

## Global Social Policy Digest (GSP 6.1)

The Global Policy Digest forms part of every issue of the journal Global Social Policy. All members of ICSW receive Global Social Policy every quarter.

This and subsequent issues of the GSP Digest are being produced by a new team assembled as a result of collaboration between the Globalism and Social Policy Programme (GASPP) and the International Council for Social Welfare (ICSW). The Digest has been compiled by Bob Deacon and Meri Koivusalo (funded by GASPP) and Alexandra Kaasch and Mike Chai (funded by the ICSW from SIDA and Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland resources). A pre-publication version of this Digest with direct links to the web sites is available on [www.gassp.org](http://www.gassp.org) and [www.icsw.org](http://www.icsw.org). All the web sites referenced in brackets were accessible in January 2006. This edition of the Digest covers the period mid September 2005 to mid January 2006.

We are taking the opportunity provided by a new team to experiment with a modification to the subject headings of the Digest. The headings below are designed to conceptualise the area of global social policy into those activities/policies that are primarily about *trans-national social policies of redistribution, regulation and rights* and *issues of global social governance* on the one hand and *international actor influence on national social policy* on the other. There is a new section drawing attention to the Southern contribution to the global debate and to the social policy dimension of Southern regionalism.

### Global Social Policies: redistribution, regulation and rights

#### Redistribution

Following the G8 summit at Gleneagles in July 2005 (see Digest GSP 5.3) the UN General Assembly in September ([www.un.org/summit2005](http://www.un.org/summit2005)) reaffirmed the commitment to the global partnership for development, to increase international financial and technical cooperation for development, external debt relief etc. While welcoming the moves towards the 0.7 % of GDP level of ODA by some countries, the Summit did not reaffirm the commitment of others to reach this target leaving the USA free to continue to fail significantly to do so. Developing countries agreed to adopt MDG plans by 2006. Concerning innovative financing facilities the formulation remains quite vague and actually it is left to individual countries if and which and when such new financing sources are implemented: "Some countries will implement the International Finance Facility. Some countries have launched the International Finance Facility for Immunization. Some countries will implement in the near future, utilizing their national authorities, a contribution on airline tickets to enable financing of development projects [...]" In fact, it was 66 governments that signed the Lula group's<sup>1</sup> *Declaration on Innovative Sources of Financing for Development*. Other, fewer countries plan to implement a tax on airline tickets.<sup>2</sup>

At the September IMF-World Bank meetings, a multi-billion-dollar debt cancellation plan for the most heavily indebted poor countries was approved (see <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/survey/2005/100305.pdf>). The outcome of these

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<sup>1</sup> Consisting of Germany, France, Chile, Brazil, and Spain.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/ga10389.doc.htm>;  
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/socecon/globaltax/general/2005/12progress.htm>

meetings also includes two new, additional approved tools for the IMF involvement in low-income countries: the Policy Support Instrument (PSI) for members that do not want or need IMF financial assistance; and a new window in the PRGF trust for timely financial support to PRGF countries facing exogenous shocks. In preparation for the September Development Committee Meeting, staff of the World Bank and the IMF reviewed the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) approach ([http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/20651869/DC2005-0017\(E\)-PRReview.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/DEVCOMMINT/Documentation/20651869/DC2005-0017(E)-PRReview.pdf)).

The *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development* ([http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2005/09/20/000112742\\_20050920110826/Rendered/PDF/322040World0Development0Report02006.pdf](http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2005/09/20/000112742_20050920110826/Rendered/PDF/322040World0Development0Report02006.pdf)) marks a sea-change in the public face of Bank thinking on the issue of equity. This report defines equity in terms of striving to ensure equal opportunity unhindered by class, gender, and ethnicity. The absence of equity it argues hinders development. Redistribution policies within countries are endorsed for the first time if they contribute for example to effective public primary education or access to water. The Scandinavian story of equity and development is reported with approval. At the global level issues of international redistribution are touched upon: increased ODA is supported and obstacles to development such as the TRIPS agreement, unfair tariffs and migration policies are critically commented upon.

### **Regulation**

In terms of global regulation the same *World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development* (see above link) admits that – despite the common advice to poor countries to integrate in the global economy – those markets are “far from equitable, and the rules governing their functioning have disproportionately negative effects on developing countries”. It argues for more equitable rules for the global market, and better participation of poor countries in global rule-setting processes.

The OECD Observer Policy Brief *Opening up trade in Services: Crucial for economic growth* (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/63/18/35415933.pdf>) also demonstrates the importance of strengthened regulation that has to accompany liberalisation. It calls for new regulatory tools and approaches in pricing, universal access and service standards.

