**Africa Overview**

**Reassuring Omens, Bold Visions**

On May 13, 2000, the *Economist*, the venerable and influential magazine of the global English-speaking political classes, dubbed the continent “Hopeless Africa.” Yet beyond the ubiquitous images of mayhem, positive, though less “newsworthy,” changes were evolving at the societal level. Thanks to discernible changes in public attitudes and less willingness to accept the inevitability of authoritarian rule, it was at the grassroots that the most promising battles were being waged for a more humane Africa. Human rights groups, churches, academics, and other civil society activists demonstrated an uncommon resolve, courage and willingness to put their lives on the line to resist repression and lead the push among nongovernmental actors for transparency, participation, and accountability.

The indignant demand for more democracy came against a backdrop of deterioration and decay in the quality and performance of public institutions, in their ability to produce the results that people demanded and would respect. Demands for change resonated with the public at large, including sectors of society that were only tenuously tied to the system, with little access to employment, food, health care, education, or other benefits that government was supposed to bring. But their aspirations bumped up against governments that had been unable to provide political and social progress. As the pressure built up during the year, governments in a number of countries began to pay more attention as concepts of transparency and accountability took hold.

The phenomenal transition in Zimbabwe was the most dramatic illustration of a yearning for democracy and human rights, and of the dogged determination of civil society actors to engineer and orchestrate reform. Not so long ago the prospect of Zimbabwe’s ruling party losing a referendum vote and coming close to losing control of parliament would have bordered on the surreal. But that was precisely what happened. First, the Zimbabwean electorate voted down a government-sponsored constitution at a referendum in April, and two months later the ruling party—that had been thought unassailable—came close to losing its parliamentary majority. The June elections came in the wake of a period of unprecedented violence in which supporters of the ruling party reportedly killed nineteen people, including white farmers and opposition politicians, beat up hundreds more, raped dozens of women, and occupied more than one thousand commercial farms. At the vanguard of pressure for change was a coalition of nongovernmental forces that confronted the powers that be, questioning not only their efficacy but also their legitimacy. This was an insurrection of courageous academics, high school teachers, priests, students, lawyers, judges, citizens, all seeking to move their country closer to the ideals of democracy and respect for human rights and the rule of law. They rose to that task very effectively and pulled off a people-power revolution that achieved astonishing gains in a short span of time.

The organizational effectiveness of the Zimbabwe groups was considerably helped by two factors: a popular backlash, especially among the urban electorate, against persistently high levels of unemployment, poverty, corruption; and an infusion of talent and organizing capabilities that rapidly professionalized the
ranks of the civil society coalition and later the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Sophisticated and adroit, the opposition became highly effective media operators, ensuring a forceful projection of their message both at home and abroad. It did not lead to a change in government, but it marked a big step along the way.

As developments in Zimbabwe heralded bolder, increasingly courageous grassroots movements, the Ivory Coast too saw changes towards greater empowerment of nongovernmental forces, and renewed engagement of the Ivorian people. In massive demonstrations sparked by a controversial presidential election, thousands of Ivorians spilled onto the streets of Abidjan to force the Ivorian president General Guei from power. Moreover, in the general uprising, voters in the northern power base of opposition leader Alassane Ouattara largely boycotted the elections. Despite harsh repression under General Guei since his coup, and even in the face of intense gunfire, protesters demonstrated across Abidjan, storming state radio and television stations in what appeared to be a spontaneous popular revolution. This “people power revolution” was set off by mass dissatisfaction with Guei’s attempts to rig and steal the elections, and also with an earlier court ruling that excluded two major political opposition figures from the presidential election.

Equally undaunted were civil society and human rights groups in the rebel-held eastern provinces of North and South Kivu in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Although the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD) authorities sought to limit the many and vigorous actors, civil society groups struggled to maintain their rights to free expression and association, serving as a channel for criticizing the RCD and its Rwandan allies. In addition to dozens of human rights associations, there were uncounted development and humanitarian nongovernmental groups, activist churches, and independent journalists. Although the rebel authorities and their Rwandan allies resorted to such tactics as physical assault, arbitrary arrest, and detention, activists courageously persevered to maintain the only line of defense against glaring human rights abuses by self-styled liberators.

In DRC’s southern neighbor Zambia, a less dramatic but nonetheless crucial development took place during the country’s World Bank Consultative Group (CG) meeting. For the first time in Africa, a transparent CG meeting where all deliberations were open to independent human rights and civil society activists was convened in Lusaka in July. Building upon the experience of a previous CG meeting in Malawi when a select number of NGOs were invited to a session on human rights and governance, the Bank and a number of bilateral donors used it as a precedent to persuade the Zambian authorities of the benefits of opening up the discussions. After strenuous objections to the participation of human rights and civil society activists, Zambia’s Minister of Finance Katele Kaumba relented and agreed to have the entire meeting opened to civil society groups, both local and international, including traditionally tightly closed sessions. The human rights performance of the government was openly discussed during the meeting in the presence of NGOs. This was a significant opening given the strategic importance of a World Bank Consultative meeting to an aid-dependent government like Zambia. Seemingly, the success of the Lusaka meeting was due to good teamwork between Zambia’s bilateral donors, and a new, more open team at the World Bank—reflecting a softening of the World Bank’s compartmentalization of poverty reduction versus human rights, and some risk-taking by the Zambian government.

War-torn Angola also showed signs of pressure for change. With an eye to forthcoming elections, seventeen minor opposition parties met in May to fashion an alliance to foster opposition to the war, and
advocate free and fair elections. Concurrently, Angola’s churches—known to command the largest base of support in the country—formed a joint body to champion peace and national reconciliation. In Sudan too, in the face of overwhelming security obstacles, the New Sudan Council of Churches’ “People-to-People” reconciliation process held a meeting in May in conflict-ridden southern Sudan, of people on the east bank of the Nile, despite overwhelming ethnic and military impediments. The May meeting sought to build upon the positive results of the west bank March 1999 meeting.

There were other interesting trends in Senegal, Eritrea, and Somalia. In Senegal, the electorate rejected President Abdou Diouf in his quest for a fourth consecutive term. Following a highly competitive March election, Diouf peacefully conceded defeat to veteran opposition leader Abdoulaye Wade who took almost 60 percent of the votes cast. Diouf, head of the party that had governed Senegal since independence from France in 1960, became only the third elected African head of government to leave office following an election. Prior to the elections, Senegal set another precedent in February 2000, when a Senegalese court indicted Chad’s exiled former dictator, Hissein Habré, on torture charges and placed him under house arrest. It was the first time that an African had been charged with atrocities in his own country by the court of another African country and represented a major step toward promoting the rule of law and breaking the cycle of impunity in Africa. But Senegal somewhat tarnished its reputation when its judiciary dropped charges against Habré under what seemed to be questionable circumstances. An appeal by Chad’s torture victims was still pending at this writing.

In Eritrea, although decision-making remained tightly controlled within the governing People’s Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ), the sole party operating in the country since the country became formally independent in 1993, there were signs of possible openings. The constitution guaranteed freedom of expression and the press, but the government severely restricted those rights. The government owned all the broadcasting media, and the only printing press in the country. But following military setbacks in the war with Ethiopia during the first half of 2000, and the catastrophic displacement of almost a third of the Eritrean population as a result of that war, the pressure mounted for a genuine implementation of the constitution. An intense debate was reportedly taking place in Eritrean elite circles, behind closed doors, on how and why the country went to war in the first place. Questions were reportedly also being raised on the conduct of Eritrean diplomacy during several unsuccessful rounds of negotiations to end the war. Probably in a concession to the mounting tide for change, the Eritrean National Assembly concluded its thirteenth session on October 2 by announcing that multiparty elections would be held in December 2001. The assembly formed a committee to draft regulations to govern political parties. Also in the aftermath of the war, about a dozen private newspapers and magazines started publication. The Eritrean government also softened the severe restrictions it had imposed in 1998 on foreign NGOs that had denied them any operational role, and limited their contribution to the health and education sectors, through government channels and approved programs. Facing a complex disaster resulting from war and drought, the government invited back several international NGOs that had left the country to protest the policy. The government even ended its decade-long feud with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) by inviting it to establish a delegation in Asmara soon after the war broke out. In midyear, the Eritrean government ratified the Geneva Conventions.

Even the sickest man of Africa, Somalia, showed prospects of renewal. After descending into a
maelstrom of warring regions and factions since the 1991 ouster of the late ex-President Barre, Somalia had been without a national government. But following the Intergovernmental Authority (IGAD)-backed national reconciliation conference in August to discuss a peace plan put forward by Djibouti’s President Ismael Omar Guelleh, a new transitional government was put in place. Shedding past fears, tens of thousands of Somalis staged demonstrations in the capital, Mogadishu, and other cities in support of President Guellah’s peace proposals. President Salad Hassan subsequently reclaimed Somalia’s U.N. seat and addressed the U.N. Millennium Conference in New York.

The most important question for Zimbabwe, Angola, Zambia, or Somalia—and by association, for Africa—was whether the changes would prove more than cyclical upturns. To the degree that developments mirrored a change in the public’s state of mind, and a perception that they could influence the composition of a government and its policies, it appeared that the human rights advances would endure. These developments were driven by a combination of greater pressures on government and the gathering force of globalization, with Internet communications playing a growing role. As communications became close to instantaneous across international boundaries, African electorates, with nongovernmental forces at the vanguard as in Zimbabwe, became increasingly well informed and able to demand higher standards of governance. These developments would hardly change the face of Africa overnight. But they showed what could be done by ordinary people despite massive repression. The information revolution could in time accelerate political transformation and alter the political and human rights landscape in Africa and beyond.

Such challenges to the power base of President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, a longtime and controversial strongman, the warlords in Somalia, or the rebel forces in the DRC, could help sway many who would otherwise have felt that the task was too daunting. But the durability of the courage and determination of civil society to bring change would remain in doubt in the absence of substantial financial and diplomatic support from abroad. Under the best of circumstances, civil society and other advocates of change would have a hard time challenging wrongs that had gone on for decades, presided over by entrenched regimes often with substantial foreign support. The lesson for the international donor community was that institutions and policy decisions that led to human rights abuses were not intractable and inevitable. Investments in civil society initiatives would help ensure that the momentum generated by the events of 2000 was sustained and would embolden those seeking to influence and change institutions and policies—though progress would quite likely be painfully slow. The international community should be generous.

