

**THE UN NGO COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 17TH 2005 1:15 - 2:45 PM, CONFERENCE ROOM 6  
UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS, NEW YORK**

**PANEL PRESENTATION**

**FROM HUMANITARIAN ACTION TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**CHAIR:** Roma Stibravy, International Chamber of Commerce.

**SPEAKERS:**

Mark Bowden, Chief, Policy Development and Studies Branch, Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

Dirk Salomons, Director, Humanitarian Affairs Program, SIPA - Columbia University

**MARK BOWDEN:** Mr. Bowden said that today emphasis is on humanitarian assistance and sustainable development, adding a broader dimension to the 1990s focus. Different areas of crises addressed human assistance in environmental disasters, and/or conflict and post-conflict situations. During the 1980s humanitarian aid included food, comfort, solace and shelter. Then, the International Red Cross principles for a broader group of assistance were used for a more technical approach, undertaking surveys of massed groups, displaced populations and development crises, especially concerning such situations as famine in the Sudan and southern Africa together with related development emergencies.

In the 1990s humanitarian aid agencies began to address crises in conflict situations, that included politically treaties, government and military intervention, but they tended to disregard development and environmental concerns. Then, dominated by a Western agenda, UN post conflict peacebuilding contributed to the integration of security and civilian protection as well as concern for sustainable development. Increased military intervention and the need to secure large displaced populations increased the need for large financial flows and direct assistance. Private and informal financial flows increased to \$5 billion a year. The annual average assistance for displaced populations, development and environmental degradation began to climb to \$10 billion worldwide.

Populations that were not integrated into an economy were not always able to receive relief assistance. Large scale population displacement also meant large scale environmental problems. Natural disasters developed from large scale environmental degradation, contributing to the enormous rise in humanitarian aid. Funds had to be allocated for risk reductions, as agencies committed to both humanitarian assistance and sustainable development.

**DIRK SALOMONS:** Mr. Salomons discussed the humanitarian affairs program, SIPA, at Columbia University, that addresses peacekeeping and post conflict recovery, working with the UNDP Office of Project Services(OPS). Humanitarian action and sustainability is in a bridging process from humanitarian relief to development. Sustainable development is a process for meeting the needs of present times, while not compromising the needs of future generations. It became necessary to sustain large populations during disasters over a long period of time, and mitigate their circumstances in refugee camps to rebuild their future lives. Security is one of the most important issues for refugee protection from violence or conflict. The military, militias, organized gangs and armed civilians are all threats to displaced populations, governments and the human rights of refugees. Post conflict peacebuilding and demobilization give hope and a vision for future security and development.

There are a variety of necessary humanitarian actions that should be taken:.

1. Negotiations, demobilization and reintegration into society for armed groups and the military.

2. To obtain security and justice, the elimination of weapons must be addressed, including consideration of the Convention on Small Arms and Light Weapons, to round up the huge arsenals amassed during civil conflicts. The UN, Governments, NGOs and civil society must stop the organized groups of militias and criminal gangs, and the machinery of war, in order to create a peaceful economy, security, stability and sustainable development. Sustainable development is the solution to the root causes of natural disasters and environmental degradation. The UN is in an ideal position to coordinate with regional and national efforts, and to help make the transition from crises to a more peaceful, sustainable world.

#### **QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, SUGGESTIONS:**

1. Please explain the high numbers of public and private flows. Answer: Bowden: There is no definition for emergency relief and the cost of refugees, which varies a good deal. Sixty percent of all relief is contributed to food aid. Private flows from NGOs, foundations, and the private sector provide the largest contributions, about \$2 billion a year. In addition, assistance comes from governments, the World Bank and the IMF. Major donors are often neighboring communities. Answer: Solomons. Financial flows must be made accountable by monitoring the aid flow, as well as a methodology for the multitude of refugees.

2. Please elaborate on the UN ability to handle all these issues with the goal of long term sustainable development, as well as peacekeeping, conflicts, crime and natural disasters. Answer: Salomons. The UN agencies, such as UNDP and UNICEF, and others, are often alert to the various crises long before nation states, and will their over a long term crisis. The multi-national and multi-cultural status of the UN aids conflict prevention, conflict resolution and recovery.

3. The September Summit outcome document called for a new Peace Building Commission that will address post conflict situations, relief aid, economic and social aid in all regions, coordinating the UN effort with NGOs, civil society and the private sector. On a regional basis, the European Union (EU) the Organization of American States (OAS), the African Union (AU) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) all attempt to keep peace within their regions, addressing economic and social issues. However, there is no Mideast Union or Association of Northeast Asian Nations, where conflict is abundant. Regional peace processes help in the relief effort, seeking to avoid conflict and deal with economic, social and environmental issues. A Mideast forum, normalizing relations with Israel, and addressing their critical environmental and humanitarian issues could be of great value to all Mideast states. A possible Association of Northeast Asian Nations could also bring together North and South Korea, Japan, China, Mongolia and the Russian Federation.

Answer: Salomons: Support from the newly created Peace Building Commission would be welcome in all regions. However, its modus operandi is still to be determined.

4. Please elaborate on the integration of so many issues, such as environmental, social, economic, basic services, such as water, migration and the need for education of national leaders. Answer: Bowden: National leaders are educated receiving information from UN projects in their country or region, in General Assembly resolutions, Security Council deliberations, UN Secretariat reports, the work of the UN agencies, the NGOs, civil society and the private sector all cooperating with assistance to humanitarian and environmental protection. Another important educational factor concerns international and national corruption, seeking to create transparency in government operations, in addition to UN reform.

5. What can be done to establish winter shelter for the Pakistani people from the devastating earthquake? Answer: Bowden: Although there are shortages, winterized tents are a major export from Pakistan for light weight shelter. Kits can also be obtained to build rooms with insulated panels. These are insulated rooms for families, similar to prefabricated housing.

6. Public education on sustainable development is important, with the multiple issues and many interlinked programs. Answer: Holistic education concerning sustainable development is important for young people and the general public. This links to the UNESCO's Education for Sustainable Development project.