The Global Commission on Migration presented its report (<http://www.gcim.org/attachements/gcim-complete-report-2005.pdf>) to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. It remarks that the international community is not adequately dealing with the potential of migration. The report calls for a more effective governance of international migration presenting six “Principles of Action” and 33 related recommendations to tackle migration policies at different governmental levels. Related to the different issues dealt with, further papers can be found at [http://www.gcim.org/en/ir\\_experts.html](http://www.gcim.org/en/ir_experts.html).

### **Rights**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights published a report entitled *Human Rights and World Trade Agreements. Using general exception clauses to protect human rights*

(<http://www.ohchr.org/english/about/publications/docs/WTO.pdf>). It analyses and shows how general exception clauses in world trade agreements (i.e. allowing States to take measures to protect public morals, human life or health, and public order) can be used to protect human rights.

### **The 2005 World Summit Outcome**

(<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN021752.pdf>) includes a general recommitment and reaffirmation to protect and promote all human rights and resolves “further to strengthen the United Nations human rights machinery with the aim of ensuring effective enjoyment by all of all human rights and civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights [...]”; “to strengthen the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights”; and to establish a Human Rights Council to replace the discredited Commission for Human Rights. A Roundup of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) (<http://www.un-npls.org/documents/pdf/roundup/RU124-UN-World-Summit.pdf>) summarised the reaction of NGOs to the outcome regarding human rights, which were broadly supportive.

The High Level Commission on the Legal Empowerment of the Poor (HLCLEP) was established ([www.undp.org/legalempowerment](http://www.undp.org/legalempowerment)) under the chairpersonships of Madeleine Albright (USA) and Hernando de Soto (Peru) with a membership including Gordon Brown of UK. Its mission is to explore how nations can reduce poverty through reforms that expand access to legal protection and opportunities for all. According to the Norwegian member Hilde Johnson speaking at the Arusha conference on social policy (see below) a key test will be whether the commission is able to address the issue of collective land rights of indigenous peoples. The HLCLEP starts work in New York in January 2006 and will report in two years time.

### ***Global Social Governance***

The newly appointed UNDP administrator, Kernal Davis, presented his views about desirable global governance at the *Financial Times and International Finance Corporation Conference: Southern Multinationals: A Rising Force in the World Economy* in November (<http://www.undp.org/dpa/statements/kd/2005/kd-FT-11-2005.shtml>). He stressed “the need to complement the invisible hand of the global market place with a more ”visible” dose of global governance”. This means “a much more advanced and transparent form of international cooperation”. The UN should provide the “overarching framework” for this, but all sorts of actors should be given a place.

In this regard, the outcome of the 2005 World Summit (<http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/UN/UNPAN021752.pdf>) provides some steps into this direction, reaffirming the commitment to increased participation of developing countries and expresses the need to enhance the contribution of non-governmental organisations, civil society, the private sector etc. Further, the need of a strong UN is reaffirmed. The *Implementation of Decisions from the 2005 World Summit Outcome for action by the Secretary General* (<http://www.un-npls.org/UN-Summit-SG-Report-Implementation-N0554506.pdf>) shows that the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights is already taking steps to put into action the changes envisaged by the World Summit, namely actions towards greater country engagement, an enhanced human rights leadership role for the High Commissioner,

closer partnerships with civil society and UN agencies, more synergy in the relationships between the OHCHR and the various UN human rights bodies, and strengthened management and planning for OHCHR.<sup>3</sup>

The role and function of the ECOSOC was also addressed in the Secretary General's report to the UN Summit in September 2005. *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Rights for All* (<http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>) praised the work of ECOSOC to date and asserted that a reformed Council "could start to assert leadership in driving a global development agenda" (para 179). It should "hold annual Ministerial-level assessments of progress towards agreed development goals, particularly the MDGs. These assessments could be based on peer reviews" (para 176) and "(i)t should serve as a high-level development cooperation (biennial) forum" (para 177). The final agreed outcome of the Summit (UN 2005 ref A/60/L.1 **Fout! De hyperlinkverwijzing is ongeldig.**) did indeed "recognize the need for a more effective ECOSOC as a principal body for coordination, policy review, policy dialogue and recommendations on issues of economic and social development, as well as for implementation of the international development goals agreed at the major United Nations summits and conferences, including the MDGS" (para 155). It went on to endorse the specific procedural recommendations of the Secretary-General. While all of this is to be welcomed Jens Martens<sup>4</sup>, a respected analyst of UN matters, warns that while strengthening the role of ECOSOC in development issues this new emphasis risks sidelining the broader economic brief of ECOSOC and in turn the UN. "Its areas of responsibilities would be narrowly confined to development issues. The IMF, the World Bank and the WTO would continue to decide on international economic, monetary and trade policies outside the UN [...] Thus at best ECOSOC would amount to something like an enlarged OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) augmented by the developing countries".