**Staying the Course in a Tempest-Tossed Climate**

Other good news from Africa was that two sub-Saharan giants—Nigeria and South Africa—continued to make the transition to democracy, albeit on somewhat bumpy courses. Botswana, Ghana, Mali, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania, and Namibia also maintained steady growth. In particular, Mozambique’s record was remarkable. Despite being pummeled by cyclone-driven floods, the worst in living memory, and severe tensions spawned by the 1999 December presidential and parliamentary elections, Mozambique was once again on its feet with the fastest growing economy in the world.

Still, the premier case for Africa remained decidedly focused on South Africa. The country continued to benefit from a holdover of political virtue derived from its political and constitutional transformation from apartheid to a constitutional democracy—despite the stormy political climate engendered by the crisis in
Zimbabwe that threatened to engulf the entire sub-region. South Africa’s rebound continued to be driven by responsible governmental actions in most areas of public policy. The constitutional framework was strengthened by passage of major legislation mandated under the 1996 constitution: the Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act, the Promotion of Access to Information Act, the Promotion of Administrative Justice Act, and Preferential Procurement Policy Framework Act. The National Assembly also passed legislation giving protection to “whistle blowers” disclosing information in the public interest. In a landmark September judgment on economic and social rights, the Constitutional Court found that the government had an obligation under the constitution to provide short-term housing for several hundred people evicted from their homes and in desperate need.

But though its achievements remained impressive, South Africa was not out of the woods. The growth, employment, and redistribution (GEAR) program implemented in previous years still failed to bring economic growth to some sectors of society, which had barely benefited or had even fallen further behind since 1994, leading to disagreement between the African National Congress (ANC) and its allies in the labor movement. In particular, joblessness remained intractably above 30 percent. There were other major problems: crime rates remained shockingly high; “taxi violence” between competing operators of minibus taxis remained a crime control riddle; violence against women, including sexual violence, remained alarmingly uncontrolled, with very high numbers of reported rapes; reports of police corruption and brutality were common during the year; and, despite over-congested prisons, the criminal justice system seemed unable to cope. Despite policies and laws designed to bring transformation to all sectors, implementation sometimes seemed a distant dream. The government’s credibility and effective leadership also risked being undermined by conflict between health professionals and President Mbeki, who had controversially expressed doubt as to the link between HIV and AIDS, and the government’s decision not to supply anti-retroviral drugs to HIV positive pregnant women to prevent transmission of the virus to their babies. Nonetheless, the ANC-led government continued to hold extraordinary political capital and the transformation program seemed broadly on course.

In Nigeria, Africa’s most populous state and the economic heartland of the subregion, the military remained in the barracks. Viewed from the perspective of President Bill Clinton’s two-day August visit, it seemed that Nigeria had much to celebrate. But after what some saw as a year of waffling by President Olusegun Obasanjo, a number of political worries tempered any optimism. Yes, things had changed, but the question was whether enough had changed. Little had been done to address serious and deep-rooted problems such as the unrest in the Niger Delta, secessionist demands from the southwest, high unemployment, the collapse of social services, and school closures. With worsening economic conditions and government failures to deliver any benefit from democracy, popular fatigue provided fuel for communal violence at flashpoints throughout the country. The declaration by several northern states that Islamic Sharia law would be extended to criminal law sparked deadly clashes between Muslims and Christians. The uncertainty caused by all these problems seriously damaged the country’s prospects for desperately needed economic rejuvenation and for sustaining and deepening its democracy. Many ascribed much of the blame to Obasanjo—though the challenges he faced were more institutional than personal. He was accused of being reluctant and incapable of dealing firmly with important issues, including the bickering between the president and the legislature that seemed to have distracted attention from the need to make real progress.
Nonetheless, the good news was that none of those factors seemed likely to blunt the fundamental forces that had driven the switch from military rule to civilian government. The passage to democracy would be rough but would stay the course. A crucial element was that the major international actors kept their faith in Nigeria’s democracy experiment. Would the armed forces risk making a bad situation worse by staging a coup? Given Nigeria’s status as a bellwether for the region as a whole, the international response would be far from sanguine. The military would risk sharp international censure. The chances were that the military would probably not wish to turn the clock back. In the long term, nothing could do more to secure Nigeria’s democracy than a decisive break with its past: constitutional reform to provide an agreed framework for the representation of Nigeria’s disparate communities, the overhauling of a ramshackle legal and governmental structure, and human rights reforms to underpin the rule of law, accountability, and transparency.

**Emblems of Bad Old Habits**

While democracy was strengthened in select African countries, parts of the continent remained mired in authoritarianism, brutalized politics, and violent conflicts. At least thirteen nations in the region were engaged either in open conflict or heated disputes, some with internal groups and some with neighboring states, spawning large-scale forced migration and abuses of civilians either directly targeted or caught in crossfire. Ethnically inspired violence spread in Senegal’s Casamance, the Great Lakes, the Horn of Africa, Guinea, Ivory Coast, and other regions, proving that self-serving political elites continued to play the ethnic or nationalist card in an effort to consolidate their power at the expense of civilian casualties. Even in countries such as Nigeria, where the government has worked to counter the negative use of ethnicity and religion by forces outside of the government, ethnic strife remained a concern. Several countries that had benefited from the wave of democratization with the promise of more participation, transparency, and accountability in the early 1990s saw tightening control and shrinking political space.

One electoral process after another stumbled into difficulty. Electoral manipulation, government spending to support its own candidates, and the pervasive pro-government bias of most local media left electoral landscapes badly tilted in favor of incumbents—despite the now ubiquitous presence of election observers and their ritualized post-election reports. Angola, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia saw stagnation or regression.

In Ivory Coast, sub-Saharan Africa’s third-largest economy, soldiers launched a coup that brought to power a strongman, General Robert Guei, on December 24, 1999, and clobbered Ivory Coast’s standing as a stable financial and political power. The new military regime was expected to come under pressure to make good on its pledge to move quickly toward democracy and demonstrate more openness than the previously entrenched regime of ex-President Henri Konan Bedie. But such expectations were quickly dashed as General Guei deliberately sought to disqualify his key rivals for the presidency in the October 22 elections. As widely expected, President of the Supreme Court Tia Kone announced on October 6 the disqualification of twelve presidential hopefuls—including Alassane Dramane Ouattara, leader of the Rassemblement des Republicains (RDR), the main opposition party—and the approval of only five—including Guei himself—ahead of the vote.

In another key country, the Kenyan state seemed to have run out of both money and ideas. The constitutional reform process which could have brought greater democratization remained unsettled. And
yet the government of President Daniel arap Moi continued to block progress on promised reform. The political crisis was paralleled by a marked deterioration in the economic situation, caused by state fumbling and corruption. The standard of living for the average Kenyan continued to drop, and the year was typified by unprecedented electricity rationing and water shortages in the capital Nairobi and other cities. At the end of July, President Moi signed on to exceptionally exacting conditions in return for renewed International Monetary Fund and World Bank lending. Moi nominally committed himself to doing something desperately difficult: to change an immeasurably corrupt and authoritarian country.

Elsewhere in the sub-region, the ruling Ethiopian People’s Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) won a victory in May’s tightly controlled elections, two days after Ethiopia launched its largest military offensive against Eritrea. Allegations of fraud and violence marred these elections, particularly in rural areas. In Uganda, just four days after Zimbabwean voters defied massive intimidation to rebuke the de facto single party rule of President Mugabe, President Yoweri Museveni’s de facto one-party system was extended in a referendum marked by poor voter turnout. The choice in the referendum was whether to return to a multiparty system or to continue Museveni’s favored so-called no-party system. Having called for a boycott of the referendum poll, the traditional opposition parties declared a moral victory, saying that the turnout of roughly 40 percent was too low for a mandate on a key constitutional and human rights issue. In the long term, the outcome could be that the no-party system might undermine the efforts to develop what was needed to sustain several of the positive changes that Museveni’s Movement system had introduced. Of greatest concern was that behind the illusion of inclusion under the no-party system was a concentration of power in the ruling elite, high-level corruption, and mismanagement of resources.

In Rwanda, General Paul Kagame was selected by the National Assembly as president following the sudden resignations of the speaker of the national assembly, the prime minister, and the president within the first three months of the year. Two of the those who had resigned their posts left the country, saying they feared for their lives. As Kagame’s party, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, consolidated its power, it announced communal-level elections for late 2000, in which political parties could play no role. Zambia’s poor performance on the democratization front undermined President Chiluba’s credibility as a broker for peace and democracy in the DRC. Political parties, NGOs and other civic interest groups were regularly denied permission to assemble by the government’s political and security apparatus or had their meetings violently broken up by police on public security grounds.

After a year-long lull in fighting, Ethiopia and Eritrea went to war again. On May 12, Ethiopia launched a massive attack against Eritrea and successfully recaptured disputed territories that Eritrea had occupied. The two-year conflict was estimated to have killed and wounded tens of thousands of soldiers and civilians and uprooted nearly a million people. Displaced Eritreans fleeing the fighting credibly reported the involvement of the Ethiopian army in large-scale destruction and looting of civilian property, the harassment of civilians, particularly men of military age, and a high incidence of rape. On the home front, the Ethiopian government continued to face internal armed insurgencies in the Oromia and Somali regional states and other remote regions, and to hold without charge or trial thousands of people it suspected of sympathizing with the insurgents. By early 2000, Ethiopian authorities, citing broad threats to national security, had arbitrarily and harshly returned some seventy thousand Ethiopians of Eritrean parentage to Eritrea. For its part, the Eritrean government forced an estimated forty thousand Ethiopians back to Ethiopia in the months that followed the
outbreak of hostilities. Eritrean authorities also interned thousands of Ethiopian residents under harsh conditions in the wake of Ethiopia’s offensive in May, citing unspecified threats to national security.

