



**SUMMARY REPORT OF
SOLIDARITY FOR THE FUTURE:
THE NORTH/SOUTH CONFERENCE
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
25-29 MAY 1998**

Solidarity for the Future: The North/South Conference for Sustainable Development took place in Berne, Switzerland from 25-29 May 1998. The conference, organized by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, gathered more than 900 participants from 40 countries, including political and economic leaders and representatives from civil society and the scientific community.

The objectives of the conference were to address aspects of political, economic and social change that will shape North/South relations in the 21st century, give broad public exposure to the concerns of the South with respect to solidarity and sustainable development, and formulate demands for sound future development, examining them from the perspectives of the North and the South and leading to conclusions relevant to Switzerland. A number of prominent personalities addressed the conference, including Julius Nyerere, former president of Tanzania, Nafis Sadik, Director of the United Nations Population Fund, and José Ramos Horta, winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize.

Each day the conference addressed different themes related to solidarity and sustainable development: on Monday, 25 May, Switzerland's Global Role; on Tuesday, 26 May, the Global Workplace versus the Swiss Workplace; on Wednesday, 27 May, Implementing the Aims of the Rio Earth Summit; on Thursday, 28 May, A Closer Look at Solidarity; and on Friday, 29 May, Forward to 2050. In addition, participants enjoyed cultural events each evening, and, on the final two days of the conference, visited a North/South Market for Sustainable Development, which featured information, products, entertainment and delicacies from many parts of the world.

**A BRIEF HISTORY OF
THE NORTH/SOUTH CONFERENCE
FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

The Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, an umbrella organization comprised of Swissaid, the Catholic Lenten Fund, Bread for All, Helvetas and Caritas, launched a two-year "North-South Campaign for Sustainable Development" in January 1997. The Campaign is intended to stimulate a broad debate with and among Swiss decision makers, the Swiss public and partners from the South on Switzerland's role in development policy in the 21st century and to mobilize various actors in Swiss society to address the problems of sustainable development.

The Campaign consists of a number of elements aimed at increasing the awareness of sustainable development issues among Swiss decision makers, including letter-writing campaigns, seminars and study trips with Members of Parliament to developing countries. Other elements of the Campaign are geared toward raising public awareness, including a petition for "Solidarity for the Future." The

petition calls on the Swiss Federal Council to increase federal funding for development assistance to 0.4% of GDP and on the Federal Council and Parliament to declare sustainable development a national goal and ensure that it is firmly embodied along with corresponding principles of foreign policy in the federal constitution.

The petition also calls for the establishment of the "Foundation for Solidarity," as proposed by the President of the Swiss Confederation, Arnold Koller, in March 1997. The Foundation would offer assistance to those in need, prevent the development of new conflicts in Switzerland and abroad, promote peace, and help ensure world-wide respect for human rights. The petition calls for the establishment of the Foundation in 1998, the year of the 150th anniversary of the Swiss Federation. The Swiss Coalition is collecting signatures for the petition on the streets and through direct mailings, as well as at the North/South Conference for Sustainable Development.

The foundation of the Campaign is the North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development, drafted by the Swiss Coalition in late 1996. The draft was discussed and reviewed with representatives from the South at an international workshop in Les Granges, Switzerland from 7-9 January 1997 and was revised based on these discussions. The Manifesto was officially presented at a press conference to launch the Campaign on 30 January 1997. Addressed to politicians, trade and industry, civil society and individuals, the Manifesto contains 21 guidelines for defining Switzerland's role in the 21st century and indicating how to make the transition to sustainable development. It served as the basis of discussions at the North/South Conference for Sustainable Development.

THE NORTH/SOUTH MANIFESTO FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Progress and Shortcomings in Recent Decades: The Manifesto outlines progress in development in the South but also notes negative trends, such as continued poverty, the widening gap between rich and poor, habitat loss and marginalization of low-income groups and poor countries. It emphasizes the need for a radical change in the way people live and do business, especially in the North and thus in Switzerland. Both the North and the South must take decisive steps toward more equitable and sustainable development.

A Plea for Sustainable Development: The Manifesto states that people everywhere are entitled to a life with dignity, prosperity, fundamental political liberties, education, cultural diversity and an intact environment. These basic rights must also be ensured for future generations. Development must not be equated with economic growth alone; sustainable development is an integral process in which ecological, social and cultural dimensions are just as important as the economic dimension. The central focus must be on human beings, not competition and the marketplace; civil society must be the driving force as well as the beneficiary of sustainable development. North/South relations should be governed by a new set of ethical principles that extend far beyond those of the marketplace. The only firm foundation for development efforts is the principle of "caring and sharing."

A Coordinated Effort: The Manifesto calls on all actors in government, trade and industry and civil society to cooperate if a breakthrough is to be made in fulfilling this vision of sustainable development. Because this vision concerns the North as well as the South, representatives from Africa, Asia and Latin America also participated in drawing up the Manifesto.

21 GUIDELINES FOR SWITZERLAND'S ROLE IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Government Policy: Focusing Policy on the South: Swiss foreign policy must be concerned with equity for the South, going beyond the boundaries of development cooperation to deal with the structural causes of poverty. The Manifesto calls on Switzerland to:

1) create a proper framework for achieving sustainable development, such as by initiating ecological tax reform to levy taxes on energy rather than employment;

2) align its foreign economic policy with the declared aims of its foreign policy, by, *inter alia*, ceasing to promote bilateral trade with countries where violations of human rights occur and promoting uniform global social and ecological standards for multinational corporations (MNCs);

3) pursue an active foreign policy that gives priority to a North/South commitment to sustainable development, by showing steadfast commitment to a policy that promotes peace and justice to prevent conflict and to combat exploitation and lack of good governance;

4) enter into binding partnerships with the South, such as by opening the Swiss market to imports of both raw and processed agricultural products; and

5) actively participate in the search for global solutions (global governance) by demonstrating commitment to global terms of trade that stipulate both the rights and the obligations of MNCs towards society and the environment.

Trade and Industry: Fulfilling Social Responsibilities: The private sector is assuming ever-increasing importance and influence as public-sector involvement declines, markets are liberalized and businesses go global. At the same time, companies are showing a growing responsibility toward society and the environment. Businesses must perceive their responsibilities as comprehensively as citizens perceive the rights and duties of citizenship. What is required now is to bring business interests into line with national and global political demands. The Manifesto calls on Swiss trade and industry to:

6) pursue business activities in an environmentally friendly manner, by, *inter alia*, applying the "polluter pays" principle in pricing policies and systematically incorporating ecological considerations in research and development and in processes of production and disposal;

7) provide sufficient jobs, by making current paid and unpaid jobs more available and more equitably distributed between men and women, by introducing new work patterns and part-time jobs and supporting the concept of a lower rate of taxation on employment and a higher rate on capital and energy;

8) desist from engaging in economically, socially, politically and ecologically destabilizing practices, by abstaining from capital investments in speculative, destabilizing transactions and giving preference to ecologically sound financial investments;

9) gear business activities more pointedly to the needs of poorer developing countries, regions and population groups, such as by accepting more imports from the South that generate jobs and earnings locally and expanding research capacities in the South; and

10) act in the interests of society, including accepting a level of taxation that allows the state to exercise the functions that have been democratically delegated to it (education, social and environmental policy, public health, etc.) and pursuing an open information policy and detailed, transparent accountability for all MNCs.

