

Activities within the framework of the last session of the HRC

During the 7th session, the CETIM presented six statements, dealing with, the right to adequate housing in France, the consequences of the Chernobyl catastrophe on the right to food and the right to health of the most affected populations, etc. These statements are available on our internet site.

We also organized a conference on 12 March: "How does the liberalization of agriculture endanger the right to food? Realities and solutions". The speakers included A. Navarro Llanos, ambassador of Bolivia to the United Nations, M. Buisson, agro-economist, A. Paasch, FIAN, and Ch. Golay, advisor to the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

As the Bolivian small farmers have suffered much from the lowering of agricultural tariffs, the intervention of Angélica Navarro dealt with food sovereignty and the respect of the right to food in the framework of the trade agreements signed at the WTO. She also questioned the benefit of the Doha Round for developing countries: "This round, presented as the development round by the WTO, has brought nothing to my country!" She concluded, "If this round continues, Bolivia will withdraw from the negotiations."

2008 marks the end of the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Jean Ziegler. Ch. Golay took advantage of the occasion to review the past seven years of the mandate. He spoke of the struggle of the special rapporteur for recognition of food sovereignty at the international level and emphasized the difficulty of protecting national family farms in the framework of international trade agreements. "Governments are schizophrenic, as Jean Ziegler likes to say, when it comes to balancing human rights and trade agreements," he pointed out, for trade agreements are often in contradiction with human rights.

A. Paasch presented a study, of which he was the co-author, on the effect of market liberalization on the rice producers. He examined the situation in Ghana, where national producers have lost 75% of their income since the large-scale importing of subsidized rice (especially from the United States) began. For him, governments must imperatively protect their agriculture if they want to avoid catastrophes and protect their food sovereignty.

For M. Buisson, it is essential that "food sovereignty be recognized if the right to food is to become effective!". He continued by denouncing the "justiciabilization" (the ability to take matters to court to seek a legally binding decision) of trade rights through the WTO's Disputes Settlement Board. Human rights are the primary collateral victims of this. In his opinion, there must be, on the international level, a rupture "with the law of 1994" (the year of the creation of the WTO). Agriculture must be withdrawn from current trade negotiations, while leaving this question within the WTO. However, a parallel strengthening of the FAO and the UNCTAD is also necessary so that they can have their say in this matter.

CETIM ADVISES YOU THE FOLLOWING READINGS

A few other books received more or less recently that we have not yet had the space to report on and that merit attention...

Justice internationale et impunité, le cas des Etats-Unis

Dir. N. Andersson, D. Iagolnitzer and V. Rivasseau.

Numerous contributors present the overwhelming factual evidence from Hiroshima up to the present, fundamental legal values and the actions necessary for humanity and justice to triumph over barbarity.

Price: 29€, 308 p., ISBN: 978-2-296-02964-8, L'Harmattan, Questions contemporaines, Paris, 2007.

Pour la Cinquième Internationale

by Samir Amin

The Globalization of the strategies of dominant capital has provoked a globalization of the response by its victims. So, why not concede that a new international might furnish an effective framework to undergird the convergences necessary for the success of the struggles of peoples against capital?

Price: 14€, 230 p., ISBN: 2-84-109-624-6, Le Temps des Cerises, Paris, 2006.

Comment peut-on être Coréen (du Nord) ?

by Robert Charvin

A different look at this country which should interest all those whom the mainstream media accounts fail to satisfy.

Price: 15€, 150 p., ISBN: 2-84295-124-7, Ed. du Losange, Nice, 2006.

Vers la post-démocratie ?

by Robert Charvin

Nothing prophetic in this book, rather a critical look at the present time. "Post-democracy" is our present, what is presented to us, offered to us. To become a "post-democrat" is the marching order –discrete but widely disseminated– that we must obey, warns R. Charvin.

