



# NICARAGUA NETWORK NICARAGUA MONITOR

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## UN General Assembly

# D'Escoto's Active Year as President

By Katherine Hoyt

In June of 2008, former Nicaraguan Foreign Minister Miguel D'Escoto received the unanimous endorsement of the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States (GRULAC) as its candidate for the presidency of the sixty-third session of the UN General Assembly. He was then approved by the whole General Assembly as president for the one year duration of the session. In spite of his 75 years, D'Escoto took off running and has not stopped since.

In his speech opening the General Assembly session on Sept. 16, he called for the democratization of the United Nations. The next month, he named a task force headed by economist Joseph Stiglitz to suggest ways to establish a global economic order that served all peoples and nations. He caused controversy in December when he condemned Israel's violence in the Gaza Strip and called on the United Nations to take strong action there. In March 2009 he received the final report of the Stiglitz Commission and in April chaired a conference on the "new politics of food" based on the right to sustenance.

Miguel D'Escoto was born to a Nicaraguan family in Los Angeles, CA, but spent his childhood in Nicaragua. As a teenager, he returned to the U.S. to study. He was ordained a Catholic priest of the Maryknoll Order in 1961 and received a Masters Degree from Columbia University in 1962. He served poor neighborhoods in

Chile in the 1960s. In 1970, he returned to the U.S. where he founded Orbis Books, the publishing arm of Maryknoll Fathers and Brothers.

In 1977, D'Escoto helped organize the Group of 12, formed by well-known

1990. As Foreign Minister, he worked to bring Nicaragua's successful case against the United States for aggression against Nicaragua to the World Court and played a key role in the Contadora and Esquipulas Central American peace processes in the

1980s. At the time of his election to the presidency of the UN General Assembly, D'Escoto was senior advisor on foreign affairs to Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega.

In one of his first major actions as president of the General Assembly, D'Escoto on Oct. 30, 2008, inaugurated a high level task force to review the global financial system. He named as chair Joseph Stiglitz, winner of the Nobel Prize for Economics in 2001 and a former chief economist of the World Bank. Stiglitz is well known to social justice activists because he denounced the neo-liberal measures pushed on poor countries around the world by the international financial institutions and the U.S. government saying they were based on ideology and did not work. Other members of the task force came from Russia, France, Egypt, the United Kingdom, Tanzania, Colombia, Ecuador, Barbados,

India, Brazil, Japan, Nigeria, Germany, China, Malaysia, Belgium, Algeria and Cuba. The official name of the task force became "Commission of Experts of the President of the United Nations General Assembly on Reforms of the International Monetary and Financial System."

**See D'Escoto, Pg. 2**

## Benjamin Linder, Presente!



**"Indeed, in the whole Contra War which killed 40,000 Nicaraguans out of a population of 3.5 million, only one US citizen was killed. He was Benjamin Linder, a 27-year old juggler, clown, unicyclist and engineer who was constructing a micro hydroelectric project to bring electricity to an isolated rural community in Northern Nicaragua. My co-worker, Kathy Hoyt, was married at the time to the Nicaraguan doctor who signed Ben's death certificate. Dr. Gonzalez said that Ben was wounded and then shot in the head from very close range. Ben was murdered on April 28, 1987, so stop and give him a moment of thought on that day, the 22nd anniversary of his assassination." -- excerpt from a talk given April 15, 2009, at Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA by Nicaragua Network National Co-Coordinator Chuck Kaufman**

Nicaraguans who spoke out against the Somoza dictatorship and in support of democratic change that included the Sandinista National Liberation Front (FSLN). After the Sandinista victory in July of 1979, D'Escoto was appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, a post he held until the Sandinista electoral defeat in

## D'Escoto from Pg. 1

Soren Ambrose of Action Aid International noted that, "Fr. D'Escoto has taken an unusually bold and assertive stance as President of the General Assembly by setting up this panel. Of course he took office at a critical time in world economic history; what's impressive is that he responded so forcefully. The panel he created with Joseph Stiglitz has succeeded gathering a good cross-section of the most innovative ideas about the financial crisis and how to re-structure the global economy, and is doing a good job -- despite the handicap of having little support from big powers or even the Secretary-General -- of making sure these ideas cannot be ignored. He has also done an unusually good job of involving civil society, and not ignoring their input once they've made it."