Destructive wars persisted in Angola, DRC, Burundi, Sudan, Sierra Leone, and on the border between Liberia and Guinea. Noncombatants continued to bear the brunt of the interminable fighting. In the DRC it was 1999 redux: tangled webs of allies facing off in a devastating war with no end in sight. The conflict pitted the government of President Kabila, and allied troops from Zimbabwe, Angola and Namibia, against the rebel Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), as a proxy for forces fielded by the governments of Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi. The RCD had split into two competing groups in May 1999, with the mainstream faction supported by Rwanda, and the other backed by Uganda. In the northern province Equateur, the Movement for the Liberation of Congo (MLC) obtained military support from Uganda. Apparently fighting on the side of President Kabila’s government were rural militia, known locally as the Mai-Mai; and predominantly Hutu fighters commonly known as Interahamwe. Human rights and humanitarian conditions continued to deteriorate throughout the country as both government and rebel forces and their backers were reported involved in patterns of civilian killings and widespread rape of women, while government forces carried out indiscriminate shelling in Equateur. There was no improvement between 1999 and 2000. And yet there was no tangible progress in efforts to stop the ruinous war and its associated senseless killings: peace talks aimed at reviving the moribund peace deal signed in Lusaka in 1999 crumbled without an agreement on peace enforcement mechanisms amid mutual accusations of cease-fire violations.

The war in the Congo was increasingly closely linked to the seven-year civil war in Burundi as Kabila reportedly supplied more and more weapons for the Burundian rebel movement, Forces for the Defense of Democracy (FDD), in return for its help in defending Lubumbashi. A Burundian peace agreement, promoted by former South African President Nelson Mandela and U.S. President Clinton, had no effect on the combat, which grew considerably in the months after its August signing. Although parties to the war increasingly fought a classic war, they also continued to target civilians, with more than a thousand killed by October. An estimated one hundred and fifty thousand persons have been killed since the start of the war. The FDD and a rival rebel movement talked of new peace negotiation in early November but set conditions which made an agreement appear unlikely.

In Angola, a series of major victories by the government that pushed the rebel National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA) out of its strongholds in the central highlands of Angola in late 1999 raised expectations that the war might be nearing a decisive phase. At this writing, fierce fighting was raging, particularly in the areas close to the Zambian border, resulting in significant refugee inflows into Zambia. Human rights violations, a hallmark of the Angolan war, remained widespread and systematic. Disoriented and smarting from setbacks suffered at the hands of government forces, UNITA resorted to guerrilla attacks and indiscriminate killings.

As the country’s ravaging seventeen-year war raged on, Sudan remained a blatant human rights abuser, while rebel groups committed their share of violations. The Khartoum government intensified its bombing of civilian targets in the war in the south and its efforts to hamper relief food operations to needy civilians. For its part, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), the principal rebel movement in the country, continued to foster glaring abuses including looting of food and other provisions from the population, sometimes with civilian casualties; recruitment of underage boys; and rape. In the meantime,
the government’s war machine was poised to benefit substantially from new oil revenue. According to a government announcement, 20 percent of its 2000 revenue would be spent on defense, including an arms factory near Khartoum. It was estimated that following the first export of oil in August 1998, defense spending in dollars had increased 96 percent in two years.

In Sierra Leone, despite the Lomé Peace Accord signed on July 7, 1999 that committed the rebels to lay down their arms in exchange for representation in a new government, the war and its associated abuses continued, though at a lower intensity and with a reduction in the rebels’ signature abuses, the amputation of limbs, for the first few months of the year. The May collapse of the peace process after the capture of some five hundred United Nations peacekeepers, reversed this trend and ushered in an increase of all classes of human rights abuses by the rebel Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and other militias, including limb amputation, and a disturbing intensification of abuses by pro-government forces, against whom previous allegations had been few. Women were particularly targeted for sexual violence. In thousands of cases, rape and other forms of sexual violence were followed by the abduction of women and girls who were forced into bondage to male combatants in slavery-like conditions. If that was not enough, the war became increasingly regionalized, sucking Guinea and Liberia into a tangled web of cross-border attacks with devastating consequences for noncombatants and refugees living in border areas.

The Private Press: Beaten Back But Not Cowed

The rapid growth of independent media endured, although the degree of media freedom differed widely. For the most part, levels of freedom corresponded with levels of democratic development. The Internet also dramatically enhanced the access and distribution capabilities of the independent press, fostering freer flows of information in general. Eroding governments’ ability to control the press and manipulate facts, the Internet also relieved the financial stresses that many African news agencies faced. South Africa, Nigeria, Botswana, Mauritius, Mali, Senegal and some others generally continued to register high levels of media freedom. But in several countries, severe levels of intolerance persisted. Many a government seemed all too alert to the danger that a free flow of information in society could undermine their grip on power. During the year, there was a rampant use of intimidation, assaults and detention, banning and radio closures, prolonged prosecutions and libel suits, or economic coercion to silence independent media.

Despite an improved climate for freedom of expression in Angola, a campaign of harassment against journalists continued. The privately owned media was targeted, apparently because it had increased its investigative and critical posture. Since November 1999 at least six journalists had been convicted of libel or defamation by government officials. On December 10, the directors of Folha 8, and the privately owned weekly newspapers, Agora and Actual, were ordered by police to retract stories that concerned a report by the U.K.-based NGO Global Witness, saying the government had corruptly used oil revenues. For its part, the official media published detailed refutations of the Global Witness report. On July 27, the Angolan government signaled its intention to tighten further controls on the media when it published a draconian new draft media bill that guaranteed presidential immunity to criticism and would send journalists to prison for criticizing or questioning government officials. The bill would allow the government the right to decide on who could practice journalism, seize and ban publications, and to detain journalists for thirty days before
charges were filed.

The independent media also continued to come under legal pressure in Zambia, where the trial of six journalists from the *Post* who were detained in March 1999 for publishing a story that criticized Zambia’s military capability and preparedness in the face of a possible military attack from Angola dragged on. All the reporters, including editor-in-chief Fred M’membe, were charged with “espionage.” All twelve pleaded not guilty to the charge, and on August 18, after repeated trial adjournment, the state dropped its charges against all except M’membe. An unexplained fire on September 3 at the Post offices damaged some U.S.$500,000 worth of equipment.

In South Africa, eyebrows were raised when more than thirty editors and writers were subpoenaed to appear before the South African Human Rights Commission to answer charges of racism. They were ordered to produce documents related to their editorial decisions, and the commission had the power to search their offices. The journalists could face fines or up to six months in jail if they failed to comply. The journalists stood their ground but offered to give evidence voluntarily if the subpoenas were withdrawn. Following a public outcry, the commission relented and withdrew the subpoenas. The hearings followed the release of an interim report commissioned by the Human Rights Commission and much criticized on methodological grounds, which found that the South African media was riddled with racism and racial stereotyping. The final report, which included material from the hearings, received a much more favorable reception, and included constructive recommendations to address these problems.

In Liberia, the year witnessed numerous incidents of detention and ill-treatment of journalists, a community under heavy attack since President Taylor took power in 1997. In March, Suah Dede, head of the Liberian Press Union, was briefly detained without charge after giving a radio interview condemning the closure of two radio stations. In April, Isaac Redd, radio broadcaster on the state radio station, was detained and held without charge for several days by the police. He was later accused of speaking against the president and charged with “criminal malfeasance.” In August, four members of a foreign news film team, in Liberia to film a documentary, were arrested, charged with espionage, and detained for a week. The team had been given official permission to film in Liberia, but were accused of filming in restricted areas and seeking to damage the country’s image by falsely linking President Charles Taylor to diamond smuggling. They were released following international pressure.

For its part, the Ethiopian government continued to abuse freedom of speech and of the press. At least twenty-seven journalists lived in exile at this writing, having fled their homeland due to repeated arrests, ill-treatment in detention, and the threat of extraordinarily high bail amounts. Eight reporters remained behind bars. In mid-August, sudden increases in printing costs, by more than a third, put additional pressures on some thirty-six private publications as well as the government press in Ethiopia. The private newspapers went on strike in September, and warned that the high production costs could eventually force them out of business. They urged the government to reduce taxation on imported paper and other print inputs.

In April, several journalists were assaulted in Zimbabwe. On April 22, a bomb shook the premises of privately owned Zimbabwean *Daily News*. On 6 April, Nyasha Nyakunu and Tsvangirai Mukwazhi, respectively editor and a photographer with the *Daily News*, were held for two hours by youths from the ZANU-PF armed with iron bars. A week earlier a photographer and a journalist with Agence France-Presse, and a cameraman from the British news agency Reuters had been threatened by about fifty men armed with
mACHETES AND IRON BARS.

In the DRC, scores of journalists were imprisoned apparently without legal justification. President Kabila’s government had detained over 110 journalists and harassed many others since it took power in 1997. Private newspapers and radio and television stations were often shut down or banned from coverage of news deemed sensitive by the government. A special military court in mid-September sentenced two journalists to two years in prison for defying such directives. There were also numerous accounts of torture and other inhumane treatment. In Bukavu, the capital of rebel-held south Kivu province, photographer Jean Pierre Tanganyika, also known as Dudjo, was arrested after a grenade explosion on August 26 for having taken pictures of the injured victims at the scene. He was detained without formal charge at the local army barracks, briefly released on September 16, and rearrested again on the same day. His whereabouts remained unknown.

Aware that a large proportion of the population relied on radio for news, governments sought to silence independent radio broadcasting. The government-owned radio station provided the only news broadcasts heard by most Liberians. Two independent radio stations came under attack in March 2000: Star Radio and Radio Veritas, the radio station of the Catholic Church. Star Radio was forcibly closed, and remained so at this writing. At the beginning of October, the Zimbabwe police shut down Capital Radio, an independent radio station, and seized its equipment. The station began broadcasting after the Supreme Court ruled that Zimbabwe’s broadcast monopoly was inconsistent with the country’s constitutional provisions regarding the fundamental right to freedom of expression. President Mugabe’s government then promulgated a presidential order outlawing private broadcasting without state approval. According to the police, Capital Radio had breached that order. At this writing, the station’s legal action disputing the legality of the government’s actions was still pending. In Kenya, however, several independent television and FM radio stations began broadcasting in 2000, obtaining licences after applications made several years earlier, some as far back as 1992. The growth of the independent broadcast sector resulted in a notable expansion in the airing of differing opinions, particularly on radio. These licences were, however, restricted principally to urban areas.