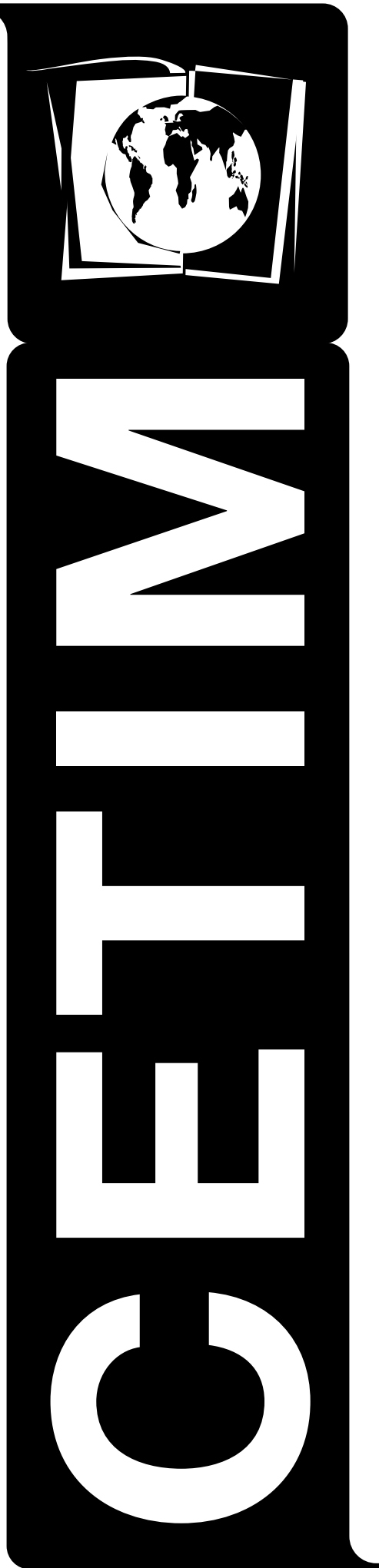
Price: 12€, 138 p., ISBN: 2-8410-9184-8, Le Temps des Cerises, Paris, 2006.

April 2008

Bulletin
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EDITORIAL

Faced with an ever greater need for a discussion on the meaning of international cooperation and development aid, and acknowledging an overall political context that is pushing in the direction of a diminishing public aid, on 7, 8 and 9 December 2007 in Geneva, the CETIM organized a symposium entitled "International cooperation, development, development aid... Just what are we talking about?". Its purpose was to generate some serious reflection on the (real) meaning of international cooperation and what this involves, not only in the relations between the countries of the South and the countries of the North, but also in South-South and North-North relations. It was also an occasion to present and explore the hope emerging in Latin America with the appearance of an alternative political, economic and social integration pattern. Over the three days, this event drew together some 300 persons.

The CETIM also wanted to celebrate, in its own way, the twentieth anniversary of the Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD), a milestone which was ignored within the U.N. system. In our opinion, this declaration contains elements that are both bold and relevant and that open the way to imagining another form of international cooperation, based on respect for all human rights (civil, political, economic, social and cultural) and on the right of peoples to self-determination. For this occasion, we brought out the most recent PublicETIM publication, *Quel développement, quelle coopération internationale?* It explores, among other things, the legal and economic foundations of the DRD and its scope (see the accompanying leaflet).

This bulletin presents brief reports of the various conferences that have been held. Moreover, the videos that we have recorded during the symposium are now available on our website.

Regarding the Human Rights Council, last March's session was, once again, a lively one. Like its predecessor, this body has been subjected to vehement criticism, often unjustified. There were those who took advantage of the occasion to call into question the universality of human rights. The confrontations focused in particular on the discussion of subjects as sensitive as racism and the defamation of religion. Will the still young Council be able to resist the attacks? This bulletin proposes possible answers.

The meaning of international cooperation and development

CETIM Symposium

This symposium comprised three elements: plenary conferences (three in number), workshops (eight) and a cultural evening. This article focuses primarily on the conferences.

Tribute to Thomas Sankara

On Friday, 7 December, the event opened with an evening of tribute to Thomas Sankara. In spite of the last-minute absence of two guests (Samir Amin and Jean Ziegler), this evening featured a major phase in the history of African development and in the creation of an alternative to neo-colonialism, all still largely unknown to the general public. The research director of the Third World Forum, Bernard Founou, and Blandine Sankara, Thomas Sankara's sister, spoke to the assembly for two and a half hours and led a fruitful and stimulating discussion on the experience of the revolution led by Thomas Sankara in Burkina Faso at the beginning of the 1980s and on his idea of international development and cooperation. Thomas Sankara accorded priority to autonomous development, national then regional, including policies such as food sovereignty, local production and self-determination, repudiating the interference of the international financial institutions and former colonial powers. In spite of his (political) assassination in 1984, still unsolved, the sankarist experience remains rich in hope, especially for the youth of Burkina Faso and of Africa in general.

