health issues. "We also thought we needed a bold and candid speaker like Rawlings to tell people what behaviours they need to put away in order to avoid malaria and HIV-AIDS infection," the UN official said at a press conference in Accra. "Moreover, Rawlings has in his years as head of state expressed very deep feelings against malaria in particular. He is also free from the work of governance and, therefore, available for the role given him," Capeling-Alakija added.

She explained that Rawlings' new role as an Eminent Person is not an employment by the UN, but an opportunity for him to continue his fight against killer diseases such as AIDS and malaria in a voluntary capacity, but on a wider scope. "With his background as a former president and fighter against diseases in his country, we believe his contribution would intensify our efforts at combating the two killer diseases," she said. Capeling-Alakija said in his new capacity, Rawlings would spearhead UNV activities against AIDS and malaria in Africa under a specific programme of action, adding that his responsibility would spread to other parts of the world under a UNAIDS programme.

She said the former Ghanaian leader started work on the morning of Monday, 5 February and would continue till the end of the year when he would have the choice to renew his commitment or not. "In his capacity, Rawlings would soon embark on a programme in which he would address international conferences and rural communities on how to effectively combat AIDS and malaria," the UN official added.

PanAfrican News Agency

Conservation Goes To The Movies

6mins. 27secs.

The struggle to reconcile human prosperity and wildlife conservation is the backdrop to South African-born film director, Elaine Proctor's latest film. 'Kin' explores the contradictions between conservation and community rights as well as examines the hope for racial reconciliation in today's Namibia. The film tells the story of Anna, a young wildlife conservationist who lives in a remote region of Namibia. Together with her brother Marius, Anna fights to save a small herd of elephants that drink nightly from her well. For both Anna and Marius it is the elephants that are their kin rather than the baffled Himba people whose settlement borders their farm. Into Anna's isolated existence steps Stone, an African-American, working briefly in the country. With the arrest of a local Himba man for poaching, who most locals believe to be innocent, Anna's life suddenly is plunged into a sea of conflicting loyalties. A position in which she finds it almost impossible to extract any answers.

As Proctor states "the catalyst for (Anna's) shift is the experience of falling in love with a stranger who comes from the outside and helps her recognize everything." 'Kin' can in many ways be seen as a metaphor for the process of reconciliation. A process which the country is still slowly and painfully working its way through.

Proctor wanted the film to have the feel of a documentary and to this end she used many local people, including members of the local Himba tribe to portray themselves. It is their portrayal of themselves facing issues they are currently having to solve which gives 'Kin' its sense of authenticity.

This film elegantly blends political themes with complex stories, which highlight the contradictions in modern day southern Africa. It however ends on an optimistic note. Kin suggests that not only can man find a way to live in harmony with nature but perhaps more importantly he may also be capable of learning to live with his fellow man.

IPS

Behind the Children

3mins. 29secs.

The representatives of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees and the Save the Children Fund Alliance have submitted a report on an action programme to address the issue of abandoned children seeking asylum in Europe. This report evaluates the situation in the EU's 15 Member States and Norway, and formulates a set of recommendations for action both at European and national level. It covers children and young people under 18 living outside their country of origin, without parents/relatives or anyone to help them and who, for the most part, have fled their country in order to escape persecution, violations of human rights, armed conflict and generalized insecurity, trafficking for sexual exploitation, or extreme poverty.

According to the UNHCR, the abandoned children who are seeking asylum have no legal protection or adequate care. At European level, these issues receive practically no treatment in either legislation or policy, and the legal basis for action in this field is precarious. This is why the report requests the development and application of appropriate policies in the EU and in the Member States.

The Courier

Towards a place for Africa on the Security Council?

8mins. 22secs.

Although the historic millennium Summit held between 6 to 8 September 2000, focused mainly on the problem of world poverty, there was also room for discussion of the in-depth reform of the United Nations in order to adapt it to a changing world and make it a more effective tool for responding to the various expectations of different nations. Having just welcomed its 189th member with the arrival of Tuvalu, the institution needs to readjust its decision-making mechanisms, as advocated by the report commissioned for the UN by Lakhdar Brahimi, former Algerian diplomacy minister. This report, the broad outlines of which were approved by the heads of state, opens up the debate on extending the Security Council, which is in charge of peacekeeping.

By requesting a place for Africa within this body, the leaders of this continent hope to increase its influence at the UN, and there is no shortage of arguments in favour of such a move. In 1945, when the UN was created, two thirds of its current Member States did not exist as independent states, and the world population stood at only 2.5 billion. Today it is in the region of 6 billion. The continent of Africa alone has 700 million inhabitants and includes 53 of the 189 States that belong to the UN. More than a third of the questions discussed by this Council directly concern Africa. Some hold the view that the shape of this narrow decision-making framework needs to change to reflect a new, more balanced form of representation. How, and by whom, will this representation of Africa be conducted, once the idea has finally been accepted? This question that, as the African contingent was pleased to announce, should not pose any great problem. Could it be that the African Union, which came into being at the OAU Summit last July, will allow Africa greater influence on the international stage?