Civil Society: Challenging Those with Power: Actors in civil society can be an independent third force alongside industry and government in actively helping to combat economic marginalization, social discrimination, loss of political self-determination and ecological degradation. The Manifesto affirms its commitment to:

11) strengthening civil society as an independent third force, including cooperating with partners committed to empowering the poor or influencing the framework conditions that affect the poor;

12) participation of all members of civil society as a basic principle, i.e. by supporting grassroots movements in the South that oppose and offer alternatives to totalitarian regimes and calling for the participation of private organizations in the World Trade Organization (WTO) and other multilateral institutions;

13) giving alternative social models a chance, by, *inter alia*, fostering research partnerships between North and South that address sustainable development issues outside the mainstream;

14) expanding development-related information and educational activities, such as by getting private organizations to invest in information, education and development activities; and

15) establishing appropriate new coalitions between actors in civil society and their counterparts in Switzerland and abroad, by collaborating with business, politics, universities and consumer organizations and coordinating with grassroots initiatives in the South.

Individuals: Shaping the Future Together: The Manifesto emphasizes that each individual can contribute to putting the North and the South on the path to sustainable development. It calls on individuals to:

16) treat everyone with respect, regardless of their sex, origin, skin color or religion;

17) attain more socially and ecologically balanced lifestyles;

18) give preference to sustainable production and fair trade;

19) actively participate in community service; and

20) exercise political rights favoring sustainable development.

Learning Together - Surviving Together: By changing course toward sustainable development, the way for a new social contract is being paved. The Manifesto calls upon all actors in the North and the South to share power, pay attention to the positive aspects of other societies and learn from one another in order to give sustainable development a chance and give all people, including present and future generations, a chance to live with dignity. It calls on all actors to:

21) seek to learn from one another, the North from the South and the South from the North.

REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE

The conference was organized around topics addressed in the Manifesto: Switzerland's Global Role (Monday); the Global Workplace versus the Swiss Workplace (Tuesday); Implementing the Aims of the Rio Earth Summit (Wednesday); A Closer Look at Solidarity (Thursday); and Forward to 2050 (Friday). Each day was chaired by the executive director of one of the five member organizations of the Swiss Coalition. Participants heard keynote speeches on these topics each day, followed by open discussion, and, from Tuesday through Friday, took part in a number of simultaneous workshops. Panel discussions were undertaken on these topics in the afternoon. Following is a summary of the plenary sessions, workshops and panel discussions, organized by daily topic.

SWITZERLAND'S GLOBAL ROLE

On the first day of the conference, discussion focused on the theme of "Switzerland's Global Role." The following questions guided the discussion: what will be the focus of Swiss foreign policy in the 21st century; what do people in the South expect from Switzerland; and what role can Switzerland play in international organizations? The meeting was chaired by Werner Külling, President of the Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations. Flavio Cotti, President of the

Swiss Confederation, Pallo Jordan, South African Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, and Nafis Sadik, Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), delivered keynote addresses, and in the afternoon a panel discussed what direction Swiss foreign policy should take.

PLENARY

In his opening remarks, Chair Werner Külling outlined the conference's objectives: to address aspects of political, economic and social change that will shape North/South relations in the 21st century; to give broad public exposure to the South's concerns with respect to solidarity and sustainable development; and to formulate demands for sound future development, examining them from the perspectives of the North and South and forging conclusions relevant to Switzerland. He noted that the basis of the conference is the North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development, which the Coalition drafted with partners from the South and whose basic tenets are solidarity and sustainability. He stressed that, as Switzerland celebrates its 150th anniversary, its role in global development in the 21st century must become better defined. He welcomed constructive input from participants on Swiss development cooperation, external economic relations and foreign policy. He urged participants to sign the petition that calls for the establishment of the Foundation for Solidarity, increased development assistance and entrenchment of the principle of sustainable development in the Swiss constitution.

He underscored the intertwining of people's fates in the South with those in the North and stated that, while globalization, deregulation and privatization are widely propagated, few speak of "social globalization" and the responsibility to help those in need. He emphasized that this conference was not just another event in the North about the South but is based on the belief in solidarity with people and the environment and would be addressed by and receive input from many Southern participants.

President Flavio Cotti addressed human rights, conflict management, sustainable development and the role of Swiss foreign policy. He recalled his participation at the 1992 Earth Summit as the Swiss Environment Minister and lamented the lack of progress achieved since then. He said the Brundtland Report and Agenda 21 achieved worldwide understanding that sustainable development will only be realized if ecological, social and economic dimensions are promoted equally, and while the last decade has witnessed unprecedented economic growth, the necessary adjustments have not been made in environmental and social areas. He stressed that the North must demonstrate a commitment to sustainable development. He cited the growing number of international agreements on environmental protection as significant progress and called for further establishment of legally-binding multilateral instruments.

Acknowledging the interlinkages between poverty and environmental protection, he said combating poverty must be an end in itself and humankind must be central to environmental protection. Noting that the scope of human rights embraces all elements of personal development, including social and ecological concerns, President Cotti underscored that respect for human rights is a fundamental prerequisite for sustainable development. He emphasized the need to alleviate human rights violations resulting from violent conflict and said sustainable development is essential to achieving this goal. He stressed the importance of civil society, particularly NGOs and relief organizations, for their contributions to Swiss development policy.

Minister Pallo Jordan shared the experiences of South Africa regarding sustainable development, highlighting its efforts to raise the standard of living and the quality of people's lives, particularly those who struggled under apartheid. He underscored the need for global cooperation, including partnerships both within the South and with the North, in achieving sustainable development. He stated that in Africa, new economic policies have been attracting investment, economies are beginning to grow faster than populations, regional associations are working toward a free trade area, and improved telecommunications are a major factor in growth and development. He said that although

newly democratized South Africa inherited a modern progressive state and is perceived as being able to look after its own needs and assist the rest of Africa, few of its citizens have benefited from development.

He recommended that developed countries reassess their positions in Southern development and condemned harsh structural adjustment programmes, ineffective debt restructuring and nationalism as inhibiting progress towards sustainable development. He also stressed the need for new and additional resources to implement Agenda 21 and for developed countries to take the lead in reducing and eliminating unsustainable production and consumption patterns. He emphasized the adoption of new technologies, a holistic approach in the transfer of best practice technologies and ODA programmes to provide access to these technologies. He commended the Swiss focus on projects in poorer regions, noting contributions in the Eastern Cape area, and expressed hope that the conference would contribute to future solidarity.

Nafis Sadik spoke on the role of small nations in international organizations. She emphasized that large and small nations alike play important roles in international organizations. Switzerland, while not a member of the UN, has actively participated in its debates and contributed to its activities. She noted that the UN was founded on a vision of greater peace, security, freedom and prosperity and, while significant global progress has been made in these areas, it is unevenly distributed. Equity and social justice remain goals for the next millennium, but to achieve them, an understanding of the relationship between population, environment and sustainable development is required at all levels. In this regard, the North/South Manifesto for Sustainable Development is a timely initiative and a good example of the contribution by a small nations' citizens to the dialogue on global problems and their solutions.