The Commission for Social Development note entitled *Future organization and methods of work of the Commission for Social Development* ([www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2006.htm](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2006.htm)) (for the 8-17 February 2006 session) also reviews further steps to implement its changed responsibilities: the future work will be organised in a series of two-year action-oriented implementation cycles including a review segment and a policy segment. It is proposed that each cycle will address one of the three core issues of the World Summit for Social Development: eradication of poverty, promoting full employment and fostering social integration.

Finally within the context of the newly strengthened UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs in New York under Jose Antonio Ocampo, assisted by Jomo Kwame Sundaram, it is worth noting that DESA is publishing on line a new working paper series ([www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2005](http://www.un.org/esa/desa/papers/2005)).

### ***International Actors and Social Policy***

#### **Health**

The World Health Organisation executive board meeting takes place in the end of January 2006. The agenda of the meeting includes the expected measures concerning influenza pandemic, universal access to prevention, care and treatment of HIV/AIDS

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<sup>3</sup> see also [http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents/2005/ECOSOCsummitfollow\\_up.pdf](http://www.un.org/docs/ecosoc/documents/2005/ECOSOCsummitfollow_up.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Martens, Jens (2005): "In Larger Freedom". The Report of the UN Secretary-General for the Millennium+5 Summit 2005. Briefing Papers. FES Berlin, p.7

as well as the draft global strategy on prevention and control of sexually transmitted infections. The Commission on Intellectual Property Rights has prepared its report to the WHO Executive Board that is expected to be published in full in spring on the Commission's website (<http://www.who.int/intellectualproperty/en/>). Linked to the report is a potential new resolution on a global framework on essential health research and development that has been discussed by nongovernmental sources, but it remains uncertain whether an actual proposal will be presented to the Executive Board. The WHO Executive Board will also need to deal with the proposed and revised resolution on trade and health. The proposed resolution calls for further consideration and action on trade and health related issues by the WHO ([http://www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/EB117/B117\\_10-en.pdf](http://www.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB117/B117_10-en.pdf)).

An international conference on social insurance was held in Berlin in December 2005 (<http://www.shi-conference.de/contribut.html>). It was convened by the German Development Cooperation (GTZ) together with the ILO and the WHO, and was a major result of the GTZ/WHO/ILO agreement established in 2004, which covers co-operation in the broad area of social health protection and social health insurance. Attention was drawn to the lack of access to social health protection - affordable health insurance or government-funded health services - in many countries. It is estimated that each year 100 million people slide into poverty as result of medical care payments and another 150 million are forced to spend nearly half their incomes on medical expenses.

Paul Hunt, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to the Highest Attainable Standard of Health, has given a statement to the United Nations General Assembly. This statement emphasised the ways in which migration and human resource crisis in health care endangered the attainment of right to health (<http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/health/right/annual.htm>). The Special Rapporteur has also been part of the Ethical Globalisation initiative campaign on the right to health and as part of this organised a leaders statement on right to health, which was published in December 2005 (<http://www.eginitiative.org/>).

The WHO has launched a new report on domestic violence and its impact on health as well as a global patient safety challenge drawing attention to health care-associated infections ([http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who\\_multicountry\\_study/en/](http://www.who.int/gender/violence/who_multicountry_study/en/)).

The UNICEF has launched its flagship publication *State of the Worlds Children* in December 2005. The 2006 Report is titled *Excluded and Invisible* ([http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06\\_fullreport.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/sowc06/pdfs/sowc06_fullreport.pdf)) and argues that children in four circumstances are most likely to become invisible and forgotten: children without a formal identity; children without parental care; children in adult roles and children who are exploited. These are also the children who will not be reached through the general aims of Millennium Development Goals, but require further action.