The DRD and the historical context of its adoption

The opening general conference, on Saturday, 8 December, was introduced by Gustave Massiah (CRID) and Florian Rochat (CETIM). These speakers presented the Declaration on the Right to Development (DRD), the context of its origin and the progressive tendencies it incarnates.¹ It is worth recalling the definition of development proposed by the DRD as an overall economic, social, cultural and political process that continually aims to improve the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and significant participation in development and in the equitable sharing of the benefits that derive from it. It was on the basis of these principles and this definition that the rest of discussions took place. As the theme of the symposium was vast, and time was limited, we have chosen to touch on only some aspects of the problems

dealt with in the second part of the conference: on the one hand, the questioning of economic growth as the basis of development; on the other hand, the emphasis on the need for coherence in international cooperation policy; finally, the words of our partners from the South concerning the interventions of the North's NGOs on this subject.

Development, growth, ecology: an impossible equation

Questioning the current meaning of development means questioning its widely accepted core concepts (as advocated by neo-liberal thought) such as economic growth as the sine qua non of development. Contrary to what one might think, it is not/no longer necessary to aim for an "economic take off" in order to develop while passing through various, well identified phases. One of the crucial things at stake in the 21st century and in development is the preservation of the environment. Is the accumulation of wealth (growth), in the sense in which we understand it today, compatible with environmental preservation? Can we continue on the path we are on now? Is the most widely accepted economic model on the planet leading us to environmental catastrophe? For the economist Jean-Marie Harribey (ATTAC), it is urgent to dissociate growth and development in the thoughts and actions of international cooperation, to demonstrate the necessity of questioning the responsibility of capitalism in the great social and environmental crises that have been unfolding before us for so long and to act accordingly in proposing other models. In this regard, the DRD can be a source of inspiration, for it never mentions economic growth when it defines the aims of international cooperation and development.

Swiss Cooperation

If, today, it is legitimate to ask if international cooperation, as currently practiced, can lead to development, it is also important to ask what sort of international cooperation might be "ideal". Catherine Schümperli (IUED) focused on Swiss² international cooperation in her intervention. As Switzerland has not been directly engaged in colonization, it has been able to promote a certain progressive-tending reflection on the subject of international cooperation. Thus, in 1975, a report on what one might call misdevelopment attracted the attention of the Federal Council regarding the dangers of the "incompatibilities" between an international development policy and a foreign policy designed to satisfy vested interests in Switzerland.³ Twenty years later, the Federal Council adopted the "North-South Guidelines", entering into detail on the subject of consistency in order to reinforce the effectiveness of cooperation. However,

be arbitrary nor discriminatory and that they not be used to weaken fundamental freedoms.

Canada, the main author of the resolution, declared that this paragraph would transform the mandate of the special rapporteur into a "police mandate". The European Union deplored that this proposal aimed at restraining freedom of opinion and expression. India and Brazil were also opposed to it. The paragraph was adopted by a vote (requested by Canada): 27 in favor⁷, 17 against⁸ and 3 abstentions.

Another modification of the original text was proposed by Cuba, inserting a phrase in the tenth paragraph of the preamble mentioning "the importance of all forms of the media" in the enjoyment of this right, and adding "the importance that all forms of media report and deliver information in a fair and impartial manner". This proposal was also opposed by Canada and the European Union, but was nonetheless adopted by 29 in favor⁹, 17 against and 3 abstentions.¹⁰

Finally, the resolution on this question, as amended, was adopted by 32 in favor¹¹ and 15 abstentions.