She noted that at the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), the international community agreed on a Programme of Action recognizing population as a critical factor in social and economic development. She highlighted the contributions of many small nations, including Switzerland, to the debate and to consensus on the Programme. She highlighted the notable agreement on a cost estimate for implementation of the Programme's reproductive health component, but expressed concern over the inadequate mobilization of these resources to date. She emphasized that the action plans of recent UN conferences contain agreed policy elements to achieve a better future for all. At the global level, the technical and financial means exist to achieve this goal, but the political will is lacking. The Manifesto is an important expression of political will and reflects the new global consensus from the UN conferences -- that sustainable development is about people.

The floor was then opened for questions from the floor. Participants commented on: the transfer of medical technology to Africa versus the use of indigenous technologies; the role of the North in forest destruction in the South; the prioritization, costs and needs of health system development at local and national levels; and South African programmes for environmental protection.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel, "What Direction Should Swiss Foreign Policy Take?" was moderated by Esther Girsberger, Editor-in-Chief of "Tages-Anzeiger" newspaper, and was comprised of Ursula Koch, President of the Social Democratic Party, Adalbert Durrer, President of the Christian Democratic Party, Ueli Maurer, President of the Swiss Peoples Party, and Franz Steinegger, President of the Radical Democratic Party. Panelists first took up the question of why, when discussing Swiss foreign policy, development aid and North/South cooperation are not addressed. One panelist said development aid is and should be part of foreign policy, but admitted that discussions on development policy have been pushed to the back burner by domestic problems. Another said that, although he supported funding for development aid, foreign policy is dictated by current events, and development is only discussed in consideration of budgetary matters.

Panelists discussed capital flight, tax evasion and tax fraud, particularly regarding funds flowing into development projects. One panelist said that no one is interested in accepting money of dubious origin but that banks cannot be stopped from accepting funds and assets. He said the Swiss want to maintain traditional values with respect to banking secrecy. Another panelist noted that, particularly in light of recent events in Indonesia, pressure should be put on the government to examine Indonesian assets in Swiss banks for fraudulence. It was stressed that interests and objectives must be clearly defined with respect to aid and cooperation and that solidarity involves donor country sacrifices. One panelist questioned how long rich countries can continue to pay lip service to development aid.

Regarding development projects, panelists emphasized the importance of taking advantage of valuable local human resources on site, of both NGOs and governments, who make important contributions to the success of projects. It was noted that development aid is a merger of state, private and economic institutions, and that development cooperation could be improved by greater cooperation between the economy and private organizations in the field to enable investors to create jobs in recipient countries. The moderator highlighted the problem of viewing development cooperation as an opportunity to invest and improve the Swiss economy without concern for social justice in recipient countries. It was noted that the development cooperation of many European governments contributes to enhancing the wealth of developing country elites rather than fighting poverty, supporting rural development and improving education and health.

On the merits of ecological tax reform, one panelist emphasized Switzerland's considerable deficit and suggested that such reform might simply be an alibi to generate additional financial resources for the state, while the global goal of ecological tax reform is being lost. Another panelist said there are no medium- or long-term alternatives to ecological tax reform. He said alternative energy prices must be lowered and noted that this is being discussed in the Swiss Parliament. He also expressed concern over the relationship between Switzerland and the EU, noting that Switzerland has made greater efforts than the EU toward making transport more sustainable, and emphasized the need for partnerships in implementing ecological policies. It was suggested that the medium- and long-term strategy must be to support renewable energy sources rather than to import and tax potentially polluting energy sources.

Panelists were asked what they would be willing to renounce in order to create a fairer world. They emphasized: the personal and individual nature of this decision; the importance of influencing family and friends to live more sustainably; the inappropriateness of the state dictating who should renounce what and when; the commitment of development assistance in itself as an act of renunciation; and the need to reduce military spending and direct it toward development assistance.

The discussion was then opened for comments from the floor. One participant suggested that globalization might be the real problem and, if so, were panelists willing to renounce international institutions that perpetuate North/South inequalities such as the IMF and the WTO. One panelist said the IMF is a necessary infrastructure, while another stated that the speed of globalization must be slowed and that the human factor must be taken more seriously at the next WTO negotiations. Another panelist, noting that the transnational economy is a parasite that drains nation-states, said countries must globalize politics and develop standards for, *inter alia*, democracy, environment and labor. Another participant said Swiss banks accept money from corrupt sources and Swiss companies sell poisonous products to developing countries and asked what the Swiss government is doing to address this. One panelist noted that Switzerland can only make companies obey Swiss laws and that other countries need to develop national legislation to protect their natural resources.

One participant asked what Switzerland is doing to reduce population growth and to help people in developing countries and how it plans to meet the financial commitment made at the ICPD. A panelist responded that governments make promises at international meetings

that cannot be fulfilled and that empowerment and education of women should be the focus of development aid. A participant asked what the Swiss government is doing to increase ODA. Panelists replied that the government is in debt and the current national policy is one of austerity. One participant said the panel illustrated that people are only willing to take actions that do not fundamentally alter their lifestyles and again asked what panelists were willing to renounce.

THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE VERSUS THE SWISS WORKPLACE

On Tuesday, 26 May, discussion focused on the theme of "The Global Workplace Versus the Swiss Workplace." The following questions guided the discussion: is the South competing for jobs in the North, and vice versa; what factors favor the creation of jobs; and what measures can be taken to stop social and ecological dumping? The meeting was chaired by Christoph Stückelberger, Executive Secretary of Bread for All. Participants were addressed by Dharam Ghai, former Director of the UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Ruth Montrichard, Service Volunteers For All (SERVOL), Julius Nyerere, former President of Tanzania, and Nancy Barry, Director of Women's World Banking. A panel discussion was conducted on whether Switzerland is facing an economic crisis.

PLENARY

Dharam Ghai discussed the importance of employment creation for development. He underscored that employment gives people a sense of usefulness to society, while unemployment leads to personal frustration, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and ethnic conflicts. He said the definition of unemployment must also include unfair, seasonal and informal sector employment. He called for growth-oriented macroeconomic policies aimed at increasing farmers' incomes, promoting micro-enterprise, increasing labor intensive exports and creating employment. He proposed that the international community develop a world-wide employment programme aimed at environmental regeneration, infrastructure development, small farmer and micro-enterprise sector development and human development. He suggested liberal policies to allow foreign companies or groups of workers to compete for short-term contracts in service sector markets overseas and, noting the growing elderly populations in industrialized countries, recommended that countries contract out care for the elderly to poor countries. He proposed creating "services to humanity departments" in MNCs and establishing a method for rating social initiatives to guide philanthropic contributions.

Ruth Montrichard spoke on jobs for the poor. She emphasized the perspective of the poor in the provision of jobs instead of assuming the poor will be grateful for any job offered. She pointed to a loss of hope and confidence among the poor, stressing the importance of human development in job provision, such as the building of self-esteem, education and training. She highlighted SERVOL's early childhood centers and junior life centers, both of which are administered by community boards of education. The early childhood centers are parent- and community-oriented. The junior life centers provide training in marketable skills, build self-esteem and prepare adolescents for parenting. SERVOL has also set up three high-tech centers and, with its sister organization, has begun to offer small loans for entrepreneurial ventures. She highlighted the contribution of funding from the North to the success and development of SERVOL's programmes, noting contributions from Helvetas in particular. She stressed self-reliance, empowerment and human development in achieving full economic and social participation and sustainable development. She also emphasized the distinction between economic and developmental growth, and stressed the importance of listening to the poor and adopting the North/South Manifesto.

The floor was then opened for discussion. Participants highlighted the Western style of education in developing countries left over from colonial times, as well as the need to shift from throw-away economies to recycling economies.