A high-level forum (HLF) on Health MDGs was held in November 2005 in Paris (<http://www.hlfhealthmdgs.org/>). This third and last meeting dealt especially with the fiscal space and sustainability from the perspective of the health sector, best practice principles for global partnerships activities at country level, health in fragile and post conflict states, human resources for health, and the future of the forum. The decision

to establish the Forum was taken at a meeting convened by the World Bank, DFID and CIDA in May 2003 in Ottawa. The focus of the HLF was on governments and donor agencies, however, a joint NGO statement to the High Level Forum was made to the meeting. ([http://www.wemos.nl/Documents/hlf\\_letter.pdf](http://www.wemos.nl/Documents/hlf_letter.pdf))

The OECD has established a Regional Centre on Health and Social Policy in Seoul, South Korea, seeking to respond to the need for greater knowledge of best practices in health and social policy in OECD and non-OECD countries, with a focus on Asia. The OECD has also published the OECD indicators 2005 in its *Health at a Glance* publication warning that increasing obesity and lack of focus on prevention could counteract the positive trend of falling death rates in most OECD countries (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/58/47/35624825.pdf>).

In HIV/AIDS the aim towards universal access to HIV prevention and treatment continues to be important in the scaling up of programmes in low- and middle-income countries. A Global Steering Committee, supported amongst other by the UNAIDS, on increasing the prospects for universal access held its first meeting in Washington DC in January 2006 (<http://www.unaids.org>). The UN General Assembly Fifth Committee took up the programme budget implications of the 2006 follow-up meeting. By the terms of the draft resolution on the follow-up (document A/60/L.43), the Assembly would decide to undertake on 31 May and 1 June 2006 a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the targets set out in the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS, which was adopted in June 2001, and convene a high-level meeting on 2 June 2006 aimed at continuing the engagement of world leaders in a comprehensive global response to HIV/AIDS.

### **Social Protection**

The Social Protection Board of the World Bank ([www.worldbank.org/sp](http://www.worldbank.org/sp)) under Robert Holzmann continued to focus its work on pension reform including its privatisation and on refining its work on safety nets. It was the turn of the Middle East and North Africa to receive particular attention with the publication on *Pensions in the Middle East and North Africa* ([www.worldbank.org/pensions](http://www.worldbank.org/pensions)). It argues that where countries have a sound banking system and a clear agenda of financial sector reform such as Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco, the promotion of private schemes should be encouraged. At the same time it calls throughout the region for reforms to limit the existing discrimination against women.

The World Bank Institute held another \$3,000 Pension Course from November 7-18 in Washington (<http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/WBI/WBIPROGRAMS/SPLP/0,,contentMDK:20737956~menuPK:461671~pagePK:64156158~piPK:64152884~theSitePK:461654,00.html>). Designed for high-level policy makers and civil servants the course is taught by among others Holzmann, Rutowski and James together with some dissenting voices such as Orszag. Among the country case studies are Chile, Croatia, Hungary, Mexico, Hong-Kong, and Poland.

The Bank ([www.worldbank.org/pensions](http://www.worldbank.org/pensions)) has teamed up with the OECD ([www.oecd.org/daf/pensions](http://www.oecd.org/daf/pensions)) and with ING, one of the “world’s largest financial services companies” ([www.ing.com/group](http://www.ing.com/group)) “to study how pension privatisation has

performed in a wide range of developing and transition economies.” The current partnership welcomes additional membership from other major financial institutions.

In terms of the OECD’s own work on pensions it published in September its first newsletter *Ageing-Pension Reform and Long Term Care* under the editorship of John Martin, Director of Employment, Labour and Social Affairs

(<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/60/40/35407553.pdf>). The first issue reviews the OECD’s earlier *Pensions at a Glance* publication

([www.oecd.org/els/social/ageing/PAG](http://www.oecd.org/els/social/ageing/PAG)) together with its *Long Term Care for Older People*

([http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_201185\\_35195570\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/50/0,2340,en_2649_201185_35195570_1_1_1_1,00.html)) publication and looked forward to the OECD Ministerial meeting in October that considered about 19 country studies on Ageing and Employment.

The World Bank’s work on safety nets has in part continued in the same vein as previously with the World Bank Institute ([www.worldbank.org/wbi/socialprotection](http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/socialprotection)) running another of its courses on *Protecting the Vulnerable: The Design and Implementation of Safety Nets* which restates the Bank’s Social Risk Management framework. However it seems that the social protection section of the Bank has been brain-storming on the relationship between this and the associated social funds approach and the recent interest in conditional cash transfers in Brazil, Mexico etc such as those that encourage school and health clinic attendance. While both are said to embody progressive targeting and have positive welfare impacts neither reaches the poorest of the poor and neither solves systematic sector problems.