MORe HUMAN FALLOUT

The massive numbers of displaced persons in Africa remained a major human rights catastrophe. As of January 2000, there were 6.3 million Africans of concern to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), from an estimated 22.3 million worldwide. Of the top twenty countries from which people fled from around the world, eight were in Africa. Eleven African states hosted refugee populations of 100,000 or more. The figures were equally striking in terms of internally displaced populations (IDPs): eight African countries were among the twenty countries with the largest internally displaced populations. Indeed, in several African countries, as in Sierra Leone, armed groups purposefully uprooted civilians, creating massive populations of refugees and IDPs in order to forward political or military objectives with little or no regard for human suffering.

Sudan alone had approximately four million IDPs—the largest IDP population in the world. Angola’s growing IDP population stood at some 2.5 million. The war between Eritrea and Ethiopia resulted in massive internal displacement, particularly in Eritrea where 1.5 million people were uprooted, including 90,000 who sought refuge in neighboring Sudan. Hostilities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo resulted in the
displacement of 1.6 million people, one million of whom had little or no access to humanitarian assistance with dire consequences. The U.N. reported that infant mortality among the displaced was the highest in the region, and that maternal mortality was the highest in the world. Some of the longest and most forgotten refugee crises were on the African continent, with recurring refugee movements caused by conflicts spilling over into neighboring countries. Refugee crises in Africa invariably affected a whole subregion—and sometimes beyond.

The Horn of Africa countries continued to be producers and receivers of refugees simultaneously. And in West Africa, the interlocking conflicts in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Guinea affected populations in all three nations. Balancing national security concerns with the obligation to provide safe asylum and protection to refugees was one of the most challenging issues for host governments in Africa. Internal conflicts alarmingly spilled across borders into neighboring countries, resulting in greater militarization of refugee settlements by armed elements, weapons flows, cross-border attacks, forced recruitment of refugee children, and rape and other physical attacks on refugee women and children in camps. The security risk increasingly associated with hosting refugees from intractable regional conflicts resulted in a growing unwillingness by host governments to provide asylum and protection. Xenophobia and anti-refugee sentiment continued to grow, even in countries with a generous history of hosting those fleeing conflict. The failure by African governments and the international community to separate out combatants from refugees in the camps exacerbated the problem and made refugee camps more likely targets for attack.

For example, in September, tensions rose between Liberia, Guinea, and Sierra Leone, each accusing the other of supporting rebel activity. Guinea, one of the largest refugee hosts in Africa, intermittently closed its border with Sierra Leone, fearful of incursions by Sierra Leonean rebels. In September, an inflammatory public statement by the president of Guinea provoked widespread rapes and other attacks by Guinean police, soldiers, and civil militias against Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees.

Defending Human Rights

The human rights movement continued to register significant strides across the continent, although there were variations in the environments in which they operated. Many countries continued to liken human rights advocacy by local NGOs to disloyal political opposition or collaboration with those fighting the government of the day.

In several countries, including DRC, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Liberia, and Ethiopia, individual activists faced intimidation, arrest, assault, and sometimes death for their advocacy of human rights. The risk that rights defenders faced was underscored on August 24 when Fr. John Kaiser, a well-known human rights activist in Kenya, was brutally murdered at night by unidentified persons some fifty miles outside Nairobi. A Catholic parish priest in the Rift Valley area and a U.S. citizen, Father Kaiser had worked in Kenya for thirty-six years and had been an outspoken human rights activist. In 1999, the Law Society of Kenya had honored Father Kaiser with its annual human rights award.

The DRC continued to be one of the most dangerous places for human rights activists. The government in late May detained for weeks Félicien Malanda Nsumbu and Georges Kazimbika, respectively the secretary and financial officer of the national umbrella group for development organizations, and accused them of contacting the rebels. In early June, the government prevented representatives of civil society and the political
opposition from leaving the capital to attend preparatory talks for the inter-Congolese dialogue in Cotonou, Benin. On January 16, security forces of the RCD arrested at her home Immaculée Birhaheka, president of the women’s group Promotion and Support of Women’s Initiatives (PAIF), and her colleague Jeannine Mukanirwa, PAIF’s vice president. The two, and other women held like them at the infamous “Bureau 2” detention center in Goma, were whipped with a piece of tire. On October 9, RCD soldiers broke up a meeting held by the umbrella group for human rights organizations in Bukavu. Congolese and Rwandan soldiers beat them with sticks and fists in front of a big crowd. The rights groups were planning to discuss follow-up activities to the previous week’s visit to eastern DRC of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson.

President Charles Taylor of Liberia and other high-ranking government officials also continued to attack human rights groups for publicizing abuses and blamed the human rights community for the withholding of international aid. In December, 1999, James D. Torh, the executive director of a child-rights organization, Fore-Runners of Children’s Universal Development, was detained and charged with sedition for a speech he made. Torh was denied bail for five days and upon release, he fled the country. In Namibia, a Zambian-born human rights activist and a founder member and executive of the Namibian Society for Human Rights who had lived in Namibia for sixteen years was on February 21 expelled by immigration officials because of his alleged support for Caprivi secessionists.

But in Nigeria, numerous and sophisticated human rights groups were able to operate freely throughout the year. The human rights movement, long recognized as the one of the most vibrant networks on the continent, strengthened its advocacy—to the extent that its legislative and reform program was vastly more ambitious than that of the government. In South Africa too, activists continued to operate in an environment of freedom. Occasional government hostility to NGO criticism was neutralized by strong collaboration in government-NGO partnerships elsewhere.

There was also some encouraging news from countries whose dedicated human rights networks operated in less than favorable circumstances. In Rwanda, the League for Promoting and Defending Human Rights (La Ligue Rwandaise pour la Promotion et la Défense des Droits de l’Homme, LIPRODHOR) monitored judicial proceedings related to the genocide and made plans to observe a new alternative justice process set to begin operating early in 2001. The Association for the Defense of Human Rights and Public Liberties (Association pour la Défense des Droits Humains et des Libérés Publiques, ADL) executed a useful study of villagization, a government policy of forced resettlement of the rural population. The League for the Defense of Human Rights of the Great Lakes (La Ligue des Associations de Défense des Droits de l’homme des Grands Lacs, LDGL) initiated a campaign among its member organizations to end impunity in the region and to extend the mandate of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda, as did the Burundian Ligue Iteka. The Burundian Association for the Defense of Prisoners did the first nation-wide census of persons jailed in national prisons and secured the release of prisoners who had already served their terms and yet remained in jail.

In an environment which was not known for tolerance of independent monitoring, the Ethiopian Human Rights Council (EHRCO) continued to report on the human rights situation in the country. Several civic organizations, including EHRCO, the Ethiopian Economic Association, the Inter-Africa Group, and the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce convened panel discussions that allowed ruling party and opposition
candidates to air their programs before urban voters, mainly in the capital. The Ethiopian Women Lawyers Association conducted training for women candidates. Progress was registered toward the establishment in Ethiopia of national institutions and an international presence for the protection and promotion of human rights. The outgoing parliament in July unanimously approved bills establishing the Ethiopian human rights commission and the office of the ombudsman. However, the government continued to deny recognition to the Human Rights League, which was founded in 1997 by members of the Oromo community. The government arrested eight board members of the league shortly after they applied for registration of the association, and confiscated its office records and equipment in 1998. Garuma Bekele, executive secretary of the league, and also editor of *Urji*, and Addisu Beyene, secretary of the Oromo Relief Association and prominent rights advocate, together with some fifty other prominent Oromo civic leaders, remained in jail since their arrest in October 1997. Their trial for conspiracy continued in camera. Mary Robinson, the U.N. high commissioner for human rights, said during a visit in October that her agency planned to open a regional office in Addis Ababa to work with the countries of the Horn of Africa and the OAU.

**Organization of African Unity**

As countries in Africa continued to erupt in violence, the Organization of African Unity (OAU) once again failed to rise to the challenge of effectively dealing with issues of stability and democracy throughout the continent. Through measures taken at several summits, the OAU attempted to become a more proactive, unified body; however, its efforts were undermined by decisions which called into question its commitment to democracy and stability. Working mostly in tardy reaction to crisis situations, the OAU found its actions largely futile in solving the civil strife in many countries. The one exception, the OAU’s success story for the year, was the cessation of hostilities agreement which helped halt the two-year war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, with a June 18 agreement to end hostilities and work out a final settlement. The cease-fire, which was a product of OAU intervention, consisted of detailed plans to disengage the two armies and to allow a U.N. peacekeeping force to patrol parts of the established buffer zone. As part of its efforts to oversee the agreement’s implementation, the OAU sent military observers in September to monitor the cessation of hostilities.

In countries like the DRC, Comoros, Sierra Leone, and the Ivory Coast, the OAU’s presence was either not very visible or for the most part ignored. In April, leaders of European and African states met under the auspices of the European Union (E.U.) and the OAU in Cairo. In the first summit of its kind, participants discussed human rights, good governance, trade, illegal arms, debt relief, and other issues. A Civil Society Forum scheduled to take place prior to the summit was blocked at the last minute. Convened by the North-South Center, the gathering was moved to Lisbon, which diminished its potential impact on the summit. The OAU’s apparent silencing of civil society groups weakened its credibility as an organization committed to the promotion of democracy. African nations had hoped to make economic issues a priority at the conference, particularly the issue of debt relief. The E.U. decided to remove trade barriers to Africa, but refused to establish new measures to address Africa’s burgeoning debt. The summit resulted in the 110-point Cairo Declaration, which included an affirmation of the promotion of human rights, but no new initiatives for their protection.