With regard to the subject of racism, the Council adopted a text "From rhetoric to reality: a global call for concrete action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance"¹² in which it "welcomes the landmark and historic formal apology by the Government of Australia for the past laws and policies that inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on its indigenous peoples". At the same time, it urged those governments that have not done so "to issue formal apologies to the victims of past and historic injustices and to take all necessary measures to achieve the healing and reconciliation of and the restoration of dignity to those victims, as outlined in paragraph 101 of the Durban Declaration and Program of Action".

The European Union deplored that this resolution was not "balanced" and requested that the Council treat all victims "equally". Following a vote requested by the E.U., the text was adopted by 34 in favor¹³ and 13 abstentions.

¹ A/HRC/RES/7/19, adopted 27 March 2008.

² Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Indonesia, Jordan, Malaysia, Mali, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka.

³ Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Rumania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

⁴ Bolivia, Brazil, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Japan, Madagascar, Mauritius, Mexico, Peru, South Korea, Uruguay, Zambia.

⁵ Angola and Bosnia.

⁶ A/HRC/RES/7/36, 29 March 2008.

⁷ Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Indonesia, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Philippines,



Qatar, Russian, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zambia.

⁸ Bosnia, Brazil, Canada, France Germany, Guatemala, India, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Peru, Rumania, Slovenia, Switzerland, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uruguay.

⁹ Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zambia.

¹⁰ Guatemala, Peru, Philippines.

¹¹ Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Zambia.

¹² A/HRC/RES/7/33, 28 March 2008.

¹³ Angola, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Cameroon, China, Cuba, Djibouti, Egypt, Gabon, Ghana, Guatemala, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mali, Mauritius, Mexico, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Uruguay, Zambia.

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characteristics of, and what is at stake in, the Bank of the South and the terms of the continuing negotiations about its functioning.⁵

The Bank of the South was officially born 10 December 2007, with headquarters in Caracas. It seeks to be an alternative to the international financial institutions in the area of regional financing in order to promote development, integration and the construction of a new international financial architecture. Owing to an innovative strategy, it is proposing that the countries of the South (in this case, the countries of Latin America) no longer keep their monetary reserves in the currencies of the “dominant” countries (euros, dollars) but in their own currencies, held in a bank of the South, controlled by the Latin American governments. This will allow them to avoid, as much as possible, international financial crises and to achieve a commercial balance of payments. As an important step in the strengthening of the financial autonomy of the signatory countries, it also intends to become the bank of the ALBA and thus to reduce the inequalities of the continent. The exact structure and the general functioning of the bank are still being worked out.

To supplement the symposium and to allow the public to discuss in small groups the subjects raised in the conferences as well as other relevant subjects, eight workshops were organized by associations⁶ whose practices and experiences in the area of international cooperation were particularly interesting relative to the subjects of the symposium. The CETIM encouraged discussions on the theme of food sovereignty, audits of the debt, commitment of youth (along with other militants) in international cooperation, pollution permits and the transfer of technology, intellectual property, the endogenous dynamics of development, world public property and the relations between development and international tax systems.

Finally, on Saturday evening, reflection and discussion yielded to recreation but still oriented to the

theme of international solidarity and development. There was a vibrant and surprising show of slam-poetry by the young Julien Delmaire from Lille, who thrilled the attendance with his performance. Then, the showing of the documentary “Questions à la terre natale” by the Senegalese Samba Felix Ndiaye gave the floor to those Africans who want to create an Africa of sharing, independence and humanistic principles, with social justice and prosperity.

The last day of the symposium was a working session devoted to the drafting of an appeal to all NGOs and other movements present and partners to make good on their intention to adopt the principles of the DRD and to put pressure for its implementation on their respective governments – which, for the most part, endorsed it in 1986. This appeal will be published soon.

Overall, the symposium fulfilled its objectives of participation and reflection that we had set for it, in spite of the date when it was held (just before the end-of-year vacations). We received numerous positive comments and warm congratulations, both during and after the symposium.

We wish to thank the associations and the members of the CETIM who helped us in organizing this event, as well as the speakers. Finally, we thank the Geneva public authorities (via the FGC) for their financing.

¹ See our Bulletin N° 29.

² Catherine Schümperli, *La politique suisse de solidarité internationale*, Le Savoir suisse series, Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes, No 38, Lausanne, 2007.