Julius Nyerere discussed universal social standards, emphasizing that they are not possible due to the historical, cultural and social diversity of countries. He stated that demands to include social issues in international trade discussions mask protectionist tendencies in industrialized countries, as they are based on the precept that fair and free competition requires a level playing field. He said it would be impossible for poor countries to meet the cost of internationally acceptable social standards because standards ultimately depend on the wealth of each country. This has been generally accepted; now it is proposed that all countries implement core labor standards, most of which are incorporated in ILO Conventions that many countries have already signed.

He stated that rich countries preach democracy to poor nations and apply sanctions against those determined to be undemocratic, but do not advance democracy at the international level. Universal social standards are not possible nor just unless they are linked to and conditional on parallel implementation of national and international anti-poverty programmes and are incompatible with unfettered competition in the global market. He explained the hostility of Southern countries toward proposals to bring trade-related social standards into the arena of the WTO rather than the ILO, which they view as more democratic, and their opposition to further international intervention beyond the existence of the ILO. He underscored that the solidarity of those in the North who believe in justice and equality, have access to the media and can influence their governments and transnational corporations is essential if the struggle against poverty is to succeed.

Nancy Barry said the South will be competing for jobs in the North unless the North embraces the realities of globalization and builds a world where everyone benefits. She stressed the need to stop thinking in terms of polarities such as North and South or poor and rich if solutions are to be found, and underscored the importance of moving beyond traditional hierarchical systems. She recommended that business-like approaches be used to achieve economic and social change. She expressed concern over the lack of participation of finance and industry representatives at the conference and said it is the role of civil society to find ways to connect such powerful people with the poor. Noting that many solutions, such as micro-finance, originate in the South, she called for replacing consultants to developing countries with reciprocal learning. She cited several cases of women leaders changing the world through entrepreneurial work.

In an ensuing discussion, participants posed questions regarding: the weakness of trade unions in developing countries; the burden of debt repayment in developing countries; the need for reparations to Africa in light of the wealth accumulated from slavery and colonialism; whether Southern non-aligned countries could agree on a social standard among themselves; and problems of focusing on repayment as the main criteria for success of micro-credit loans and their fostering of Western consumer markets in rural areas.

WORKSHOPS

Does Job Competition Exist? Asian and Swiss Perspectives:

One panelist contested the view that the South is stealing jobs from the North and suggested that rising unemployment in the North is caused by unregulated technological change and a shift in government priorities from full employment to low inflation. Participants debated the need for and implications of the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) and core labor standards and agreed that foreign investment is desirable but disagreed as to the extent and by whom it should be regulated.

The Human Right to Food Security Creates Jobs: Participants concluded that the right to food means access to productive resources such as land, credit and self-employment, and that governments are obligated to respect, protect and fulfill access to such resources. Participants emphasized the need to: monitor inconsistencies between inter-governmental organizations' policies and the human right to food; establish means to protect developing countries' agrarian sectors within the WTO; maintain farmers' rights to seeds; and accord higher priority to rural development.

Fair Trade Labelling and Private Sector Social Clauses:

Discussion focused on codes of conduct, their implementation to improve labor conditions and the need to incorporate Southern NGO perspectives in their formulation. Codes of conduct were regarded as process-oriented tools involving workers, companies and civil society and as complements to efforts toward global minimum standards in the production of goods.

NGOs, the "Drive Belts" Linking Researchers and End-users:

Participants discussed the need to: tackle gaps in institutional cultures and approaches between NGOs and researchers based on successful examples; ensure that applied research is driven by local needs and strategically planned at national and international levels; build capacity at all levels; increase the participation of women and social scientists in research; assign higher priority to applied research at institutional and political levels; and maintain support for applied research by funding agencies.

International Social Dumping and the Role of Trade Unions:

Do Trade Unions Fail as a Result of National Self-interest?: Workshop participants widely recognized the need for broader coalitions between trade unions and Northern NGOs concerning international issues, such as campaigns to address specific problems resulting from globalization.

The Regional Economy and the Social Economy – Alternatives to the Global Economic Impasse?: Participants discussed social economy -- the principle of generating local work for local people and using local resources in a democratic manner -- and its role as a network during difficult times. Participants concurred that by promoting connectedness and mutual responsibility, the social economy provides a foundation for dealing with conflicts resulting from economic crisis or the downsizing of industrial society to achieve sustainability.

Social Dumping, Ecological Dumping and Tax Dumping: How to Deal with Unsocial Uses of Capital?: Discussion emphasized the need to: introduce ILO standards in WTO agreements at the same level as free trade; have intensive exchange rather than conflict between Northern and Southern NGOs on social and environmental standards; democratize the WTO; and differentiate international standards according to national socioeconomic contexts. Participants highlighted the potential impact of a consumer rating of MNCs, and suggested that Swiss NGOs adopt their own standards, apply them in interactions with banks and firms, and advise their members on how to do likewise.

Strategic Silence or the Sustainability of Male Dominance in Development Thought: Panelists highlighted: the unequal distribution of labor and wealth between men and women and of population and wealth among OECD countries, developing countries and countries with economies in transition; feminist approaches to macroeconomics in Asia; and women's work in Cameroon, root causes of gender inequality, such as illiteracy, and steps towards empowering women through micro-credit, economic literacy and participation in cash-crop markets.

Investment and Development: The Role of the MAI: Panelists addressed the main features of the MAI as well as civil society's view of it. Discussions revolved around: the lack of transparency and participation by the public and developing countries in MAI negotiations; potential loss of national sovereignty; non-discrimination towards foreign investors; dispute settlements whereby foreign investors can sue governments directly; the appropriateness of the OECD as the negotiating forum; and globalization based on values other than just economics.

The Tobin Tax: Regulatory Tool for the World's Capital Markets and Instrument for Developing Finance: Participants discussed the potential drawbacks and benefits from a Tobin tax on currency transactions. They disagreed on the stabilizing effect of such a tax but concurred that it would provide much-needed revenue for national treasuries and international activities such as poverty eradication.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion, "Is Switzerland Facing an Economic Crisis?" was moderated by Ellinor von Kauffungen, journalist, and was conducted by André Daguet, SMUV Trade Union Executive Committee member, Heinz Hauser, Professor of Economics at the University of St. Gallen, Beat Kappeler, journalist, and Monique Seigel, business executive. When asked whether the South threatens the Swiss workplace, one panelist pointed to greater purchasing power and increased market access, rather than cheap production prices in the South, as threats. Another said the workplace is not threatened if Switzerland can define its position in the global market. Switzerland's attractive investment environment, service industry and high purchasing power was highlighted, but underestimating large Southern markets was cautioned against. One panelist said globalization does not threaten but presents opportunities for Switzerland. Another questioned the future existence of nation-states and described an "international economy" rather than "globalization," as not all countries are integrated. Another said globalization is a reality and noted that development and capitalism have not solved but rather worsened social problems, particularly with respect to social dumping. Another disagreed, believing that wealth is well distributed, particularly in newly industrialized Asian countries. He suggested that companies be encouraged to sign and implement social charters.