The thirty-sixth annual OAU summit held in Lomé, Togo, in July symbolized the organization’s desire
to move toward greater unity despite deep divisions. During a summit in Syrte, Libya, the previous year, the
OAU issued a declaration committing itself to the establishment of an African union. The aims of the union
included the promotion of stability, political and economic integration, and solidarity between countries.
Twenty-seven of the thirty-three member states that attended the Lomé summit signed a draft of the African
Union Treaty, and it was expected that two-thirds of OAU member states would have ratified the treaty by
the next year’s summit. This step toward greater unity was however overshadowed by several countries’
boycott of the summit. Angola’s president, José Eduardo dos Santos, asked that the summit’s venue be
moved to Addis Ababa after Togolese President Gnassingbe Eyadema was implicated in diamond and arms
trafficking with UNITA by a U.N. report. As host of the summit, Eyadema stood to inherit the chair of the
OAU for the upcoming year. Ignoring both Angola’s request and a recommendation by Robert Fowler, head
of the Security Council sanctions committee, to avoid holding conferences in sanctions-busting states, the
OAU decided to keep the summit in Togo. Namibia and the DRC expressed solidarity with Angola and also
boycotted the summit. During the summit, OAU members extended support for the efforts of the Angolan
government to restore peace, while condemning UNITA for its violent actions in Angola.

The summit sought to address current crises as well as those from the past. Initiatives were proposed to
investigate the illegal trade of conflict diamonds and the resumption of fighting in Sierra Leone. A
mini-summit was held among West African leaders, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the executive
secretary of ECOWAS to discuss the continuing hostilities in Sierra Leone. The absence of Angola, the
DRC, and Namibia prevented a mini-summit from being held to discuss the conflict in the DRC. The OAU
members also voted to enact a maritime blockade on Anjouan to discourage its secession efforts from the
Comoros. Perhaps grabbing the most international attention was a report released by the OAU’s International
Panel of Eminent Personalities demanding the payment of “significant reparations” by countries that failed
to prevent the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. Belgium, France, and the United States were specifically
mentioned as guilty of inaction, along with the U.N. Security Council. The report also called for attention
to alleged war crimes by the Rwandan Patriotic Front during the genocide.

In many countries in Africa, the OAU’s efforts to restore peace and stability had little or no result. In
1999, OAU Secretary General Salim Ahmed Salim had “morally guaranteed” the Lomé peace agreement for
Sierra Leone, which included a blanket amnesty for all abuses committed prior to its conclusion. Since then,
the agreement had been torn to shreds as fighting had resumed and human rights abuses were rampant. In
June, the OAU named a special envoy to Sierra Leone in hopes of enhancing its efforts to end the conflict.
A delegation in Freetown pressed for a cease-fire but President Kabbah stated he would not comply until the
rebels had returned the areas seized since the signing of the Lomé Accord. Since many of these areas include
diamond mines, the fighting continued with no signs of stopping. In August, OAU chair Gnassingbe
Eyadema called for a change in the U.N. monitoring force’s mandate from one of peace enforcement to
peacekeeping. The African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights sent a delegation led by the
commission’s chair, EVO Dankwa of Ghana, to Freetown in February 2000, after strong lobbying from
NGOs attending the commission’s October 1999 session in Kigali. The delegation, continuing a tradition
of ineffective missions by the OAU organ, met with no victims and almost no local human rights groups, did
not go outside of Freetown, and produced no written report of its findings or recommendations.

After leaving the construction and implementation of the Lusaka Accord for the DRC in the hands of
Zambian President Chiluba, who was representing the Southern African Development Community (SADC), the OAU appointed Sir Ketumile Masire to be the facilitator of an internal dialogue on the future of the DRC. Throughout the year, the accord was repeatedly violated and an internal dialogue never materialized. President Laurent Kabila rejected Masire on the grounds he was biased toward rebel groups. Despite the OAU’s repeated calls for a cease-fire, all parties continued to engage in fighting. After a regional leaders’ summit sponsored by SADC was held in August, Kabila suspended the implementation of the peace accord and called for direct negotiations with Rwanda, Uganda, and Burundi, to be overseen by the U.N. and OAU. At this writing, no movement had been made in that direction.

The situation in the Comoros provided an excellent example of the OAU’s efforts being largely ignored. The OAU had sought to defuse the Anjouan island secession crisis in the Indian Ocean republic for three years. In April 1999, Colonel Azali Assoumani staged a bloodless coup and established a military government. Assoumani refused to hold elections until the secession attempt was ended. The OAU repeatedly criticized the coup and Assoumani’s unwillingness to hold democratic elections. Early in the year, the OAU increased pressure on Anjouan separatists by enacting a travel embargo and freezing the financial assets of the leaders. Assoumani asserted that the OAU had failed to resolve the crisis and Comorans could find a solution themselves. In August, the military government and Anjouan separatists held talks, which resulted in an agreement ending the secession attempt. The OAU criticized the agreement because its formation did not include the input of a majority of the Comoran people, and failed to adhere to the framework established by the 1999 OAU brokered reunification accord. Despite OAU condemnation of the agreement for threatening the unity of the Comoros, the military regime and Anjouan separatists called for the OAU to lift its trade and travel embargo.

The OAU condemned General Robert Guei’s coup in Côte d’Ivoire and called for elected president Henri Konan Bedie to be reinstated. Guei refused to step down, but declared that elections would be held in October. Staying true to its decision that military juntas would not be allowed to participate in the OAU, Guei was banned from this year’s summit. At its summit in July, the OAU created the “Group of Ten” to ensure that the upcoming governmental transition in the Côte d’Ivoire was peaceful. The group consisted of Togo, South Africa, Algeria, Burkina Faso, Djibouti, Gabon, Ghana, Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal. At the end of September, the Group of Ten called upon Guei and the leaders of political parties to form a National Transitional Council to guide the country toward peaceful elections. The OAU also requested that presidential elections be postponed until legislative elections had taken place. There were mixed reactions to the group’s proposal among the political leaders in Côte d’Ivoire. As of this writing, the OAU’s requests remained ignored.

The International Response

Trapped in The Basement Of Global Priorities?

There was little new movement in international policy on African issues. As the international community seemed reconciled to the notion that Africa was locked in a permanent pattern of annihilation and turbulence, big powers seemed unprepared to elevate the plight of millions of Africans trapped by conflict and human rights abuse to a global priority. The year opened on a high note and witnessed a flurry of activity: hectic
agendas and rounds of announcements; high-powered delegations traversing the continent; commissions
galore examining and reexamining urgent issues; declarations and resolutions continued to be churned out;
reports and documents adorned with the habitual exhortations and reaffirmations of lofty visions continued
to be released. But real action that could curb cataclysmic trends if rhetoric was matched by commitment
inched forward at a snail’s pace. When it came to the pivotal issue of funding, major players resorted to
fudging, making no commitments, only “options to consider.” As a result, it became predictable that once
again pledges would be unfulfilled.

The United Nations’ Strategic Ghetto

The year 2000 was inauspicious for the United Nations in Africa, although it aimed much of its official
rhetoric toward the continent and its current activities there. This increase in rhetoric was not matched with
a comparable increase of financial support or other resources. The woes of the U.N. in Africa, especially its
peacekeeping missions, seemed to represent system-wide failures of the U.N. Furthermore, the major powers
were reluctant to intervene in Africa under U.N. supervision and the forces of the countries that took part in
peacekeeping missions were often ill-trained and ill-equipped. While the U.N. and the Security Council no
longer treated Africa with the indifference that it did during the early 1990s, it clearly failed to address
African issues with the material resources they so desperately needed.

The U.N. engaged in a rare bout of self-criticism at the close of 1999. The Report on the Genocide in
Rwanda severely condemned the lackadaisical manner in which the Security Council treated Rwanda, due
to its and Africa’s marginalized status within the international community. The report, released on December
16, 1999, declared that, “the Security Council, led unrelentingly by the United States, simply did not care
enough about Rwanda to intervene appropriately.” The report went on to denounce the Security Council’s
tragic decision to reduce UNAMIR in the face of killings, rather than to try to muster political will to try and
stop them. Ultimately, “[The Security Council’s] refusal to sanction a serious mission made the genocide
more likely.” In response to the report, Secretary-General Kofi Annan called for more effective U.N.
engagement in Africa and better coordination between the Security Council and regional organizations.

As if in response to these views, the United States representative to the U.N., Richard Holbrooke, used
the U.S. stint as president of the Security Council to lead the U.N. to focus its attention on Africa during
January 2000. Undertakings were made that the U.N. would lead from the front in addressing Africa’s
problems and make Africa safe for human rights and dignity. The Security Council held meetings on the
effects of HIV and AIDS in Africa, the growing problems of refugees and internally displaced persons in the
continent, and the conflicts in Angola, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which U.S.
Secretary of State Madeleine Albright called “Africa’s First World War.”

The issue of AIDS in Africa received additional attention during the month, as the United States declared
it a national security threat, the first time a health issue had been linked to national security in the United
States and within the Security Council. Annan declared that the impact of AIDS on Africa was no less
destructive than that of warfare itself, and many speakers called for the conspiracy of silence about AIDS to
end. Dr. Peter Piot, director of UNAIDS, noted that roughly U.S. $1-$3 billion was needed to sustain and
expand these campaigns. What happened after the ringing speeches? Only a tiny fraction of that total sum
had been raised at this writing. Moreover, the international community continued to be less and less
Responsive to Africa’s refugee and IDP emergencies. Food deliveries were curtailed during the year and relief programs for Africa remained drastically underfunded. For example, UNHCR programs throughout West Africa faced a U.S.$27 million funding shortfall in an overall budget of U.S.$77 million. Similarly, in Tanzania, which hosted the largest number of refugees in Africa, refugee food rations were cut in September due to insufficient funding. The international community’s lack of response to African crises continued to contrast sharply with its generous and relatively speedy response to alleviate the suffering of displaced persons in 1999 during the humanitarian crises in Kosovo and East Timor.