³ V. Commission des organisations suisse de coopération au développement, *Maldéveloppement Suisse-monde: propositions pour une nouvelle politique suisse de développement*, CETIM, 1975.

⁴ <http://ensemblecontrelapauvrete.ch>

⁵ V. Eric Toussaint, *Banque du Sud et nouvelle crise internationale*, CADTM/Syllepse, 2007.

⁶ They were Jardins de Cocagne, Uniterre, Espoir pour la faim, Plateforme pour une agriculture durable, CADTM, Echanges et Partenariats, É-Changer, COTMEC, Centrale sanitaire suisse romande, MediCuba, AITEC, Biens publics à l'échelle mondiale and ATTAC Switzerland.

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Is the Council under sentence of death?

Since its birth in March 2006, the Human Rights Council (HRC) has been in a continual flux. Certain countries (to wit the United States and Israel) not only opposed its creation but also opposed the setting up of its mechanisms (the same countries plus Canada, in particular).¹

These past months, from certain quarters in the West, we have thus witnessed a considerable number of attacks on the Council, which could be mortal.

For the Council's detractors, there is no lack of pretexts: among others, the systematic condemnation of Israel by it for the exactions committed in Palestine, the divergences on the treatment of the question of racism and the defamation of religions.

Although there are real divergences on many subjects (and not only on the ones mentioned above), some parties would like to expand them into a conflict to the point where the Council as the United Nations' primary human rights body would be called into question.

Their effort to try to focus attention on these several subjects alone is not at all innocent. Such a focus might well serve as screen for the failings of the Western countries in many areas. For example, one might mention: the imposition of anti-democratic measures in the name of the “war on terrorism”, including tolerance of torture, which amounts to a manipulation of this “war”; the role played by many governments in the rise of racism and xenophobia, tolerating the actions of openly declared racist and xenophobic political parties; the priority given by most Western countries to individual rights while ignoring collective rights, thus undermining the universality of ALL human rights; the refusal of international solidarity, in contradiction to its recognized status within international law; etc.

Criticism regarding the Council

The criticism that these parties level at the Council derives primarily from the following points: the systematic condemnation of Israel, the relegation of the West to the status of minority, the difficulty of condemning countries that violate human rights, and the divergences on the treatment of the question of racism and the defamation of religion.

Regarding the first point, it is important to keep in mind that the question of Palestine was placed on the Council's agenda by consensus-less-one (Canada), resulting in a single agenda item devoted to it (Item 7).

Regarding the second matter, it is true that the Western countries are in the minority in the Council, but how could it be otherwise given their demographics

and the number of member states representing them in the concert of nations? It is false to attribute the Council's faults to this situation, since the other members states do not represent a homogeneous group on all subjects dealt with by the Council.

The third point is a point of fact. The condemnation of countries guilty of human rights violations has become more difficult than ever with the support of 15 members required to present a resolution. And can one leave this in the hands of governments knowing that they are both judge and jury and are guided by their political and economic interests? The recent practice witnessed during the first session of the universal periodic review (April 2008) confirms this.

Finally, regarding the focus on the treatment the Council accords to the subjects of racism and defamation of religion, it is true that this treatment has shown there to be ideological and cultural cleavages that have been observable among countries for some years. (For further information, see the inset.) However, should the discussion of such subjects be avoided? While those who hold with the idea of the clash of civilizations may not agree, the United Nations in general, and the Council in particular, are the bodies, par excellence, for discussing these subjects with a view to defusing the tension surrounding them and proposing solutions.

Moreover, the Non-Aligned Movement is calling for additional norms for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The organization of the Islamic Conference is calling for a convention “to fight against the defamation of religion and to promote tolerance”, with a view to protecting their citizens. This point is contested by the West. Switzerland and Morocco are in favor of a convention on human rights education. This is an alternative that will surely prove worthwhile in the long term.

One must acknowledge that racism, of which the defamation of religion is an integral part,² is a crucial and burning question to which an urgent answer is needed. If one is not careful, this question alone could cause deep divisions, have repercussions on the respect of other rights and even compromise the cooperation among countries undertaken within the framework of human rights protection mechanisms, in particular within the Council.