The heads of state also discussed the reinforcement of the financial, military and logistic resources of the UN to enable it to carry out its assignments successfully, in particular its peacekeeping operations. Many meetings were also held and bilateral contacts made with the different heads of state on the fringes of the Summit in an attempt to find solutions to specific problems. As the proceedings drew to a close, one question lingered on everyone's lips: will the good resolutions listed in the final Declaration of the Millennium Summit actually be implemented? Whatever happens, as is true of many meetings of this type, these resolutions will be heavily dependent upon the political will of those making them.

The Courier

Point of View

Justice For Sierra Leone's Children

10mins. 40secs.

The UN Panel investigating Liberia's role in diamonds for guns syndicate tearing West Africa apart has reached its conclusions: Charles Taylor's Liberia is the source of the horrors. This acknowledgement and the recommended actions serve as a great Christmas gift from conscientious humanity to the children and people of Sierra Leone. The Panel, among others, wants air and travel ban on the Liberian regime. It wants a ban on diamonds coming from Liberia. It wants its timber also banned. These moves, we believe, will send a strong message to the criminals in Liberia that their end is near in using politics for criminal objectives.

The Panel's findings and recommendations are among the most straight forward and courageous steps since Charles Taylor, propped up by Libya, Cote D'Ivoire, Burkina Faso and international underworld criminals, began the process of disintegrating West Africa under the cover of political demands. Perhaps if such steps had been taken a decade ago, tens of thousands of children from Liberia, Sierra Leone and now Guinea, would have survived. But we believe the time is never late in isolating this rottenness masquerading as a democracy. We congratulate the Panel!

For over a decade, economic activities in Liberia and Sierra Leone have come to a grinding halt. Farmers have been forced to abandon their villages and seek refuge under tents to be fed by donors. UHNCR outgoing High Commissioner, Mrs. Sadako Ogata, has noted that without creating the conditions needed for a departure from emergency to self-reliance, the wars and problems will mount. The truth is the creation of such conditions is far beyond the capabilities of current African governments, many of them named in the UN Panel's report as collaborators. To expect them to take needed steps in saving their people against their personal interests is a sad dream. This is why the international community, whatever the pitfalls, becomes the one big hope.

Those who argue against sanctions for bloody pariahs, applying the age-old argument that sanctions will hurt the ordinary people, must only look at Taylor's Liberia despite his enormous personal wealth at the expense of the country. The country's only hospital has been closed down. There are now only 25 doctors for the entire health service, compared to the pre-election figure of 400. Government service, where available, has gone to pre-colonial times. For example, the Ministry of Finance has no vehicles, so it cannot ensure payment of salaries to workers outside the capital Monrovia. Those workers in the capital may have their checks, but there is no money in the banks to honour them. In the end, the checks are pawned to street moneychangers at a high percentage.

All these are happening under a man who vowed to use the US dollars as Liberia's legal tender, promising every child a computer even if there is no electricity, water or chairs for schools, etc. Moreover, one must only ask the children of Sierra Leone the meaning of suffering, for what greater punishment is there than depriving a five-old child her arms and legs in the name of building a better society - Taylor's RUF pledge? The UN Panel's findings and conclusions, when applied comprehensively, may give the children of Sierra Leone time to laugh. We hope that the findings will be applied. We are overjoyed!

Abridged Editorial from The Perspective

Noted

Algeria Gets New Wetlands

2mins. 33secs.

Algeria has registered 10 new wetlands among those of international importance as part of the celebration of this year's World Wetland Day, observed 2 February, the press reported in Algiers. Most of the sites in the desert, south of the country included the Iherir valley (Illizi region), the Gueltales Swamps of Isskarassene (Tamanraset), Chott Merouane, Oued Khrouf (El- Oued), Ould Said Oases, as well as Tamentite and Sid Ahmed Timmi (Adrar). Algeria now has 13 wetlands of international rating covering between 5,000 hectares and over 1.861 million hectares of land, or the equivalent of the total surface of wetlands in the US, according to estimates by World Wildlife Fund officials.

The World Wetland Day was marked in Algiers with the award of certificates for the 10 new wetlands to Algeria.

AllAfrica.com

Critically-Ill AIDS Boy Turns 12

3mins. 6secs.