Among the groups that would be well known to Monitor readers making contributions to the document were: Jubilee South, Jubilee USA Network, Consumers' Union, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Oxfam International, RESULTS, the World Council of Churches, and World Wildlife Fund-UK among many others.

The group's recommendations were released on March 19. The report said that developed countries must take action to stimulate their economies in ways that would address the effects of the economic downturn on the poor and that developing countries needed additional, more permanent and stable funding that was not subject to inappropriate conditionalities, such as those imposed by the IMF. The report criticized trade agreements which "contain commitments that circumscribe the ability of countries to respond to the

current crisis with appropriate regulatory and macro-economic reforms."

The report further recommended free access for products from the less developed countries into markets of the developed countries, an end to export subsidies by the rich countries, as well as an immediate end to cotton subsidies. It called for real and substantive regulatory reforms that "go beyond the financial sector to address underlying problems in corporate governance and competition policy." The Commission emphasized the need for major reforms in the governance of the international financial institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, giving greater voice to developing countries.

To resolve the current crisis, "there must be some global regulatory framework to establish minimum national standards and also govern the global operation of systemically relevant global financial institutions." The report notes that a number of countries may face difficulties in meeting their external debt commitments as the crisis worsens and debt rescheduling becomes more difficult and calls for the development of an equitable sovereign debt restructuring mechanism, which would allow countries to declare bankruptcy as companies can.

The report calls for a new trade "round" that "truly promotes growth in the developing countries" and preserves the "long recognized principle of special and differential treatment of developing countries." Finally, it expresses the need for more investment in development and "to address the long run challenges of responding to climate change" including funds from a carbon tax that would be used to support the developing countries costs of reducing greenhouse gas

emissions.

Ambrose says, "The task now is to make sure that these ideas, now that they're in the public debate, cannot be ignored. Civil society groups will have a role to play in that work, as will formations like the G-77-plus-China. The June 1-3 summit [on the global financial crisis] will either be the end of the process or the beginning of mounting a real challenge to the entrenched neo-liberal, market-fundamentalist assumptions of the global economy." On April 7, the General Assembly approved a resolution inviting the leaders of the 192 UN member states to the June summit at which, according to D'Escoto, they, not just those of the Group of 20, "will have an opportunity to participate equally and fully in the common search for solutions that meet the concerns and needs of all countries, large and small."

D'Escoto's statements insisting on the role of the United Nations in promoting compliance with humanitarian law and respect for all peoples, including Palestinians, has made him the target of verbal attack by the right wing. In early November 2008, several weeks after Israel began a blockade of humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, D'Escoto spoke out strongly at an event commemorating the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People. He said "What is being done to the Palestinian people seems to me to be a version of the hideous policy of apartheid."

He added, "The State of Israel, founded ... in 1948, celebrates 60 years of its existence; shamefully, there is still no Palestinian State to celebrate." "I believe," D'Escoto said, "that the failure to create a Palestinian state as promised is the single greatest failure in the history of the United Nations." In response Jewish Council on Public Affairs Chair Andrea Weinstein called D'Escoto's comparison of Israeli policy to apartheid "abhorrent."

Then, on Dec. 12, 2008, Israeli authorities prevented Richard Falk, the UN Special Rapporteur on Israeli Conduct in the West Bank and Gaza Strip (who is a professor emeritus of International Law at Princeton and a Jew), from entering Israel because of his "vehement statements." D'Escoto spoke up again, this time calling Israel's action "arbitrary" and calling for an international boycott of Israel. He also

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said that he had been the target of death threats on the internet which his staff was investigating.

Israeli Ambassador to the UN Gabriela Shalev, upon hearing D'Escoto's statement after the Falk expulsion, called off a scheduled meeting with him. The ambassador's spokesman said, "The role of the president of the General Assembly should be to unite the international community and promote shared interests and values. However, since his first days as president of the General Assembly, Mr. D'Escoto has been divisive and controversial, abusing his position." The reference to "his first days as president" probably was about D'Escoto's embrace of Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad after the latter addressed the General Assembly in September. Conservative US Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL) said in a statement referring to D'Escoto that the UN "has been hijacked by forces that undermine human rights and attack free countries, including the United States and Israel."