Not mentioned on the social protection pages of the World Bank is a new World Bank social policy initiative emerging under the leadership of Anis Dani, social policy adviser in the often heretical Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development Network of the Bank. A click on [www.worldbank.org/socialpolicy](http://www.worldbank.org/socialpolicy) will reveal a link to a major conference held in December in Tanzania on *New Frontiers of Social Policy: Developments in A Globalizing World*

([http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20692088~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363\\_00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20692088~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363_00.html)) and a new seminar series running in Washington. The conference and work programme addressed issues of a) inequality, livelihoods and inclusion, b) institutions, voice and accountability as well as c) cultural diversity and social integration. The plan is to build upon the concerns with institutional and political and social structural obstacles to equitable development revealed in the WDR 2006 on

*Equity and Development*

([http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2005/09/20/000112742\\_20050920110826/Rendered/PDF/322040World0Development0Report02006.pdf](http://wdsbeta.worldbank.org/external/default/WDSContentServer/IW3P/IB/2005/09/20/000112742_20050920110826/Rendered/PDF/322040World0Development0Report02006.pdf)). Panels at the conference address Donor Impact on Domestic Accountability, the Implementation of the WDR 2006 and the Role of International Organisations in Global Social Policy. Among the plenary speakers were scholars such as Ian Gough, Ravi Kanbur, Mahmood Mamdani, and Jomo Kwame Sundaram and Sergei Zelenev of UNDESA and interestingly Paul Stubbs and Bob Deacon of

GASPP! An Arusha statement was agreed

([http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20761071~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363\\_00.html](http://web.worldbank.org/WBSITE/EXTERNAL/TOPICS/EXTSOCIALDEVELOPMENT/0,,contentMDK:20761071~pagePK:210058~piPK:210062~theSitePK:244363_00.html)) by participants that stated among other things that “targeting public services

at the poor along  
their capabilities

Meanwhile the  
universal social  
been doing thro  
programme, un  
report on *Econo*  
revised social se  
(<http://www.ilo.org>)

Extension of So  
Social Protectio



generated an overview volume listing key indicators of family friendly policies in all OECD countries.

([http://www.oecd.org/document/35/0,2340,en\\_2649\\_37419\\_34905443\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37419\\_00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/35/0,2340,en_2649_37419_34905443_1_1_1_37419_00.html)).

## Education

On the occasion of its 60th anniversary UNESCO organised 60 thematic weeks out of which 16 are dedicated to education issues.<sup>7</sup> The very first week dealt with Education for All (EFA). In the course of this, a ministerial roundtable took place on the topics of progress and challenges in EFA, resource mobilisation and aid effectiveness, strengthening partnerships in education at the country level, and the UNESCO's role and strategy in the EFA drive. Following the fifth meeting of UNESCO's High Level Group on EFA, the third meeting of the Fast Track Initiative (FTI)<sup>8</sup> took place in Beijing (<http://www.fasttrackinitiative.org/education/efafti/Beijingmeeting.asp>).

Addressing yet another challenge within the EFA frame, UNESCO published the fourth edition of the EFA Global Monitoring Report on literacy ([www.efareport.unesco.org](http://www.efareport.unesco.org)), as well as launching a new literacy portal that can be accessed via the education site (<http://portal.unesco.org/education>).

The first week in October focussed on teachers. A high priority Initiative on Teacher Training in Sub-Saharan Africa for the 2006-2015 decade was brought into being – in cooperation with ILO, Education International, and the World Confederation of Teachers (<http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/>).

The week from November 7 – 12 was dedicated to national policies and education. On this topic, the UNESCO published a new volume in its Policies and Strategies Series titled *Decentralization in Education: National Policies and Practices* (<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001412/141221e.pdf>).

UNICEF contributed to the gender debate in education with the first part of the *Gender Achievements and Prospects in Education* (GAP) Report ([http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/GAP\\_Report\\_part1\\_final\\_14\\_Nov.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/GAP_Report_part1_final_14_Nov.pdf)).

This report has been a yearlong multimedia assessment of global progress towards gender parity in education. It regrets that the MDG of gender *parity* in primary and secondary education has not been achieved, and comes forward with proposals to move ahead. The United Nations Girls' Education Initiative's (UNGEI) publication '*Scaling up' good practices in girls' education*

(<http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001422/142240E.pdf>) goes further in its claim dealing also with the MDG of gender *equality*. It points out that getting girls into education is one thing, keeping them in school and having them complete a quality education is a much greater challenge.

The first Global Forum on Education took place in Santiago (Chile) on the theme *The Challenges for Education in a Global Economy*; and at the OECD Chief Executive Meeting in Copenhagen, education policy issues for the next 3-5 years were discussed, namely in the fields of quality, equity and efficiency; lifelong learning and the employment challenge; and the challenge of globalisation (<http://www.oecd.org/>).