The Millennium Summit, held in New York September 6-8, 2000, gave world leaders another opportunity to convey their concern and interests in Africa affairs. Following closely after the release of the Brahimi report, which scrutinized U.N. peace and security operations, the Security Council in resolution 1318 decided unanimously to overhaul U.N. peacekeeping operations to create a more effective and better-financed force “by adopting clearly defined, credible, achievable and appropriate mandates.” The Brahimi report, released on August 17, 2000, criticized the concept of impartiality, which had guided U.N. peacekeeping efforts in the past that had led to the failure to distinguish between the victim and the aggressor. In addition, the report demanded that peacekeeping missions should specify orders to use force to better serve as a credible deterrent, a veiled reference to the U.N. peacekeeping mission debacle in Sierra Leone. The report also noted that “spoilers” of peace accords tended to be those with access to funds to supply weapons, a reference to the illicit trade in diamonds that supported continued fighting in Angola, the DRC, and Sierra Leone. Resolution 1318 pledged to enhance the effectiveness of the U.N. in addressing all stages of the conflict, reaffirmed its determination to give special attention to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa given the specific characteristics of African conflicts, and emphasized the importance of continued cooperation and effective coordination between the U.N., the OAU, and African sub-regional organizations in addressing conflicts in Africa.

As part of this trend, Secretary-General Annan’s Millennium Report urged developed nations to make special provisions for the needs of Africa, to fully support Africans in their struggle to overcome the continent’s problems, and to curb the illegal traffic in small arms by supporting regional disarmament measures. Despite the renewed focus on Africa, many African leaders felt that not enough was being done within the Security Council to address African issues, quickly or effectively. South Africa’s President Thabo Mbeki stated, “Our collective rhetoric conveys promise. Our offense is that our actions convey the message that we do not care.” Indeed very little had been accomplished by the peace and security operations in Africa between January and September. Overall, the U.N. remained as ill-prepared for the next big crisis as it was for the last.

Following two years of fighting between Ethiopia and Eritrea, the United Nations established UNMEE, the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea, when a new outbreak of hostilities erupted. A severe drought in the Horn of Africa had affected roughly ten million people in the region, which the fighting exacerbated, causing a severe humanitarian crisis, and the Security Council called on the OAU to immediately initiate peace talks between the countries. On June 18, 2000, the foreign ministers of both countries signed an Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities under the auspices of the OAU, with representatives from the United Kingdom and the United States present. The following month the Security Council passed Resolution 1312, which called for one hundred military observers to be sent to the region to
verify the cessation of hostilities between the two countries in order to prepare for a larger peacekeeping mission. On September 15, Security Council Resolution 1320 authorized the deployment of up to 4,200 troops until March 1, 2001 to monitor the cease-fire agreement. Although the security conditions improved, as Annan noted in a report on September 18, the humanitarian issues caused by the drought were still a cause for serious concern.

Combat and tension continued to plague the DRC, despite the Lusaka peace agreement signed by the government of the DRC, five neighboring countries, and one of the two main rebel groups in July of 1999. The disengagement plan hammered out by the United Nations and a joint military commission drawn from the governments and the factions involved provided that the belligerents should start simultaneously withdrawing their forces forty kilometers (twenty-five miles) from the frontline within weeks. But there was little evidence to validate the optimistic messages by the U.N. that the cease fire was holding. Although Security Council Resolution 1279 extended the mandate of MONUC in November 1999, authorizing five hundred U.N. military observers to the region, fighting continued between government troops and rebel groups in the eastern region of the country. Some members of the Security Council, specifically the United States and Great Britain, did not want U.N. troops in the region while fighting continued, further delaying the deployment of U.N. troops to the country. Security Council Resolution 1291 expanded MONUC to 5,537 soldiers in February 2000, to monitor the implementation of the cease-fire agreement and to supervise the disengagement and redeployment of troops. The whole concept of MONUC seemed to have been founded more on hope than experience. Many analysts doubted its viability, given the impossibility of protecting civilians in the huge country with such a small force. At this writing, U.N. optimism had waned considerably, though MONUC’s mandate was extended by a further two months in October 2000. There seemed to be a real chance that MONUC would simply wither and die.

U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson visited eastern Congo for three days in early October to meet with the leadership of the Congolese Rally for Democracy (RCD), local human rights activists, and representatives of U.N. agencies working in the country. Upon her return, she pledged to make the humanitarian situation within the DRC a higher priority for the U.N.

The peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone illustrated many of the structural flaws that hindered the effectiveness of the United Nations. Since the inception of UNAMSIL in October of 1999, officials in charge of the mission appeared unable to address the most basic security issues or cooperate among themselves. Besides the U.N.’s inability to protect its own staff, UNAMSIL’s most egregious failure was its inability to protect civilians in the face of increasing human rights violations, a clear failure to fulfill its mandate. In May, the killing of at least ten and the capture of roughly five hundred U.N. peacekeepers forced the U.N. to reassess its role in Sierra Leone and the future of U.N. peacekeeping missions in Africa. Even the successful rescue of the U.N. hostages in July and the SLA capture of the notorious leader of the RUF, Foday Sankoh, in May did little to repair the public image of UNAMSIL. Contributing countries were reluctant to continue supporting a costly and seemingly doomed peacekeeping mission. At the end of September, the Indian government announced its intention to withdraw its troops from UNAMSIL; its 3,059 troops made up one quarter of the 12,477 troops and were the best equipped. The Indian commander, Major General Vijay Jetley, had engaged in a public row with leaders from Nigeria, the largest troop contributor to UNAMSIL, accusing them of undermining the operation and doing business with the RUF in diamond mining operations. He also
upbraided the Jordanian troops for collaborating with dissident former government soldiers known as the West Side Boys, by giving them supplies. Jetley was criticized for his treatment of soldiers from other nations under his command and his lack of communication with other military and political leaders during the hostage crisis in May. Following India’s decision, Jordan reportedly decided that it did not want its troops to remain in Sierra Leone unless a NATO country was persuaded to play a significant role in the U.N. force. Additionally, the U.N. was unwilling to stiffen its mandate from peacekeeping to peacemaking, although it continued to increase the troop size of the mission. On August 4, UNAMSIL’s mandate was expanded and its authorized troop presence was increased in successive resolutions; from the original six thousand in October 1999 to thirteen thousand in May. In September, the secretary general recommended that the troop strength be further increased to 20,500.

The United Nations Security Council agreed on August 14 to set up a war crimes tribunal for Sierra Leone to try crimes against humanity, war crimes, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law, as well as crimes under relevant Sierra Leone law committed within its territory. But the measure stopped short of actually establishing the court or deciding its composition and functions. The sticking point seemed to be how the authority of the court should be shared between Sierra Leone’s judicial system and neutral international experts. The Security Council asked the secretary-general to address these and other questions and produce a detailed blueprint for the court within thirty days. The blueprint—a draft statute for the special court—was published in October. The provisions regarding the court’s jurisdiction, competence, fair trial guarantees, rules of procedure, and evidence all seemed to be satisfactory to assure that the court would receive a broad mandate to prosecute those responsible for the atrocities, that it would be backed by a strong international presence. The report that accompanied the draft statute emphasized the need for adequate funds.

Nevertheless, concerns remained as to whether the court would be free from political manipulation, and would try not only Sankoh and his comrades but also leaders of other fighting factions, including those supporting the government, who had committed heinous crimes against humanity. A structure that failed to establish a broad-based justice would in the long run gravely undermine a strong and impartial rule of law that would be essential to sustainable recovery. In addition, the Statute would limit the temporal jurisdiction of the court to crimes committed since November 1996, yet unspeakable crimes were committed from the inception of the war in 1991.

One of the main causes of fighting in the DRC and Sierra Leone was the illegal diamonds-for-arms trades that rebel groups, as well as external allies, used to sustain continued fighting. Diamonds played a pivotal role in funding the fighting between the government and the RUF rebels in Sierra Leone. In recognition of this link, the Security Council passed Resolution 1306, which banned imports of rough diamonds from Sierra Leone for the next eighteen months, except those diamonds that were certified by the government. It also called for a five-person panel to examine sanctions violations and the link between trade in diamonds and small arms in Africa, with observations and recommendations to be presented by October 31, 2000.

In Resolution 1237, the Security Council decided to establish an independent inquiry into the breaking of sanctions against Angola’s UNITA, which prohibited the sale or delivery of arms, military equipment, and petroleum products, and most importantly, the purchase of diamonds mined in areas controlled by UNITA. On March 10, the Report of the Panel of Experts on Violations of Security Council Sanctions Against UNITA
was released; it was a ground breaking report in that it openly named sanction-breakers and established its own sources for information and investigation. The report cited two African presidents, Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo and Blaise Compaore of Burkina Faso, who openly broke the sanctions to aid UNITA, while it said President Omar Bongo of Gabon supplied UNITA with large amounts of fuel.

The report explicitly linked UNITA with the diamond-for-arms trade, stating that, “Diamonds had a uniquely important role within UNITA’s political and military economy. UNITA’s ongoing ability to sell rough diamonds for cash and to exchange rough diamonds for weapons provide the means for it to sustain its political and military activities.” The Security Council approved the report and called for tougher measurers to restrict UNITA access to diamonds, fuel and arms. By July, the Security Council declared that UNITA’s conventional war capacity had been destroyed and no longer posed an immediate threat to the Angolan government, citing UNITA’s increasing difficulty in selling diamonds on the international market as a dominant factor in addition to rebel territorial losses on the battlefield. The writing of the report signaled the Security Council’s growing interest in the illegal trading activities of UNITA and its supporters and became a deterrent to those that would break the U.N. sanctions against UNITA.

The report made thirty-nine recommendations, including that the Security Council should apply sanctions to those governments, officials, and enterprises that break sanctions against UNITA, and that the diamond certificate of origin system should be reformed. Despite its strong stance against sanction-busters and innovative and reasonable recommendations, the Experts Panel suffered from the lack of a centralized office to coordinate its work, not involving Interpol in its efforts, and by the failure of member states to share intelligence with the panel.

Badgered by the controversy regarding “conflict diamonds,” De Beers Consolidated Mines, the dominant force in the international diamond industry, in July announced a radical shift from its seventy-year marketing strategy of manipulating prices by stockpiling to a new one of selling diamonds as branded luxuries. Essentially, the new strategy seemed to be a defensive response to protect De Beers’ product from being tainted by conflict. Also in July, the International Diamond Manufacturers’ Association and the World Federation of Diamond Bourses, meeting at the World Diamond Congress in Antwerp, adopted a global certification scheme for rough diamonds in order to identify conflict diamonds. The congress also agreed that all rough diamonds would have to be shipped in sealed packages certified by the authorities in the exporting nations and verified by a new international diamond council, and that countries knowingly involved in illegal diamond trading should lose their export accreditation. Both De Beers and the congress pledged that they would cooperate with the United Nations to help curb illegal trade in diamonds. These were important announcements, but the fundamental issue remained verification. In the absence of an independent monitoring regime-nagging questions would persist.