On Dec. 27, D'Escoto released a statement that which said that the Israeli bombing of Gaza represented "severe and massive violations of international humanitarian law as defined by the Geneva Conventions, both in regard to the obligations of an occupying power and in the requirements of the laws of war." He said that those violations included collective punishment, targeting of civilians and disproportionate military response, adding that, "Time has come to take firm action if the United Nations does not want to be rightly accused of complicity by omission."

Conditions only worsened when two United Nations schools and the refugee headquarters of the UN were hit by Israeli bombs with substantial loss of life. At a Jan. 15 emergency UN meeting D'Escoto questioned the continued participation of the United Nations in the so-called "Quartet," an international coalition seeking a peaceful resolution of the Palestinian question. He said that the United States, the European Union and Russia, the other members of the Quartet, could choose to ignore the opinion of the International Court of Justice that Israeli actions violated fundamental human rights norms, but the United Nations could not and should not.

He said, "We, the United Nations, must call for an immediate and unconditional



**UN General Assembly President Fr. Miguel D'Escoto was Foreign Minister during the Sandinista revolutionary government of the 1980s. His efforts to restore a balance of power between the UN General Assembly and the Security Council has made his tenure controversial.**

ceasefire and immediate unimpeded humanitarian access. We, the United Nations, must stand with the people around the world who are calling, and acting, to bring an end to this death and destruction. We must stand with the brave Israelis who came out to protest this war, and we must stand with those in the frightened [Israeli] city of Sderot who called for "Another Voice" to answer the fear of rocket-fire with reconciliation and not war."

When he took office, D'Escoto had said that one of his principal goals was the democratization of the United Nations. On Feb. 19, the General Assembly began a closed door meeting to launch negotiations to reform the UN Security Council to better reflect the present situation in the world. The Council has 15 members, including 10 non-permanent members elected for two-year terms and which represent regions of the world, and five permanent members with veto power which are the United States, Russia, China, Britain and France. In a letter D'Escoto told the 192 ambassadors to the UN that the first round of talks would include the controversial issue of the different categories of Security Council membership and the equally prickly issue of the veto and regional representation.

Among the proposals presented at the

last conference on the subject was that of the African Union which argued that Africa with 53 countries was the only continent without a permanent seat on the council. The AU wanted to add 11 new seats, six permanent seats including two for Africa with veto power, and five non-permanent seats. The Group of Four—Germany, Japan, Brazil and India—wanted permanent seats without veto rights on a 25 member council. And a group of countries which included Italy and Pakistan wanted a 25 member council with 10 new non-permanent seats.

The Obama administration has indicated that it is open to Security Council reform and to a permanent African seat on the Council but has not taken a decision on the subject. In an apparent break from the past, the State Department recently said that the US was not linking Security Council reform to other aspects of UN reform, which previous administrations have tried to do. One has only to remember the efforts of ultra-conservative John Bolton appointed by President George W. Bush in 2005.

Although previous negotiations on restructuring and democratizing the UN have come to naught, those efforts didn't count on the energy and commitment of Nicaragua's Miguel D'Escoto!

# Ten Thousand March on Pentagon!

By Sean Hannley

[Sean Hannley, a student at Claremont McKenna College in California, is an intern at the Alliance for Global Justice.]

March 21<sup>st</sup> 2009 is a day I will remember for a very long time – my first national protest march in Washington, DC. I had been volunteering for several weeks to help set up the “March on the Pentagon,” a protest march aimed at ending the US occupations of Iraq and Afghanistan, ending support for Israel’s war against the Palestinian people and stopping war profiteers from cashing in on and encouraging both wars as well as other conflicts around the globe. I had seen images of protests and news reports about them, but nothing compared to the experience of being there, of marching with a crowd of 10,000 people for a single purpose, to stop our government from using our money to kill and maim people and destroy property and states.

The protest began with a rally near the Lincoln Memorial. The location could not have been better chosen. “Free Palestine!” and “Stop the War!” reverberated off of the Vietnam and Lincoln Memorials. The crowd was quite diverse and the speakers talked about a broad range of issues, from US intervention in Latin America, to the ongoing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, to the need for worker solidarity and beyond.