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<sup>7</sup> Thematic weeks' websites: [http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=41781&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/education/en/ev.php-URL_ID=41781&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html).

<sup>8</sup> The FTI is managed by a Steering Committee, composed of the two current co-chairs (the United Kingdom and Belgium), UNESCO, the World Bank and the outgoing co-chair (Sweden). The FTI Secretariat is housed in the World Bank.

Concerning *higher* education, the World Bank (AFTHD) commissioned a paper, authored by Bloom, Canning, and Chan from Harvard University, titled *Higher Education and Economic Development in Africa* ([http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/HigherEd\\_Econ\\_Growth\\_Africa.pdf](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EDUCATION/Resources/278200-1099079877269/547664-1099079956815/HigherEd_Econ_Growth_Africa.pdf)). The authors emphasise the important role of tertiary education in promoting economic growth. Also, the OECD Programme on Institutional Management in Higher Education (IMHE) organised a seminar on *The role of higher education institutions in regional development* in October in Karlstad, Sweden (<http://www.oecd.org/>).

### **Habitat**

In the course of the Cairo Conference (4-11 September 2005), the Habitat International Coalition (HIC) Board adopted its strategic lines for 2005-2007 (<http://www.hic-net.org/documents.asp?PID=274>). They are based on two levels: the promotion of the Right to Adequate Housing, and the fulfilment of such a Right by recognizing and enhancing “people’s processes”. This shall be achieved by developing relationships, supporting community-based efforts to improve for example housing, advocacy for recognition, defence and full implementation of housing rights. More concretely, it is to promote the social production of habitat, revise MDG slum reduction targets, halt forced evictions and promote human rights, campaigns and networks.

In the process of preparing the *World Urban Forum 3* taking place in Vancouver (Canada) in June 2006, the government of Canada together with UN-HABITAT launched a 72-hour Internet event. *HABITAT JAM* (<http://www.habitatjam.com/>) was open to input and online discussion from December 1 to 3, collecting ideas to be turned into actions for the World Urban Forum.

The Habitat Debate September issue *The Millennium Development Goals and the City* (<http://www.unhabitat.org/HD/hdv11n3/habittat%20deb%20187s.pdf>), as well as the UN-HABITAT annual report 2005 *Responding to the Challenges of an Urbanizing World* (<http://www.unhabitat.org/>) deal with the problems of urbanisation and the improvement of living conditions of slum dwellers. The annual report calls for a three-part, integrated strategy comprising slum upgrading, urban development, and regional development. The strategic scope includes knowledge management and reporting, advocacy of norms, technical cooperation, innovative financing, and strategic partnerships. A further report was launched titled *Financing urban shelter*. It presents the first global assessment of housing finance systems, and discusses further direction of strengthening such finance systems (<http://hq.unhabitat.org/>).

The UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) Population Division published the report *Population Challenges and Development Goals* ([http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/pop\\_challenges/Population\\_Challenges.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/pop_challenges/Population_Challenges.pdf)). Apart from an overview of global demographic trends and population policies, the report shows how the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) would support the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals (including the MDGs).

A World Bank report entitled *Water, Electricity and the Poor. Who Benefits from Utility Subsidies?*

(<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTWSS/Resources/Subsidybook.pdf>) focuses on the distributional impact of consumer subsidies for urban water supply and electricity services. It places these issues within a broader social protection framework, and asks whether and why consumer utility subsidies are (not) able to target the poor.

### ***Trade and Social Policy***

The World Trade Organisation (WTO)

([http://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/minist\\_e/min05\\_e/min05\\_e.htm](http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/minist_e/min05_e/min05_e.htm)) ministerial meeting was held in Hong Kong in December. The expectations from the meeting were already diminished before it started. Critical views of the Hong Kong agenda and meeting saw especially developing countries agreeing about how little they were offered by developed countries.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the WTO emphasis on the Ministerial Declaration was strongly on how it has put negotiations “back on track”. As part of the process the European Commission had said earlier in the Gleneagles G8 summit that it would put substantial funds on “aid for trade” activities and in Hong Kong made commitments to put more than 2 billion euros annually by 2010 (<http://europa.eu.int/comm/trade/>). It has also already been pointed out by the South Centre that in practice this is “charity with strings attached” which may lure developing countries to commitments whose economic and policy costs may be much higher than what they can gain from aid for trade (<http://www.southcentre.org/>).