The Universality of Human Rights in Danger

Currently, the bases of this division are noteworthy, and they could go so far as to call into question the universality of human rights and, accordingly, trigger the paralysis of the Council, indeed its isolation or even its suppression – just as happened to its predecessor.

For example, for India, the cast system “cannot be qualified as racist”. Canada is boycotting the

preparatory work of the Council for the follow up to the Durban Conference (World Conference against Racism), whereas the European Union contents itself for the time being with a “passive” boycott. Brazil, with the support of several other countries, is campaigning for “voluntary commitments” of member states regarding human rights, thus distancing itself from the numerous binding conventions ratified by the overwhelming majority of these states. In 2004, the League of Arab States adopted a revised version of “its own charter” of human rights. As for the Russian Orthodox Patriarch, he announced during a panel discussion on “intercultural dialogue on human rights”, organized by the Council during its seventh session, that the Orthodox Church was also preparing “its own charter” of human rights. It would not be surprising if soon the Hindus or the Buddhists decided that they, too, would like their “own charter” of human rights.

The administration by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the composition of its staff are also sources of contention. On the one hand, many countries demand a right of oversight in the action program of the Office of the High Commissioner. On the other hand, the recruitment of international civil servants for this agency is currently very favorable to the West, which violates the principle of equitable geographic distribution.

In this context, further attacks against the Council take on an additional dimension even to the point of irresponsible behavior.³ We have said –and repeated it several times– that the Council, like its predecessor, as an intergovernmental body, is far from perfect. However, it plays an indispensable role within the United Nations framework for the promotion and protection of human rights. Thus, it is an indispensable element in the elaboration of universal norms in this area, work to which all countries should be contributing. Moreover, the universality of human rights cannot be simply decreed. This is a matter of a patient construction involving mutual commitment and conviction. And as long as the oppression, the injustice and the flagrant violations of human rights that we currently witness persist, peoples and citizens need international human rights protection mechanisms.

¹ In this regard, see the first CETIM's critical report, *The Human Rights Council and Its Mechanisms*, available in www.cetim.ch/en/publications_cahiers.php.

² The right to freedom of thought, of conscience and of religion is protected by international human rights instruments. All discrimination based on religion or belief is “an affront to human dignity and a disavowal of the principles of the United Nations Charter”. (The Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief, Art. 3: http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/d_intole.htm)

³ For example, the appeal published in *Le Monde*, 27 February 2008, “L'ONU contre les droits de l'homme” (“The U.N. against human rights”), published over the signatures of Elisabeth Badinter, Pascal Bruckner and Alain Finkielkraut.

Defamation of religion and racism during the 7th session of the Human Rights Council

The subjects of defamation of religion and racism once again provoked emphatic confrontations between the member states during the last session of the Council (3 to 28 March 2008).

Regarding defamation of religion, the resolution on this subject¹ was presented, as in previous years, by the Organization of the Islamic Conference and adopted by a vote (requested by the European Union): 21 in favor², 10 against³, 14 abstentions⁴ and 2 non-participations in the voting.⁵

According to this text, while the Council deplores “manifestations of intolerance and discrimination in matters of religion” and “expresses deep concern at the negative stereotyping of all religions”, it highlights attacks on Islam by expressing further “deep concern at attempts to identify Islam with terrorism, violence and human rights violations and emphasizes that equating any religion with terrorism should be rejected and combated by all at all levels”.

Within this framework, the Council calls for measures by countries “to prohibit the dissemination, including through political institutions and organizations, of racist and xenophobic ideas and material aimed at any religion or its followers” and urges governments to provide “adequate protection against acts of hatred, discrimination, intimidation and coercion resulting from the defamation of any religion”.

For the European Union, the defamation of religions “is not a human rights concept”, for it aims to “protect religions”. The E.U. requests, moreover, “from other countries the same openness” [that the E.U. shows], all while deploring that only Islam is mentioned in the resolution.

This divergence on the defamation of religion was also evident when the resolution of the right to freedom of opinion and expression was adopted. This resolution extended the mandate of the special rapporteur on this subject⁶.

Following a proposal of the African Group and the Organization of the Islamic Conference, a new paragraph was added to the initial text, requesting the special rapporteur “to report on instances in which the abuse of the right of freedom of expression constitutes an act of racial or religious discrimination”.