When discussion was opened for comments from the floor, one participant asked panelists to characterize the future world economic order. Panelists' descriptions included: markets for capital, goods and services with sanctions for human rights violations, but not at the WTO level; a market-oriented economy, but with a wider distribution of wealth; and regulations against social, ecological and tax dumping, along with a Tobin tax. Another participant asked if Switzerland's economy will become entirely service sector-based. One panelist responded that this is already the case, while another said a minimal industrial sector is necessary to support service sector activity. A participant noted that Switzerland is well-positioned for the future and asked what the Swiss private sector can do to alleviate poverty in developing countries. One panelist suggested a policy of "trade not aid." Another said the advantages Switzerland enjoys, such as trust, cannot be exported and that other countries must earn such advantages. Other suggestions included the creation of additional jobs and fixing standards in international agreements.

IMPLEMENTING THE AIMS OF THE RIO EARTH SUMMIT

On Wednesday, 27 May, participants focused on "Implementing the Aims of the Rio Earth Summit." The following questions guided the discussion: how can Agenda 21 and the plans of action produced by Rio follow-up conferences be implemented; what concrete experiences have project partners from the South had with implementation; and what role can NGOs play in implementation? The meeting was chaired by Jürg Krummenacher, Executive Director of Caritas Switzerland. Participants were addressed by Farida Akhter, President of People's Perspectives on Population (Bangladesh), Eduardo Caicedo, Director of Juan Tama Vocational and Agricultural School (Colombia), Leonor Briones, Professor of Economics, University of the Philippines, and Martin Khor, Third World Network (Malaysia). A panel discussion on "Implementing Agenda 21 in Switzerland" was also conducted.

PLENARY

Chair Krummenacher opened the day's discussion by recalling the Earth Summit and asking how Agenda 21 and the plans of action produced by the Rio follow-up conferences can be implemented. He highlighted the role of NGOs and the importance of Southern experiences with implementation.

Farida Akhter addressed women's role in sustainable development. She said the term "sustainable development" illustrates the crisis of development -- that it is not sustainable. She called for a re-evaluation of global production patterns and consideration of what is more impor-

tant, producing and distributing soft drinks or providing fresh drinking water for all. She noted that at global summits on food, population and women, the South was told to address the problems themselves, ultimately placing the burden on women in the South under the guise of "empowerment." She said that, despite good intentions, the plight of garment workers and child laborers will be worsened by international standards that would limit trade. She cited shrimp exportation to the North as a cause of environmental destruction and loss of food security in Bangladesh. Regarding population, she said women are urged to use contraceptives while their overall health and the side effects of contraception are overlooked. She urged Switzerland to monitor the activities and impacts of its MNCs. She concluded that sustainable development does not only require women but is impossible without them.

Eduardo Caicedo discussed the ecological aspects of sustainable development. He stated that while important environmental agreements were signed in Rio, it has been business as usual in the agricultural sector in Latin America -- deforestation and mono-culture planting continue unabated. He described an example at the Ecuador-Colombia border where thousands of acres of trees were cut and replaced with African palm trees, which produce half as much volume of a less valuable oil than the trees they replaced. He highlighted the need to develop and implement a strategy that not only includes moral imperatives but also addresses the immediate interests of people, particularly those at the margins of society in both the South and the North. He said this can be achieved by respecting the natural cycles of the elements and utilizing the diversity of traditional knowledge from many parts of the world. He also emphasized the need to develop new curricula in schools that incorporate lessons from traditional knowledge and teach different pedagogic principles, including solidarity, justice and reciprocity.

Leonor Briones spoke on the economics of sustainable development. She said financing the implementation of Agenda 21 is necessary at all levels and outlined methods available to governments for raising revenue. She noted that taxes are often levied indirectly through methods such as a consumer tax, which places the burden on the poor. She cited privatization as another source of revenue that often leads to monopolies on utilities such as communications and water. She emphasized that borrowed money comes with conditions such as structural adjustment programmes that eliminate potential gains. She noted the increase in debt servicing costs due to currency deflation since the Asian financial crisis, which forced the Philippine government to reduce expenditures on education and health. She supported the North/South Manifesto, particularly the guidelines calling for Switzerland to provide legal expertise on the issue of debt relief, business and industry to focus on the poorer developing countries, and the North and South to learn from one another. Noting that \$300 million of drug money alone is laundered through Swiss banks on a daily basis, she called for implementation of the Tobin tax and regulation of banks.

Martin Khor said the Rio process acknowledged a world environmental crisis and linked it to economic and development crises, focused on future and present needs, stressed equity in the environment and development debates, and promised aid to developing countries. He lamented the loss of the Rio spirit, as demonstrated by events such as the establishment of the WTO, the decline in ODA, and increased indebtedness. He warned of the West's use of the WTO for global economic governance. He stressed that the South will not change consumption and production patterns until the North does and called on Switzerland to set an example. He emphasized that globalization is not inevitable. He commended the North/South Manifesto but said it does not address specific factors of globalization nor mention what the Swiss can do to combat its negative effects. He said globalization requires a global response from civil society and suggested that the Swiss set up an emergency alert system to monitor and provide information on developments in the IMF and the WTO. He acknowledged grassroots activists as heroes, praised youth involvement and urged Swiss youth to connect with youth in developing countries, because the world is in their hands.

The floor was then opened for comments. One participant questioned the existence of "free" markets in globalization, and another responded that they are not free but rather monopoly markets. Another inquired about the possibility of avoiding the vicious cycle of borrowing from the World Bank and the IMF. Sound economic policies were recommended in response.

WORKSHOPS

The Role of NGOs in Implementing Agenda 21 and Other Commitments of the Follow-up Intergovernmental Negotiating Processes: Workshop participants discussed the pivotal role that NGOs play in translating global policies into concrete measures at local, national and regional levels and in deepening and broadening existing international instruments, as highlighted with the climate change convention. Participants also discussed approaches to NGO involvement in both intergovernmental and national policy making and implementation and concluded that multifaceted strategies tailored to national circumstances and the specific issues under negotiation are required.

Patents on Life and the Conservation of Biological Diversity: Panelists focused discussion on conflicts between the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the WTO Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPs), highlighting the negative impacts of TRIPs on biodiversity. Participants considered strategies to exclude all life forms from patentability, particularly with respect to the TRIPs review in 1999. Participants also stressed the upcoming Swiss referendum on genetic engineering, which would ban patents on plants and animals and could have a major impact on the TRIPs review.

Debt Relief as a Development Tool: Participants emphasized that debt relief is not sustainable by itself but that the concept of creative debt relief allows for new forms of cooperation between government, civil society and the private sector. Counterpart funds have the potential to become financially viable institutions that give the poor access to financial services, but concepts must be developed to make them more politically autonomous.

Women's Rights and Reproductive Health: An Important Component of Sustainable Development: Discussion focused on how to place sexual and reproductive health at the center of the sustainable development debate, advocate for women's rights and empowerment, and increase access to reproductive health services. Participants emphasized the importance of education (of women, men and youth) on women's rights and reproductive and sexual health and highlighted the use of media, particularly radio, role models, peer counseling and youth centers, among others. Participants also underscored the importance of women's economic empowerment, highlighting the success of market women's networks, and the need to adapt technical cooperation modalities to respond to people's needs at the grassroots level.

Disaster Prevention in the South: Ecological Aspects -- The Case of Bangladesh: Workshop participants considered natural and man-made disasters, long-term post-disaster rehabilitation programmes to assure financial resources and restore livelihoods after disasters, and how to define sustainability for the poorest of the poor.