As South Africa's youngest AIDS activist, Nkosi Johnson who just turned 12, there was little cause for celebration. The young boy, who has captured the hearts of millions of people around the world, remained critically ill at his Johannesburg home with no improvement in his condition. Nkosi, who was born HIV-positive, collapsed in December with AIDS-related brain damage and viral infections.

About 200 people, including AIDS orphans and other people living with HIV/AIDS, attended a party for Nkosi at the Melpark Primary School in Melville where he completed Standard Four last year. It was at the same school in 1997 that the young boy first came to public attention when parents tried to prevent his admission because of his HIV/AIDS status.

Nkosi is best remembered for taking the podium at the opening of the world's biggest AIDS conference in Durban last year and calling on South African President Thabo Mbeki to allow the anti-AIDS drug AZT for pregnant mothers.

Africa Online

Children's Section

Kumbo and Mhisi

12mins. 7secs.

There was once a man and his wife who had lived for several years in a certain village with their son, Kumbo. At the time of this story, the parents decided that it was time to move to a different village, for they had lived in their old home long enough. They discussed this move with their child and were rather surprised when he said, 'Oh, no, my parents. You can move, but I'm not going to. I can't understand why you should want to leave such a nice house as this one.'

'But, my child,' said his mother, 'we can easily build ourselves another house just as comfortable.'
'No,' repeated the obstinate child. 'Even if you move I am staying here.'

The parents had made their minds up. They were tired of their old village and wanted to move. And the son had made his mind up. He was happy where he was and refused to move. So they agreed to separate and the parents took their belongings to a new village, while Kumbo stayed alone in the old house.

The parents' new home was not far away and that very evening the mother returned to Kumbo saying, 'I cannot let my only son go hungry just because we have moved, so I shall bring your food everyday. You will know that it is me arriving when you hear me sing:

'Ni-vi-yi Kumbo
Ni-vi-yi Kumbo,
Is that Kumbo?'

So this was the arrangement and the mother returned to give Kumbo food everyday. Now one day Mhisi, the Hyena, who was resting in some bushes nearby, saw what happened and heard the song. 'Ah-ha,' he said to himself. 'All I have to do is learn that song and I can have that boy to myself, to do what I like with ...and I certainly know what I'd like to do with a tasty morsel like that!'

After the mother had left, Mhisi went to the house and he sang outside the door:

'Ni-vi-yi Kumbo
Ni-vi-yi Kumbo
Is that Kumbo?'

Inside the house the boy lay on his sleeping mat and realised that the voice was not his mother's. Besides she had already brought his food that day and his belly was full. So he remained silent until Mhisi gave up and went away.

The following day the same thing happened and the boy shouted out, 'You're wasting your time, whoever you are. I know you're not my mother and I'm not letting you in!'

Mhisi sunk away into the bush, racking his brains to think of a way to get into that hut. Next day he arrived before the mother and he sang as sweetly as he could?

'Ni-vi-yi Kumbo
Ni-vi-yi Kumbo
Is that Kumbo?'

Now Kumbo was expecting his mother at that time and he was very hungry indeed. To tell the truth, in his impatience to eat, he had quite forgotten about the creature that had been trying for three days to gain entry into his house. So he jumped up and opened the door.

Mhisi grabbed Kumbo by the arm and dragged him away.

'Oh, Hyena', cried the boy in great fright. 'Where are we going? I am waiting for my mother to bring food. She will be here very soon.'

'Do not worry, Kumbo.' Replied Mhisi, 'I was sent here by your mother. She was the very one who sent me to fetch you.'

So Kumbo's fears were quietened and he remained silent while Mhisi carried him into a pan deep in the bush. Then, before Kumbo realised what was happening, Mhisi killed him and ate him up.

Poor silly Kumbo. Did he think a child knows more than his parents and can go against their decision?

Parting shots

Some unforgettable quotes from African leaders:

On development

Underdevelopment represents the biggest threat to peace. Our number one priority is to eradicate poverty, ignorance and disease and to generate more choices which allow the individual to flourish, based on equal opportunities for men and women.

Sam Nujoma

President of Namibia at the Millennium Summit

On globalisation

If we want to grasp the opportunities of globalisation while at the same time containing its negative effects then we must learn to govern better and govern together.

Kofi Anan

Secretary General of the UN at the Millennium Summit

On conflict

He who goes to sleep on an empty stomach wakes up with a heart full of hatred

Pierre Buyoya

President of Burundi at the Millennium Summit

On education

Education is not a way of escaping the country's poverty but of fighting it

Julius Nyerere

Late president of Tanzania

And remember...

Beauty comes above all from the mind, from the health of the mind and the completeness of self.

Nawal El Sadaawai

Author, The Hidden Face of Eve.