European Union, Norway, and the Donor Community

As in previous years, the European Union (E.U.) and the international donor community in general remained almost exclusively concerned with corruption and economic reform issues at the expense of civil and political rights concerns—and in seeming indifference too to economic, social, and cultural rights. It was still evident that policies were driven by the “full belly” thesis that civil and political rights were luxuries that could be put aside until the economy reached a certain degree of success. As a result of the
compartmentalization approach, little progress was made in tackling the core issues—authoritarianism, arbitrariness and brutalization of politics—at the heart of Africa’s political and human rights crises. International donor policy also continued to be undermined by the recurrent problem of inconsistency and double standards in the application of aid and human rights policies. For example, during 2000, donors demonstrated far less enthusiasm and determination in championing human rights issues in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Guinea, Eritrea, Kenya, Rwanda, Swaziland, Uganda, or Zambia than in their approach regarding the issue of good governance and human rights in Zimbabwe, the Democratic Republic of Congo, or Liberia. This tended to reinforce the perception that human rights was a tool used by donors against their “enemies” and ignored in respect of their “friends.”

The largest aid and trade agreement between developed and developing countries, the fourth Lomé Convention, expired in February 2000. A new, more ambitious twenty-year partnership agreement was signed in June in Cotonou, Benin, between the E.U. and seventy-seven countries from Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific (the ACP bloc). The Cotonou Convention, replacing Lomé, included a clause stipulating that individual countries that were seriously corrupt would face sanctions, including the withholding of aid. A new procedure was also foreseen for consultation and the adoption of measures where human rights, democratic principles, and the rule of law were violated, placing the primary responsibility with the state concerned to take measures to rectify the situation. A separate Trade, Development, and Cooperation Agreement between the E.U. and South Africa (which, as a middle-income country, did not qualify for full Lomé/Cotonou terms) was also agreed upon in February 2000, cutting tariffs and liberalizing trade, after years of negotiations.

The Portuguese presidency of the E.U. during the first six months of the year promised particular attention to deepening cooperation with the African continent. But apart from the African-European Summit in Cairo on April 3-4, 2000, little was delivered. The summit itself was fairly neutral on human rights concerns save for a formal declaration that the parties “recognize the need to provide for greater inclusion of civil society in all areas of our partnership. In this context, we emphasize the need for greater participation of the citizen in decision-making concerning the management and the allocation of resources, whilst respecting the diverse and complementary roles of the State, decentralized local authorities and the other society actors concerned.”

Otherwise the priority issue for the African participants was debt relief, and they seemed to have given short shrift to human rights and related governance issues.

France took the E.U. presidency during the second half of 2000, promising a follow-up to the Cairo Conference and proposing that priority be given to developing dialogue with the sub-regional organizations. But the French E.U. presidency remained relatively muted on virtually all the major flashpoints in Africa, with the exception of Ivory Coast. France’s reaction to the coup in that country was read as evidence that France would no longer unconditionally support loyal but corrupt incumbents in its former colonies. France did not intervene to save Ivory Coast’s president, Henri Konan Bedie, whose party reportedly cheated in the 1995 presidential elections and had arbitrarily changed the constitution to thwart his main rival. Analysts observed that if France did not intervene in the Ivory Coast, their most important economic partner in Africa, it was unlikely that they would do so to support the likes of Omar Bongo of Gabon or President Gnassingbe Eyadema of Togo. France also lashed out at General Guei’s government of the Ivory Coast, following the barring of Ouattara from the presidential polls.
Britain’s involvement in Africa was most dramatically marked by its armed intervention in Sierra Leone, following the collapse of the Lomé peace process in May 2000. British paratroopers were deployed after hundreds of U.N. peacekeepers were taken hostage by the RUF. The troops evacuated British nationals and established a sense of stability in the country. Britain provided U.N. forces with intelligence and logistical support, along with training and equipment. In September, eleven British troops were taken hostage and a rescue team was deployed to free them. Hundreds of British forces remained stationed in Sierra Leone throughout the year, but under a bilateral agreement with the Sierra Leonean government, not under U.N. command. Their primary responsibility was to train a reconstituted Sierra Leonean army.

Following its high level of engagement in Sierra Leone, Britain took a leading role in the international community’s response to the use of conflict diamonds in fuelling wars in Africa. In June, the British government introduced a draft U.N. Security Council resolution banning the trade of diamonds from Sierra Leone which were not certified by the government. In June Peter Hain, minister of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, hosted a meeting of officials from diamond importing and marketing countries.

Next to the war in Sierra Leone, Britain was most outspoken with regard to the violence associated with Zimbabwe’s presidential election and land redistribution there. Throughout the year, Britain criticized President Robert Mugabe’s government for failing to uphold rule of law in the country. In May, Britain placed a national arms embargo on Zimbabwe because of the possibility that imported weapons would be used in the conflict in the DRC. Zimbabwe demanded that Britain fund its land reform in accordance with the 1979 Lancaster House independence agreement. However, the British government stated it would only finance a land redistribution policy that adhered to the transparent principles agreed upon during an international land conference in 1998.

The Netherlands, Sweden, and Norway maintained their tradition of engagement with Africa. All three countries froze or suspended government-to-government aid to Zimbabwe on the basis of good governance concerns, and to Ethiopia and Eritrea, as a result of the ongoing hostilities between the duo. Assistance to NGOs continued, often focusing on human rights and democratization programs. Denmark, however, continued its development assistance to Zimbabwe and Eritrea on the grounds that there was a greater chance of promoting democracy and human rights through development partnership and dialogue. All four countries also maintained their high profile on human rights and governance issues in dialoguing with African governments. However, Uganda, Zambia, and Ethiopia seemed to get gentler treatment than Zimbabwe or Eritrea. Moreover, economic interests could trump human rights concerns. Once Norwegian oil firms obtained lucrative footholds in Angola’s ultradepth offshore fields, Norwegian comment on Luanda’s human rights abuses became muted. The Netherlands government agreed to send some seven hundred peacekeepers to the Horn of Africa to take part in the United Nations mission to monitor the cease-fire agreement that ended the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea.

Making bold pledges about debt relief turned out to be easier than acting upon them. Despite the high sounding declarations at the 1999 June Cologne Group of Seven (G-7) summit to enhance coordinated efforts to “support deeper, broader and fast debt relief,” by mid-2000 only nine African countries had experienced any reduction in their debt payments—way off the G-7 target of writing off U.S.$100 billion of debt by the end of 2000. To help breathe new life into international debt relief efforts, Britain in July announced a special plan to provide extra money to help countries that stopped fighting and instead used their resources
to combat poverty. Ahead of the G-7 summit, the E.U. and the ACP group agreed a deal to allow the release of U.S.$1.04 billion for global debt relief for the world’s poorest countries. In its communiqué at the Okinawa summit, the G-7 conceded that the dilemmas of debt, health, and education were inextricably linked, and the heart of the economic difficulties facing the poorest countries. The Okinawa communiqué also for the first time addressed the need to combat diseases. It set three global targets to be achieved by 2010: to reduce the number of HIV infected young people by 25 percent; to reduce tuberculosis deaths, and prevalence of the disease, by 50 percent; and to reduce malaria by 50 percent.

China

In October 2000, nearly eighty ministers of foreign and economic affairs from forty-four African countries assembled in Beijing for the first China-Africa cooperation forum. China, making a fresh bid to emerge as a leader of the developing world, and building on a six-nation African tour undertaken by President Jiang Zemin in 1996, promised debt relief and business deals to those attending. In a passage clearly aimed at human rights interventions of the sort undertaken by NATO in Kosovo, the communiqué declared that “no country or group of countries has the right to impose its will on others, to interfere, under whatever pretext, in other countries’ internal affairs, or to impose unilateral coercive economic measures on others.” While affirming the universality of human rights, the communiqué went on to state that “Each country has the right to choose, in its course of development, its own social system, development model and way of life in light of its national conditions. Countries, that vary from one another in social systems, stages of development, historical and cultural background and values, have the right to choose their own approaches and models in promoting and protecting human rights in their own countries. Moreover, the politicisation of human rights and the imposition of human rights conditionalities on economic assistance should be vigorously opposed to as they constitute a violation of human rights.”

U.S. Policy Towards Africa

The United States dedicated its month as president of the Security Council, January 2000, to African crises. During this “Month of Africa,” various issues were discussed, from the refugee situation to the crises in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This emphasis on Africa was reinforced by President Clinton’s trip to Nigeria and Tanzania at the end of August—an unprecedented second visit to the continent. But these interventions only obscured a lack of commitment to promoting human rights and accountability when dealing with crises in Africa. The Clinton administration did make strides in bringing African issues into more mainstream U.S. policy, as exhibited by the record number of U.S. government agencies engaged in Africa, although African issues rarely galvanized high-level attention. In crisis after crisis, the administration continually failed to integrate human rights into its policies on economic development and regional security. Although a rhetoric of human rights concerns remained on the U.S. agenda, trade and economic concerns as well as international terrorism continued to take precedence over human rights. While administration officials rarely mentioned their prior emphasis on Africa’s “new leaders” or their support for the Lomé Accord ending the Sierra Leone peace process despite its blanket amnesty, the effects of these short-sighted policies were seen in the diminished credibility of U.S. Africa policy.