Sustainable Cooperation for Health and Sustainable Health Care: Participants discussed financial constraints in the health sector and the importance of partnerships. The example of South African women's health care groups demonstrated the importance of basing health care programmes on local knowledge and conditions and incorporating people's needs and demands. The workshop concluded that sustainable decentralized health care structures are possible if donor agencies and government structures renounce ownership of health programmes.

Employment in Development Cooperation -- Implications for Switzerland: The benefits from the exchange of personnel in development cooperation were highlighted. It was noted that these personnel: help to sustain development processes at the local level; act as a bridge between the North and South; facilitate the exchange of information

and cultural insights with the South; and play an active role in Swiss society upon their return. The important role of youth exchanges was also emphasized.

Mountains of the World: Environmental, Economic, Cultural and Recreational Challenges: Participants noted limited efforts to promote sustainable mountain development and concluded that mountains are important eco-regions that must be placed at the center of economic and political decision-making. Participants highlighted problems including resource degradation, emerging resource conflicts and minimal economic interest in mountains. Measures to enhance recreational use, promote awareness of water scarcity and value water as an economic resource were also emphasized. Participants agreed on the need to, *inter alia*: sensitize people to problems and opportunities in mountain regions; strengthen the rights of mountain peoples and organizations; and value and compensate mountain resources by establishing economic transactions that benefit mountain peoples for outside use of mountain resources.

Practicing Sustainability: Implementing Agenda 21 at the Local Level: Discussion focused on the new values that Local Agenda 21s bring to the traditional planning process, including: broader citizen participation; a trans-sectoral approach in policies; and North/South aspects in local policy discussions.

Forest Certification: Trade Barrier or Safeguard of the World's Forests?: Participants agreed that certification schemes can improve forest management. They discussed whether there is a market for labelled timber from certified, sustainably managed forests, particularly in the South where a substantial part of tropical timber is consumed domestically. Participants agreed that forest certification cannot replace regulation but is a promising initiative for safeguarding the world's forests.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel discussion on "Implementing Agenda 21 in Switzerland" was moderated by Erich Gysling, journalist, and was undertaken by Rosmarie Bär, Swiss Coalition of Development Organisations, Thierry Freyvogel, President of the Swiss Commission for Research Partnerships with Developing Countries, Michael Kohn, Chairman of the "Capital and Economy" Institute, and Anne Petitpierre, President of the Council for Sustainable Development. Panelists discussed the dilemma of the long time horizon required to integrate sustainability into people's lives, given the urgency of sustainable development. It was noted that this shift is a gradual process and must occur in all sectors of society. One panelist said Switzerland has done little since Rio to promote sustainable development but produce reports; another disagreed, citing efforts to enact energy taxes, among others. Panelists emphasized the power of the media, the impact of public opinion on policy makers, politicians' obligation to implement Agenda 21 and international environmental treaties, and the importance of action and change by the business community.

One panelist stressed that the Kyoto Protocol's CO₂ emission reduction targets are inadequate to tackle climate change, while another emphasized the need for a step-by-step process, as cooperation by business is essential and would be lost if unrealistic targets are pressed. One panelist supported an energy tax as long as it does not harm Swiss industry's position in the international economy. Another encouraged dialogue and voluntary action before taking compulsory measures. A participant asked about alternative energy development and why so much investment had been diverted into nuclear power. Another expressed concern over the North's perspective of "giving something up" instead of one of responsibility. A panelist stressed the lack of a Southern perspective in the Manifesto, noting that the South has much to offer the North. Another said that aid has not flowed to the South and that sustainable development must be viewed as an opening of Switzerland *vis à vis* developing countries. One participant expressed disappointment with the discussion, said Switzerland has been slow in promoting sustainable development and asked panelists what their vision and plans of action were with respect to implementation of Agenda 21. One panelist responded that decentralized

implementation is taking place but agreed that more initiatives and action at all levels are needed. Others stressed Local Agenda 21 programmes and cooperation with the business world.

A CLOSER LOOK AT SOLIDARITY

On Thursday, 28 May, discussion focused on "A Closer Look at Solidarity." The following questions guided the discussion: what does solidarity mean for Swiss domestic and foreign policy; what forms could solidarity take in civil society in the North and the South; and what duties should be assumed by the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity? The meeting was chaired by Anne-Marie Holenstein, Executive Director of the Swiss Catholic Lenten Fund. Keynote speeches were delivered by Dai Qing, journalist (China), José Ramos Horta, winner of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize (East Timor), P.V. Rajagopal, Secretary of the Gandhi Peace Foundation (India), and Vandana Shiva, winner of the Right Livelihood Award (India). A panel discussed the question of what the Foundation for Solidarity means for Switzerland.

Dai Qing spoke on the Three Gorges Dam project in China. She stated that the project is one consequence of the situation resulting from economic reform and the opening of China in the early 1980s, from which graft, corruption and fraud flourished, freedom of speech became increasingly suppressed, and China's natural and cultural resources were increasingly degraded. She noted Chinese dictators' preoccupation with the project over the past 70 years but said the debate over it has intensified in the last decade. The debate is no longer about a hydroelectric plant but rather its forced construction amidst popular resistance, which is characteristic of Chinese society at the end of the 20th century, with its political and economic systems in transition and public assertiveness and environmental awareness on the rise. She noted that dam builders promise abundant electricity, improved navigation, model homes and clean water, but government officials will not take responsibility for the inevitable negative consequences. As a cultural journalist, she would not have become involved in the Three Gorges debate, but the scientists and engineers and those to be affected have been silenced. The first book on the project, "Yangtze! Yangtze!" was banned, and as the editor, she was imprisoned. She underscored the heavy price people pay for speaking out in China.

José Ramos Horta spoke about how "development means liberation." He said that amidst the controversy of the role of Swiss banks in World War II, it is important to recall the contributions Switzerland has made toward peace and its role as a place of asylum. He highlighted the large number of conflicts and refugees in the world and the millions of deaths that conflict has caused since World War II and the end of the cold war. He said weapons trade fuels most of these conflicts, with developed countries selling weapons to developing countries that cannot even afford clean water, education and food. He warned that the high unemployment resulting from the Asian economic crisis could lead to regional and possibly global instability. He advocated addressing the root causes of financial chaos in the region, such as a lack of democracy and government accountability. He stressed that although only fifty people are responsible for Indonesia's debt, it will be the Indonesian people who pay. He emphasized that the recent developments in Indonesia present opportunities for democracy and liberation of East Timor. He urged people to remain vigilant and to support the democracy movements in Indonesia as well as in Burma and Tibet.

The ensuing discussion addressed the sale of arms to developing countries engaged in civil wars, as well as strategies to pressure the IMF to require reduced military expenditures when imposing structural adjustment programmes. A panelist called the European code of conduct on arms transfers a small step forward but expressed hope for a total ban on conventional weapons' sales.

P.V. Rajagopal spoke on solidarity with the forgotten. He stressed active rather than theoretical solidarity and said the present educational system creates intelligence but kills emotion. He highlighted the difficulties that local NGOs face in countries with oppressive regimes and said people struggling for basic needs are often imprisoned. He linked the increase in Southern governments' support for MNCs to an

increase in oppression and warned that non-violent struggles could turn violent if the world does not demand change. He criticized Northern NGOs for failing to understand Southern struggles and underscored the importance of introspection and change. He said that many Northern NGOs focus only on quantifiable results, are increasingly controlled by experts and managers, and cooperate with Southern governments, thus legitimizing those governments that give MNCs and banks so much power. He recommended fighting against MNCs, corrupt governments and expert-controlled NGOs and said solidarity requires understanding highly complex situations. He proposed focusing programmes on the poorest of the poor, ensuring control over means of production and joining the millions struggling for survival through active solidarity.