In terms of services negotiations the Ministerial Declaration with its Annex C specifying commitments made with respect to services negotiations remained controversial up to the final approved version and even beyond as it was claimed that the process of approval was not democratic.<sup>10</sup> The draft of the Annex C on services was argued by some to become the TRIPS of Hong Kong.<sup>11</sup> The fourth paragraph, which makes reference to government procurement was considered problematic as it was opening up further negotiations in the area. If government procurement is included as part of negotiations it may have substantial relevance to regional policies and to the practice of social, educational and health policies in many countries. Another controversial part dealt with domestic regulation with reference to a report of the chairman of the working party submitted to the Special Session of the Council for Trade in Services in mid-November 2005. Substantial criticism was also raised with respect to the paragraph 7, which takes up plurilateral negotiations.

Finally, the contentious issue of negotiation modalities and quantitative and qualitative targets remained on the agenda and qualitative targets are reflected in the first paragraph of objectives as part of the Annex C. The future interpretation of these objectives will need close surveillance if countries wish not to make further commitments, for example, in social, health and education services or wish to maintain their regulatory policy space.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.southcentre.org/>, <http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/twninfo339.htm>;  
<http://www.wdm.org.uk/wto/finalanalysisupdate.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.wdm.org.uk/wto/finalanalysisupdate.pdf>;  
<http://www.twinside.org.sg/title2/twninfo335.htm>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.focusweb.org/content/view/775/55/>

In TRIPS a main decision was made just before the Hong Kong meeting. Especially the European Commission sought a “permanent solution” for the so called paragraph 6 problem of exportation of medicines, compulsory licensing and countries with insufficient or no manufacturing capacity since the August 30 decision on the issues in 2003. This decision was made shortly before the Hong Kong meeting and has been strongly criticised by the nongovernmental organisations as the mechanism of the August 30 decision has not yet been used and its workability is thus uncertain.<sup>12</sup> In addition to fears of little help to the developing countries, concern over the impacts of the opt-out clause of the amendment were raised by the Consumers International (<http://www.consumersinternational.org>) in their statement to the TRIPS Council in the context of avian flu, availability of pharmaceuticals in the context of emergencies and economies of scale in the production of generics.

Intellectual property rights have featured strongly also in the context of regional and bilateral agreements. Recently attention has been drawn, for example, to the protests of FTA negotiations between Thailand and the United States in 2006 and fears that the FTA negotiations will lead to worsening of access to pharmaceuticals and demise of the national treatment program of HIV/AIDS.<sup>13</sup>

The World Bank has produced a book on *International Trade in Health Services and the GATS* (<http://www.who.int/trade/resource/ITHS/en/>) together with the WHO. The book is to assist and inform policymakers in formulating trade policy and negotiating internationally.

The South Centre (<http://www.southcentre.org>) produced a broad array of materials in the context of the Hong Kong meeting and especially on the state of play of the negotiations. Consumers International (<http://www.consumersinternational.org>) has also published a report for the Hong Kong ministerial meeting. Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives has produced an analysis (<http://www.policyalternatives.ca/index.cfm?act=main&call=FBA87762>) on how South Africa’s flagship health legislation conflicts with binding commitments the former apartheid regime negotiated under the WTO’s GATS.

An OECD Trade Working Paper was published focusing on *Trade and Gender: Issues and Interactions* (<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/38/50/35770606.pdf>). The paper shows how greater integration through trade impacts women and men differently, and that women “face constraints which make them less able to benefit from liberalisation”, which calls for policy responses that “may aid women in taking advantage of greater openness to trade”.

### **Southern Voices and Actors (focus on SAARC and ASEAN)**

The twice-postponed 13th summit of the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) (<http://www.saarc-sec.org/main.php>) was held in November 2005. Highlights of the Summit Declaration are: the SAARC Decade of Poverty Alleviation; a regional food bank and a forestry center; the Poverty Alleviation Fund;

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.cptech.org/ip/wto/p6/ngos12032005.html>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.bilaterals.org/>; <http://www.msf.org/>

and new resolutions to address problems of natural disasters and pandemics and trafficking of women and children.<sup>14</sup>

The Summit also celebrated the 20th anniversary of SAARC. Almost all reviews were critical of the organisation's performance. Even SAARC's leaders admit that their regional club has not achieved very much in its 20-year life.<sup>15</sup>

SAARC had pledged, at its inception, to alleviate the grinding poverty in the region. Since then repeated efforts were made to materialize this main objective but without substantial progress.<sup>16</sup> In the last twenty years, sectors such as agriculture, communication, health, and population were explored and studied for regional cooperation and the forum has a permanent secretariat along with some other small functionaries under its cover. But the people of the region are yet to reap the benefit of the forum.