During his 1999 trip to Africa, Clinton avoided Nigeria as a sign of disapproval of its military
dictatorship. Yet as he praised Nigeria’s transition to a democracy in August 2000, Clinton’s rhetoric focused more heavily on economic growth than human rights. Rewarding Nigeria for its democratic accomplishments, the U.S. promised to quadruple aid to the country. The U.S. also promised funding to build partnerships between the U.S. government, Nigerian government, oil companies, and the residents of the oil-producing areas in the hopes of resolving the ongoing conflict affecting oil production. Central to his visit, however, was Clinton’s appeal to the Nigerian government to increase oil production in order to drive down world oil prices, then at an all-time high. After leaving Nigeria, Clinton visited Tanzania to witness the signing of the Burundi Peace Agreement. Prior to his visit, Clinton had sent a special envoy to Burundi to support the mediation effort. However, the U.S. did not push for prompt, effective justice to punish serious crimes committed during the war as part of the peace process.

After the United Kingdom, the U.S. made the greatest efforts to engage with the crises in Sierra Leone. The U.S. condemned the taking of U.N. hostages by the RUF rebels and asked that they be released, but did not commit to any actions against the RUF. The U.S. also discussed with the U.N. the prospect of expanding the rapid reaction force to Sierra Leone, but remained reluctant to put its troops at risk, and would not commit personnel for peacekeeping operations. Instead, the U.S. undertook the task of training and equipping additional battalions of Nigerian peacekeepers. In the Security Council, the U.S. was a leading force behind efforts to establish a special tribunal for Sierra Leone. It also pledged support for a Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as well as creating a reintegration program to train and educate rebel soldiers.

The U.S. also took the initiative with efforts to eradicate the use of illicit diamonds to fuel civil wars in Africa, declaring support for tighter measures to control the diamond sectors in all affected countries and in the international diamond trade, but warned that those efforts should not damage the markets of stable, democratic, diamond-producing states. The U.S. provided technical and financial support in the establishment of the Sierra Leone Commission on the Management of Strategic Resources, which was supposedly responsible for the management of the country’s diamond sector. In July, representatives from the United States, United Kingdom, Belgium and the Diamond High Council met with officials in Sierra Leone to establish a diamond certification scheme in hopes of limiting the amount of RUF-controlled diamonds that made their way into the market. At this writing, Congress was hearing testimony on a bill that would block the import of conflict diamonds into the United States. With regard to illicit diamonds in Angola, the U.S. supported a U.N. resolution strengthening the implementation of sanctions against UNITA in an effort to further limit the export of diamonds and import of military supplies. There was disapproval expressed during the year over the unsafe environment for the press in Angola. However, such efforts were greatly outweighed by much more forthright lobbying of U.S. economic interests, and official criticism of other Angolan government rights abuses was muted by its embassy in Luanda. In addition, the Clinton administration encouraged the government to find a peaceful solution to the country’s civil war. Reacting to the continuing humanitarian disaster, the U.S. committed U.S.$38 million to support humanitarian relief efforts and an additional U.S.$2 million for UNHCR assistance programs in northern Angola.

The U.S. expressed repeated concern over the Sudanese government’s bombings of civilian targets, especially in areas where relief efforts were being conducted. The United States’ engagement increased with the appointment of a special U.S. envoy who traveled to Khartoum to discuss reducing human rights abuses, improving humanitarian response, and renewing regional peace efforts. The United States continued to assert
that the IGAD peace initiative offered the best hope of ending the war.

In March, the U.S. sent a special envoy on a two-week mission to support the mediation efforts of the OAU in the Ethiopia-Eritrea conflict. However, brokering the peace agreement largely fell on the shoulders of the OAU, despite its recent history of close relations with both Ethiopia and Eritrea. The U.S. supported a U.N. resolution to establish a mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea consisting of one hundred military observers until January 31, 2001. The U.S. condemned the coup in Ivory Coast and the exclusion there of many of the candidates in the presidential elections slated for October. All bilateral assistance and arms transfers were suspended until democracy was restored.

The U.S. position regarding HIV/AIDS in Africa advanced appreciably this year. The U.S. signed a U.S. $10 million agreement with the Southern African Community to fund a variety of programs, one of them an assessment of the impact of HIV/AIDS on sexual development. The Clinton Administration promised to request U.S.$332 million over the next two years to combat HIV/AIDS in Africa and globally. The U.S. also announced an HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention program in Angola that would cost U.S. $3 million over three years. The U.S. introduced a resolution in the U.N. that would allow for voluntary testing and AIDS education for U.N. peacekeepers. However, in July, the U.S. announced that U.S. $1 billion in annual loans to finance the purchase of anti-AIDS drugs would be available to countries in sub-Saharan Africa. Many African nations responded coolly to the proposal, expressing concern that the loans would just add to their debt burden.

The U.S. promoted a plan to the G-7, which was designed to provide up to U.S.$90 billion in additional debt relief to developing countries. The primary beneficiaries would be African countries. In addition, the U.S. pledged U.S.$500 million in debt relief and an additional U.S.$120 million toward the promotion of democracy. But for all the soaring speeches and high-blown sentiment, performance fell far short of the expectations generated. The House of Representatives approved funding for debt relief to meet the Clinton administration’s request of U.S.$225 million, but the measure flopped as the U.S. Senate bill earmarked a paltry U.S.$75 million for debt.

Despite high expectations that the year 2000 would bring greater international attention and resources to Africa, the major international powers remained at the sidelines during the worst episodes of human rights abuses and violations. Starting in January, the United Nations and the United States pledged greater levels of interest and support in African affairs, and vowed to do more to help their African counterparts. Africa had never garnered this much attention from the international community and its prospects for growth and development seemed brighter. However, as little was done during the year to fulfill these bold pledges, it very quickly became evident that business would remain as usual for Africa in the international arena. Furthermore, E.U. and U.S. policies lacked the desired balance between economic rights on the one hand and political and civil rights on the other, while the United Nations was unable to ameliorate any of the devastating conflicts that continued to plague the continent. The slow pace of debt relief promised by the United States and the E.U. did little to alleviate the health and education issues that burdened many African countries, nor did it appear that the pace of debt relief would increase in the near future. Moreover, the international community failed not only on its pledges for African development and debt relief, but accomplished very little in stemming the spread of AIDS despite the havoc that the pandemic was wreaking across Africa. Ultimately, numerous statements to the contrary notwithstanding, it remained clear that Africa
was a low priority for the United States, the E.U. and to some extent, the United Nations. Africa remained trapped in the basement of global priorities.

The Work of Human Rights Watch

Human Rights Watch continued to focus on identifying the root causes of deplorable human rights violations in Africa. Human Rights Watch also dedicated significant resources toward improving relationships with local human rights groups and exploring ways of working together.

Human Rights Watch stepped up a three-track approach to expanding cooperation with local African nongovernmental organizations, striving to develop relationships with them based on interdependence, long-term commitment, and solidarity. A key strategic goal was to increase local NGOs’ influence throughout the human rights movement in Africa by facilitating their access to Human Rights Watch’s wide range of expertise.

First, in the context of massive human rights violations in the Great Lakes area, Human Rights Watch implemented a Great Lakes NGO field initiative to strengthen the research, networking, and advocacy capacity of NGOs. Second, Human Rights Watch promoted an African Fellows program that trained experienced human rights activists. The program developed the skills of those activists by exposing them to international partners, advanced research methodologies, and the international advocacy arena. Last, Human Rights Watch remained committed to protesting abuses against human rights activists in Africa.

Human Rights Watch continued to cover all of sub-Saharan Africa and expanded monitoring of French-speaking countries, but focused intensively on a nucleus of countries: Angola, Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Nigeria, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia. Additionally, the Africa division undertook cross-country, thematic research on arms flows, resources and corporate responsibility, national human rights commissions, the rights of children and women, refugees and the internally displaced, and prisons. Human Rights Watch maintained field offices in Kigali and Freetown—in Rwanda and Sierra Leone respectively—and created a new field office in Bujumbura, Burundi.

The Africa division fielded investigative missions to Angola, DRC, Guinea, Kenya, Liberia, Mozambique, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia, and also collaborated with the Arms, Children’s Rights and Women’s Rights divisions in their work on Angola, DRC, Kenya, Liberia, Rwanda, and Tanzania.

Concerned that noncombatants, refugees, and internally displaced persons were under severe attack, the Africa division published numerous reports and briefing documents on Angola, Burundi, DRC, Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone to raise international awareness.

Moreover, given the sporadic nature of high-level international attention devoted to Africa, it was especially important to ensure that Human Rights Watch policy recommendations focus on political rights issues as well as security and economics. Human Rights Watch remained active in advocating for aid conditionality at the World Bank Consultative Group (CG) meetings for Zambia. In July, Human Rights Watch launched a report at the CG meeting in Lusaka to encourage donors to continue to make balance of payments support conditional upon improvements in human rights practices. Human Rights Watch’s information formed the basis of policy recommendations to guide donors’ aid programs to these countries,
and made clear recommendations to the governments in question.

The Africa division devoted significant resources toward advocacy during the year, especially targeting the United States and British governments, the U.N., and the E.U.. The Africa division’s advocacy efforts focused on Angola, Nigeria and the crises in the Great Lakes, particularly Burundi and DRC, where it played a major role in providing information and analysis about a range of human rights abuses.

Human Rights Watch was called to testify before U.S. congressional committees on four occasions, dealing with the situation in Sudan and the ongoing crisis in the Great Lakes. Human Rights Watch held numerous briefings for congressional staff about its research and implications of U.S. policy. These analyses were also presented to administration officials on numerous occasions in official roundtables and in a series of meetings held with officials of the Department of State, the National Security Council, and the Pentagon.

In regular meetings, briefings, and submissions at the U.N., Human Rights Watch advocated for human rights. The organization continuously expressed concerns to the Security Council and the secretary-general about events in Sierra Leone. Human Rights Watch underlined the need for the U.N. to establish a criminal process to bring gross abusers of human rights to justice, to strengthen the U.N. mandate and capacity to protect civilians in Sierra Leone, and to address violations of the U.N. arms embargo by Sierra Leonean rebels. Human Rights Watch remained active in pressing the E.U., the OAU and the Commonwealth to focus on human rights issues, especially those with a bearing on Angola, DRC, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan.

Human Rights Watch focus on the need for accountability for human rights abuses stressed the need for justice at the national and international level in order to stop the cycles of violence in Africa. The Africa division worked with intergovernmental organizations, governments, and local human rights activists to compel abusers to adhere to internationally recognized human rights standards.