Vandana Shiva discussed the impacts of globalization, noting that it is redefining our understanding of wealth and that free trade is denying the creativity and rights of nature and people. She highlighted that states are becoming increasingly accountable to capital and less so to their own citizens. She illustrated how globalization is driving a wedge between North/South solidarity by noting that Northern consumers opposed to genetic engineering are told they are impeding the right of the hungry in the South to food, which is a social, political and economic lie. She said the patenting of life is related to the most pressing issue confronting North/South solidarity -- the theft of traditional knowledge by MNCs through bio-piracy. She decried the propagation of a global monoculture based on the conception that a child thirsty for clean water really needs Coca-Cola and a young girl dreaming of going to school really wants a pair of Nikes. She stressed that not taking more than one needs is the basis of solidarity, leaving enough for ecosystems, other species and all people's livelihoods. She underscored that humanity must create a solidarity that seeks freedom in inclusive, non-violent ways and respects and embraces diversity.

The floor was opened for questions, and one participant asked how a successful anti-poverty strategy should be designed. It was emphasized that poverty is not static; strategies must be flexible and corporate deeds and charters must be made accountable.

WORKSHOPS

Human Rights and Development Cooperation: The workshop resulted in a resolution to be presented to the Swiss government regarding policy towards East Timor. The resolution demands: a communication by the Swiss government to the Indonesian government demanding that NGOs be allowed physical presence in East Timor; humanitarian, development and environmental aid; and witnesses to monitor the situation.

Solidarity: Between Altruism and Self-interest?: The workshop acknowledged a tradition of solidarity in Swiss foreign policy but determined that it is obsolete today. Participants focused on the need for a new solidarity that takes into account economic and environmental aspects, which are at the center of the solidarity debate.

Towards More Coherence in International Development Cooperation: Participants discussed two modes of institutional structure to promote policy coherence: centralization of development policy issues in a single government agency or distribution of issues among various agencies. Participants also discussed the concept of coherence, clarified by the example of policy contradiction, and concluded that the quest for coherence does not always require consensus.

A Closer Look at Solidarity: Conditions Formulated in the South: Participants considered the conditionalities of the North and the negotiating position of the South in development cooperation. They suggested methods to improve cooperation, including establishing reciprocal systems of solidarity, allowing the South to set priorities and addressing political debates before developing action plans. They called on the South to encourage grassroots movements to apply political pressure at the national level and on the North to lobby governments to halt capital flight, influence financial institutions and encourage fair trade.

What Can Children's Literature in the South and the North Contribute to Solidarity?: Participants discussed developments in African children's literature, how it can remain independent when confronted with books imported from the North, problems surrounding the transcription of orally transmitted stories and the portrait of African society presented in books for children and adolescents.

How and Where Should Switzerland Act to Promote Peace?: Participants discussed the relationship between development and conflict, means of conflict prevention and resolution, Switzerland's position of neutrality and its humanitarian tradition. Participants stressed the importance of: intervention at the earliest possible stage of conflict; facts, not media, in determining when to intervene; and a comprehensive approach to conflict prevention, including democratization and human rights. Participants concurred that development is the wellspring of peace.

Future Generations: Sharing Resources, Participating in Decisions: Participants discussed difficulties and challenges to civic action and participation of youth. They emphasized that, to promote access to resources such as education, health, work and culture, new forms of leadership and new channels are required to foster a different relationship with society based on creative and democratic debate and action.

Export Credit Agencies and the Three Gorges Project: Participants discussed: who supports and who opposes the project in China and why; the potential impact of the World Commission on Dams; and the fate of those resettled by the project. A panelist explained that much of the financial backing for the project has come from export credit agencies (ECAs), such as the Swiss Export Risk Guarantee, most of which lack any environmental or social guidelines. He said NGOs are coordinating to pressure ECAs to institute such guidelines.

Who Dictates the Agenda for North/South Solidarity?: Participants discussed: the growth of the NGO "industry" into a large competitive business with high management costs; the interdependence of Northern and Southern NGOs; examples of Southern initiation of projects; and the need for both advocacy and implementation. Participants outlined principles to serve as a basis for North/South solidarity, including: partnership; transparency; honesty; clear definition of roles and objectives; declaration of all parties' interests; professionalism; sustainability; community-initiated and beneficiary-driven action; self-reliance; resource sharing; moral solidarity; and South/South and North/North collaboration.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel addressed the question "What does the Foundation for Solidarity mean for Switzerland?" The moderator was Jana Caniga, Swiss Television Network, and the panelists included Christaine Langenberger, Member of Parliament, Maga Wicki, journalist, Kurt Koch, Bishop of Basel, and Peter Arbenz, Association for the Support of the Swiss Foundation for Solidarity. The panel discussed the establishment of a Foundation for Solidarity that would be based on a trust of \$7 billion gifted by the Swiss government, allowing it an annual budget of \$350 million from interest. One panelist emphasized that solidarity is the recognition of equal rights for all people and that the Foundation would be for the present and future and based on coalitions with others in defense of human rights. Another panelist stressed that solidarity is a two-way street. It was noted that opposition to the Foundation stems from reluctance to examine the past, specifically the recently revealed role that Swiss banks played in accepting stolen Jewish gold during the Holocaust, and emphasized that these psychological issues be addressed. It was noted that while the Foundation's creation forces Switzerland to address a painful aspect of its past, it builds something positive for the future.

The floor was then opened for questions. One participant appreciated Switzerland's efforts to alleviate poverty but noted the absence of proposals for action on the economic and political causes of suffering. Panelists responded that the Foundation should not be an instrument of Swiss foreign policy but noted its call for establishing democratic structures. One participant asked for ethical standards for proposed

investments and said a tax on high capital incomes would be preferable to raising funds on the world market. A panelist stressed that although criteria for investment remain unclear, ethical and ecological standards would be taken into consideration. One participant underscored changing global priorities and imperatives, redefining "economics," empowering the South to take initiative, and developing a new sustainable development model.

Participants emphasized the need to: remain vigilant, as simply creating the Foundation does not mean solidarity has been achieved; ensure that the Foundation's money does not find itself in the pockets of the corrupt in the South; and involving the South in determining how funds will be used. One participant said the difficulty with the Foundation lies in its seeming presumption that solidarity can somehow be bought. One panelist expressed hope that the Foundation would focus on youth and receive the support of NGOs, churches and other citizens' groups.

FORWARD TO 2050

The final day of the conference was devoted to youth and was jointly organized by the Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations and the Swiss Coalition of Youth Organizations. Approximately 150 young people came together in "Future Workshops" to develop common visions of a world characterized by sustainability and solidarity. The following questions guided the day's "Forward to 2050" discussion: what will the youth of today expect from Switzerland and the world in the year 2050; what changes need to be made now to ensure that young people have a promising future; and what can adults and young people do now to help create a better future? The meeting was chaired by Bruno Riesen, Executive Secretary of Swissaid. Ernst Leuenberger, President of the Swiss Parliament, addressed the plenary in the morning and participants took part in simultaneous workshops that met in three phases: an analytical phase, a visionary phase and an implementation phase.