This new paragraph is based on articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which provides for restrictions on the right to freedom of opinion and expression. The same is true of article 4 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. It is essential, however, that these restrictions not



Bank of the South and ALBA: reasons for hope

To question international cooperation and development is to propose other frameworks for reflection, for organization and for action. The Saturday afternoon conference had as its purpose the presentation of new Latin America perspectives. Two specialists on the subject, Eric Toussaint (CADTM) and the economist Rémy Herrera were to speak on the Bank of the South and the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA) but had to cancel at the last minute owing to illness.

Replacing them, on a moment's notice, Gustave Massiah opened the conference by presenting the particular political and social context currently prevailing in Latin America – to wit the accession to power of progressive, leftist governments concomitant with a lesser “monitoring” by the United States of its historical “backyard” – in which are anchored two alternative initiatives for regional development particularly interesting for this symposium.

Florian Rochat presented the ALBA. It was born in the wake of the failure of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), conceived by the United States in 1990 and which was to enter into force in 2005. The FTAA is very much an aborted initiative, for the Latin American peoples, who had not been consulted on it, rejected it, thus refusing a free-trade area set up among unequal partners that could work only to the advantage of the strongest. Very much aware that trade on an equitable and socially responsible basis fosters the creation of wealth, presidents Castro and Chávez launched the ALBA in 2004. This regional agreement should strengthen the autonomy of the peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, with a view to building a multi-polar world. Since then, Bolivia and Nicaragua have joined it. Trade relations are currently centered on the countries in question and are moving toward a lowering of tariffs and incentives for direct foreign investment by public enterprises. Drawing on the major points of the DRD, the ALBA seems to be laying the foundation of another sort of international cooperation based on complementarity, solidarity, equitable trade, energy and technological integration, the fight for the defense of human rights and against social exclusion, food and national sovereignty, and the preservation of the environment. International solidarity organizations are thus well advised to follow closely its development.

Development means financing. Since, until now, the management by the international financial institutions has turned out to be mostly counter-productive, some Latin American countries, such as Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Ecuador and Venezuela, have decided to set up the Bank of the South. Renaud Vivien (CADTM), using Eric Toussaint's notes, laid out the main

this approach, innovative in Europe, caused considerable disappointment when implemented. Although a better mobilization of national resources, including improved tax systems, represents an important element for complete and egalitarian development, Switzerland continues to manage one third of the world's private fortunes invested outside the home countries of their owners and refuses international mutual legal assistance in matters of income tax evasion – in short, giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

Ms Schümperli also criticized the way public aid to development is calculated and the cosmetic work that makes it appear that Switzerland's might be close to 0.7% (v. the Swiss NGO international solidarity campaign under way⁴). The innovative approach of the Guidelines has, nonetheless, also produced a raising of consciousness which should translate into support for the NGO international solidarity campaigns. It is worth emphasizing that, in this regard, the DRD brings to the fore the need to be consistent and encourages governments to cooperate –and not compete– with each other.

A South Point of View

Finally, a review of the meaning of international cooperation implies an introspective look at the North's NGOs (in general) when they intervene in the countries of the South. For Demba Moussa Dembélé (Forum Africain des Alternatives), there is no doubt that the NGOs have succeeded in influencing the discussion about international cooperation by developing an alternative conception of the relations between the South and the North. However, it is urgent to denounce the role played by certain (and numerous) NGOs that conceive of their role as their being simple “service providers” without questioning the basic assumptions underlying official policies of international cooperation. They claim that they stay clear of “politics” and think that the best way to “aid poor countries” is to limit themselves to this role of service providers. But wittingly or unwittingly, they end up becoming instruments in the implementation of the policies of their home countries, neglecting or denying the legitimacy of South governments (demonized by neo-liberal thought) and thus promoting neo-liberalism as a solution to under-development, adopting the discourse and methods of the powerful countries (good governance, fight against corruption etc.). Mr Dembélé insisted on the need to strengthen common campaigns between the North and South NGOs, on criticism of international cooperation as currently practiced and on the need to draw inspiration from new utopias, referring as much as possible to the provisions of the DRD.