SAARC is criticised for even failing to trigger intra-regional trade - less than four per cent compared to 66 per cent for the EU and 28 per cent for the ASEAN.<sup>17</sup>

CSOs meeting in their traditional pre-summit gathering called SAARC a “paralysed organization”.<sup>18</sup> Reviews at the meeting show SAARC countries trying to deal with poverty either through national or extra-regional strategies. Regional cooperation as an instrument for generating trade, investment and employment is largely missing. In all fairness, the review of SAARC's suggests that it has failed on past performance but still has great potential.<sup>19</sup> Undoubtedly, the main factor hampering SAARC progress is the bilateral disputes between different countries.

In contrast to the negative reviews on SAARC's performance, ASEAN (<http://www.aseansec.org/>) scored much better when it held its 11th Summit a month after SAARC's, and for the first time with China, Japan and South Korea (the Plus 3 countries), and India, Australia and New Zealand, for the first East Asian Summit.<sup>20</sup> Even its CSO critics applauded ASEAN for its positive developments. It was the first occasion, ASEAN leaders allowed CSO representatives to their business meeting.<sup>21</sup> There were doubts that the East Asian Community (EAC) along the lines of the European Community will ever materialize.<sup>22</sup> Competing geopolitical interests and historic suspicion make the goal unrealistic. But these reservations are balanced off by the fact that ASEAN was able to achieve things the bigger powers in the region could not.<sup>23</sup> These include sharp criticism of Myanmar's human rights record, and agreeing to move towards framing a rules-based ASEAN charter that will enshrine basic human rights. And in a small way, ASEAN did manage to play a role in pushing China, Japan and South Korea, who are quarrelling over their bitter war memories into a room together.

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<sup>14</sup> see also <http://www.hindu.com/2005/11/14/stories/2005111408251400.htm>

<sup>15</sup> Economist. (2005). ‘South Asian Regional Co-operation’, Nov 17th 2005

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.newagebd.com/2005/nov/12/13saarc/01.html>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.independent-bangladesh.com/news/nov/10/10112005mt.htm>

<sup>18</sup> The Independent, 2005

<sup>19</sup> Rahman, Atiur. (2004) “SAARC: Not Yet a Community”, in (ed Jim Rolfe), 2004, The Asia Pacific: A Region in Transition , Honolulu: Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies

<sup>20</sup> See also

[http://www.nst.com.my/Current\\_News/NST/Monday/Columns/20051219075043/Article/indexb.html](http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/NST/Monday/Columns/20051219075043/Article/indexb.html)

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.focusweb.org/content/view/774/27/>

<sup>22</sup> Malik, Mohan (2005). ‘The East Asia Summit: More Discord than Accord’, Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6645>

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.nst.com.my/Current\\_News/nst/](http://www.nst.com.my/Current_News/nst/)

ASEAN was, however, not spared criticisms for its track record on social dimensions in its 38 years of existence. Despite numerous ASEAN vision statements, declarations and plans of action on social policy, these have not been adequately translated into appropriate mechanisms of implementation and matching resources.

Despite observations and commentaries to the contrary, both SAARC and ASEAN seem to be working towards an economic integration process similar to that of the EU, even if without any supranational government structures.<sup>24</sup> The most urgent project facing the region is how to provide the regional public goods. But the reality today is that it is the private agencies, not the governments are dominating the provision of services in terms of health, education and social welfare.

### **Calendar of Upcoming Events 2006**

May	
1 – 19	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 36 <sup>th</sup> session
10 – 11	Economic and Social Council, resumed organizational session, New York, USA
22 – 23	OECD Forum 2006: Rebalancing Globalization, Paris, France
22 – 27	World Health Assembly, 59 <sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, Switzerland
30 – 15 June	International Labour Conference, 95 <sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, Switzerland
June	
19 – 23	World Urban Forum III, Vancouver, Canada
**	Committee of Permanent Representatives to UN-Habitat, Nairobi, Kenya
July	
10 – 28	Human Rights committee, 87 <sup>th</sup> session, Geneva, Switzerland
15 – 17	G8 Meeting, St Petersburg, Russia

<sup>24</sup> Syeed, Ahamed. (2006) 'India's performance will impact LDC members', <http://southasia.oneworld.net/article/view/125416/1/> 11 January 2006; Malik, Mohan (2005). 'The East Asia Summit: More Discord than Accord', Yale Center for the Study of Globalization, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/display.article?id=6645>