Workshop participants formulated recommendations based on their discussions and presented them in a special afternoon plenary session entitled "The Moment of Truth."

PLENARY

Chair Riesen opened the morning plenary and stressed that sustainable development can only be understood if we think of today's youth and their role in the future. He recalled the conference's appeals for sustainable development and solidarity, but noted the resignation participants had expressed. He said people know what needs to and should be done but lack the political will to take action. He called on the youth to bring ideas to decision makers and demand their right to a sustainable future.

Ernst Leuenberger said solidarity requires an honest commitment to action. He noted the annual battle over how much of the federal budget to devote to development cooperation. He noted the tendency to dwell on one's own problems and ignore those of others with more pressing problems. He hoped today's youth would do a better job, learning from their predecessors' mistakes and demanding a better present as well as a better future. He said everyone has an equal right to the future and to development, and said policies that do not consider those in the South are ignorant. He said the Swiss Parliament has not fulfilled its obligations and must offer aid when it is asked for and needed. He stressed the need for dialogue rather than a missionary attitude and highlighted the struggle against xenophobia and racism. He promised to oppose cuts in the federal budget for development cooperation and to fight against racism. He condemned the isolationist attitude common in Switzerland, commended the youth for discussing these issues, and called on them to define what to fight against and what to defend, as the future is theirs.

Conference participant Mathew Muckattu (India) presented a proposed initiative for a North/South solidarity hotline developed by participants from Suriname, Kenya, the Philippines, India, Kenya and Bangladesh. The objectives of the hotline are to: strengthen South/South networking to enhance collective solidarity action with the

North; build leadership and promote good governance among civil society in the South; address and promote human rights issues; and serve as a support and monitoring network for the proposed Swiss Foundation for Solidarity. The proposal also calls for a development endowment fund to implement the objectives and invest in the sustainability of the South. He urged participants to endorse the proposal and recommended that as a follow-up to the conference, the proposal's authors put forward a draft workplan in collaboration with the Swiss Coalition.

THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

Participants met in a special plenary session, "The Moment of Truth," following the future workshops. Youth participants presented their workshop recommendations to a panel of political, economic and media leaders, who discussed their views on the recommendations. The panel consisted of Ruth Dreifuss, Swiss Minister for Youth, Judith Stamm, Member of Parliament, Paul Hasenfratz, CEO of the Zurich State Bank and Vice President of the Swiss Banker's Association, and Viktor Giacobbo, comedian.

We Are the Best? The Role of Switzerland in Europe and the World: Participants from this workshop said Switzerland should open its borders not only for business but for cultural aspects as well, by promoting cultural exchange and improved language skills, especially English. The panelists supported this recommendation. One panelist asked whether it would be preferable for all to speak the same language to enable communication on a superficial level or to get to know one another's cultures better. She emphasized the need to protect the diversity of cultures.

Hassan and Helen, Fatima and Freddy: The workshop emphasized the need to make children aware of different cultures, beginning as early as kindergarten. It recommended instituting foreign cultures as a compulsory school subject and implementing teacher exchange programmes with other countries. One panelist agreed that learning cultural sensitivity at an early age is important but thought it should be voluntary rather than compulsory. A participant emphasized the importance of compulsory cultural exchange to avoid the risk of racism. Another participant underscored that cultural diversity enriches humanity and lauded the recommendation as a bridge to solidarity in the future.

Power to the Young: Participants stated that, because youth embody the future, they want an active and equal role in designing it. They recommended that a quota for youth (up to age 30) in the Swiss Parliament be instituted and that the voting age be decreased to 16. One panelist objected to reducing the voting age, noting the low percentage of youth in this age bracket that have exercised their right to vote since Switzerland reduced the voting age to 18 a few years ago. She also objected to instituting a youth quota for Parliament, noting the even more pressing need for a quota for women in Parliament. She stated that there are other ways to ensure that the voices and needs of youth are heard. Another panelist expressed intense opposition to quotas, preferring elections based on merit to ensure the appointment of the very best candidates. Another agreed that quotas are undesirable but supported the recommendation to lower the voting age.

The Job is Dead; Long Live the Job!: Workshop participants emphasized the importance of just compensation for labor to enable all working people to achieve a decent standard of living. They called for the establishment of a minimum floor and a maximum ceiling for wages, and recommended that there be a referendum on this proposal in Switzerland as well as the UN. They specified that the upper and lower limits would vary between countries depending on national conditions. Panelists agreed that every worker should have the right to earn a survival wage. Stressing the importance of a competitive market for labor, one panelist stated that introducing such a law at the global level would be impossible and would compel higher paid workers to leave the country if introduced in Switzerland. While it was agreed that the universal establishment of a minimum wage is a good idea, the danger of excessively regulating job markets was emphasized. The importance of ensuring safe working conditions was also highlighted.

Boyz 'n Girls: Workshop participants claimed that childcare should be ensured by state-financed institutions, noting that parents currently spend too much of their income on childcare. One panelist called the current childcare system a failure. Another emphasized the state's obligation to provide childcare, noted the dearth of childcare centers and suggested that employers offer more part-time jobs so women can also care for their children. Another panelist asked why part-time jobs for men are not offered as well so that they too could take care of their children.

Was the Earth Summit in Rio Another Rio Carnival?: The recommendations of the workshop began with a participant's request that panelists enact a skit. The panelists played the roles of government representatives for social, economic and environmental issues, while a youth acted as the planet earth. The representatives were told to turn their backs on the earth. In the skit, the economy grew, the environment degraded, and society decayed, while the earth shrank, unnoticed. The representatives were then asked to turn around and look at the state of the earth. A participant stressed that instead of turning their backs on each other, these different sectors of society should engage in discussion. Workshop participants called for: federal and local governments and NGOs to implement a Local Agenda 21 programme until 2005; the involvement of all sectors in its drafting; and its adjustment to local community situations. A local community body would monitor and be held responsible for its implementation. One panelist recognized the importance of grassroots action, as well as laws to ensure implementation.

Child Labor – Why Should We Be Concerned About Child Labor in the South?: Participants presented the results of a role play in which they developed suggestions to alleviate child labor. These included: a five-year plan to phase out child labor; a social audit on labor intensive imports; consciousness-raising and product labelling campaigns; and projects to provide basic education to children in the South. They called on governments and other interested groups to support the work of young activists. Participants advocated the improvement of working conditions for the millions of children working in the South and said all children should have access to at least an elementary school education. One panelist emphasized that not enough is being done, reiterated the terrible working conditions and called for compulsory schooling. She mentioned the international march against child labor to take place in Geneva the following week. One participant highlighted the negative consequences of abolishing child labor, stressing that if all products made by children were boycotted, children would lose their jobs and end up in the streets as prostitutes. One panelist advocated combating the most extreme forms of child exploitation, such as working with hazardous chemicals.

In closing, panelists urged youth to speak out and recognize that their hopes and dreams and those of national leaders are one and the same. Another commended the youth for their ambition and commitment to changing the world in positive ways.

CLOSING REMARKS

In his closing remarks, Chair Riesen recapitulated the highlights of the conference and noted convergence in visions and ideas between participants. He stressed the importance of explaining to decision makers that solidarity is not just charity but an investment in our common future, and underscored the need to re-evaluate our ideas and ideals and make changes in everyday life to bring about a better world. He called for action to follow through with ideas discussed during the week, emphasizing the need to not only discuss and commit to a cause but also to fight for it.