

Global CORRESPONDENT

World Update

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CARIBBEAN TSUNAMI EARLY-WARNING SYSTEM BY DECADE'S END

A tsunami early-warning system could be in place in the Caribbean Sea by 2010. Agreement for the new system came from representatives of 30 Caribbean nations at the Intergovernmental Coordination Group for the Tsunami and Other Coastal Hazards Warning System for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions in Panama in March.

In their 2004 study in the *Journal of Geophysical Research*, geologists Uri ten Brink and Jian Lin said a tsunami in the Caribbean Sea is a real threat. A magnitude 7.0 or greater earthquake occurs in the Caribbean region on an average of every 50 years. The last one, a magnitude 8.1 on the Richter scale, struck the Dominican Republic in 1946, and the resulting tsunami killed 1600 people. A similar quake in the San Blas Islands of Panama in 1882 killed 4500 people. The biggest danger lies in 2 undersea trenches, the Hispaniola Trench and the Puerto Rico Trench. At the juncture of these trenches, an oceanic plate could collide with and sink below a continental plate and could produce a tsunami. If a significant earthquake originating in the Puerto Rico Trench, only 75 mi off the island, produced a wave with the 500 mph speed of the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, it could reach the coast in less than 10 minutes. An efficient early warning system could provide residents with a few critical minutes to prepare.

The Panama Canal, vital to global trade and key to Panama's economy, is also vulnerable to a sea surge from an earthquake according to Peter Koltermann, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission: "If this canal does not work for 1 week, 4 weeks, or 6 weeks because of a tsunami, it is a huge danger and loss for the economy."

Barbados, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico were named as possible locations of the Caribbean early-warning center. The new system would replace service being provided by the Pacific Tsunami Warning Center. The Caribbean plan is part of the United Nations (UN) Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's goal to implement tsunami early-warning systems worldwide.

VIOLENCE IN KENYA MAY CONTINUE

The postelection violence in Kenya that claimed more than 1000 lives may start again despite a February 28, 2008 power-sharing agreement between President Mwai Kibaki and opposition leader Raila Odinga. An official of Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement, parliament's largest party, said that any effort to thwart the deal could renew the violence that erupted after the disputed December 27, 2007 presidential election.

The warning came in response to statements made by the head of the public service, Francis Muthaura, that the agreement does not include sharing of public service jobs and that Kibaki retained power to appoint the new prime minister, who would be third in rank after the vice president. Muthaura's statement is in contrast to the stated terms of the 50-50 power-sharing deal that outlines a new prime minister's position for Odinga, a review of the constitution, a sharing of public service jobs, and the assignment of cabinet posts based on each party's representation in parliament. The deal ended the violent crisis after 1 month of intense negotiations led by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

The postelection crisis has been blamed not only on rivalries between political parties, Kibaki's Party of National Unity and Odinga's Orange Democratic Movement, but also between the parties' tribal affiliates. Most of the fighting took place between Kibaki's Kikuyu tribe (22% of Kenya's 36 million population) and an alliance backing Odinga, who is from the Luo tribe (13%). Many Luos believe that they have been unfairly treated by the politically powerful Kikuyu since Kenya's independence from Britain in 1963.

According to the UN, half of the 500,000 people displaced by the violence in western Kenya continue to live in more than 200 camps. Camp inhabitants had mixed reactions to the recent power-sharing agreement. "Most feel that President Kibaki has sold them out," Jesse Njoroge, coordinator of the largely Kikuyu camp of 12,800 in Nakuru, told IRIN, the news service of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. He added, "What is more

important is not coexistence of leaders, but coexistence of Kenyans.”

SOMALIA'S “FORGOTTEN CRISIS”

More than 1 million of Somalia's 8.4 million people remain displaced by battles between Ethiopian-backed interim government forces and Islamists. The Mogadishu-based fighting has driven away more than 60% of the city's population—about 600,000 people—since February 2007. Guillermo Betocchi, head of the UN refugee agency for Somalia, said that the problem seems intractable and continues to deteriorate. Nearly 20,000 civilians flee Mogadishu every month.

The threat of kidnapping prevents aid agencies from allowing international staff into the country. Instead, relief workers operate through Somali staff and local partner agencies. Even transporting food and other aid into the country remains extremely difficult. Citing security fears, Kenya has forbidden aid to cross the border. Islamist militia roadblocks have shut down transportation within much of the country.

An offer of peace talks by Somali Prime Minister Nur Hassan Hussein in March was rejected by Islamist leader Sheikh Hassan Dahir Aweys, who insisted that Ethiopia first withdraw its troops from Somalia. Aweys' insurgents loyal to the Union of Islamic Courts conduct bombings, assassinations, and other attacks on the US- and Ethiopian-backed Transitional Federal Government. The Islamists portray the Transitional Federal Government as a government created by Western powers to squelch Somali liberation. The fighting killed 7000 people in 2007.

Prospects for an African Union effort to deploy 8000 peacekeepers to replace the Ethiopian troops remain unclear. So far, only 1600 Ugandan troops have arrived, and these soldiers are increasingly finding themselves under attack. Somalia has had no effective government since the toppling of dictator Mohammed Siad Barre by local warlords in 1991.

FORUM ADDRESSES GLOBAL HEALTH WORKER SHORTAGE

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 57 nations, most in Asia and Africa, experience severe health worker shortages. More than 4 million health workers are

needed worldwide to provide basic health services such as immunizations or skilled birth attendants.

One million workers are needed in Africa alone, where 36 countries have fewer than 2.3 doctors, nurses, and midwives per 1000 people. According to the WHO, sub-Saharan Africa is home to 25% of the global burden of disease, yet it has only 3% of the world's health workers. In contrast, the Americas are home to 42% of all health workers, who face only 10% of the world's burden of disease.

The health worker crisis was highlighted at the first-ever Global Forum on Human Resources for Health held this March in Kampala, Uganda. The Forum called for a massive and immediate effort to increase education and training with the help of new technologies and partnership programs between developing and developed countries. Health worker migration, although deemed inevitable, must also be managed. The WHO found that on average 1 in 4 doctors and 1 in 20 nurses trained in Africa are working in countries belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. This “brain drain” can be controlled by better wages and working conditions for health workers in developing countries.

The Forum also called for long-term and sustainable funding to end the workforce crisis. In 2006, the cost of training and hiring enough health workers to meet the WHO's Millennium Development Goals by 2015 was estimated at \$447 million per country per year. Experts fear that when the costs of infrastructure, training, and education are taken into account, even more money may be needed. “Everyone has a part to play in resolving this crisis,” said Dr Sigrun Møgedal, Chair of the Forum Organizing Committee. “Preparedness to deal with health risks depends on health workers on the ground.”

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