It was empowering to hear all of these diverse issues talked about in solidarity with one another. What surprised me was how many groups and issues all revolve around US military intervention and arms sales. It made me wonder why such simple issues such as not invading sovereign countries and flooding the world with technologically sophisticated weapons were so difficult to resolve. When we passed the Pentagon and marched on into Crystal City to drop off coffins at the war profiteers, this was made clear. I saw the wealth that our wars had generated for those involved in producing, marketing and selling products whose only purpose is to kill human beings and destroy their property. When such an industry exists in a country like the United States, war becomes inevitable.

Our system is set up so that the entities



Photo by Bill Hackwell

which command the largest share of the resources and wealth can make or otherwise affect government policy, and judging by the buildings these firms work in, they are quite well positioned to create a government policy where those sorts of products are in demand. They have an enormous stake in a system where the United States and other governments believe they need to kill human beings and destroy their property.

One of the important aspects of the protest was to deliver hundreds of coffins bearing the flags of the United States, Iraq, Afghanistan and Palestine to those corporations whose lobbying and very existence are responsible for deaths of citizens of those countries. The coffin I helped deliver bore the flag of Palestine, which has seen tens of thousands of men, women and children die by means of US weapons in Israeli hands. It drove home the point that war is not an American invention; it has been around for thousands of years before this country achieved independence. However, the United States, both its government and corporations, have served to make war deadlier, dirtier, and to separate murderers from those they kill by as long a range as possible.

The feeling of oneness with the crowd was overwhelming, to be surrounded by so many people, united in purpose, chanting, “Occupation is a crime! From Iraq to Palestine!” and “We want money

for schools, NOT FOR WAR!” While I’m sure that the protest won’t end the war tomorrow, I am convinced of the need for organized resistance to the continuing wars in Afghanistan and Iraq as a way to bring together people and organizations who, while having many different goals, all see the need for an end to the aggressive and expansionist US foreign and military policies and the continued development of ever deadlier weapons systems.

At the end of the march I came face to face with literally hundreds of riot police, holding shields and batons and the occasional semi-automatic rifle. I knew that many of them would have loved to unleash their weapons on me and the crowd but that our solidarity, numbers and level headedness kept us safe. Protesters at the parallel demonstration in San Francisco weren’t so lucky and several young women ended up in the hospital with broken bones.

After the demonstration I was exhausted, having worked two twelve hour days in a row helping set up the demonstration. I left with a deep sense of accomplishment, knowing that I, in solidarity with thousands of others, had sent a message that the death and destruction caused by United States militarism was not in my name and that I had taken a real step toward its dismantling.

# Heredia Declaration on Climate, Forests and Plantations

*Signed at Heredia, Costa Rica  
March 28, 2009*

*[The Nicaragua Network received this important document from our friends at FEDICAMP in Nicaragua. For more information, visit <http://www.wrm.org.uy/>]*

We, organizations of civil society from every continent, have met in Costa Rica between 24 and 28 March to share experiences, visit peasant communities, think and present proposals on the question of climate, forests, and plantations.

During the first part of our meeting we visited several peasant communities in the northern part of the country and were able to see the impact of pineapple monoculture on local communities, on their territories, sources of water, health, and local ecosystems. We were able to see how these peasant communities continue to protect and regenerate their forests against all the attacks they suffer.

We were able to see clearly how the imposition of an agro-export model that is repeated in different shapes and with different crops all around the planet contributes to the current climate disaster. This model of commodity exports, with its system of monocultures, intense use of fossil-fuel based agro-chemicals and transport of products over thousands of miles for the consumption of the rich North, is one of the main causes of the current climate crisis.

Costa Rica sells itself to the world as a green country that defends its forests and biodiversity, but we have seen that this image does not reflect the reality of the environment or people of Costa Rica.

After two days of reflecting about the causes that have led our societies to this situation, and about the proposals put forward from official circles, we want to share our conclusions, commitments and proposals to address climate change.

Our first conclusion is that climate change is the inevitable consequence of a social, political and economic system that has turned nature and people into commodities. Even though climate change is one of the most serious threats that we face for the future, it is also part of a series of crises that have been happening in the last few years.

# Nicaragua Out of the SOA

In anticipation of a vote this summer in the House of Representatives to close the School of Americas (now called Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation), the Nicaragua Network and School of Americas Watch have initiated a petition asking Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega to join five other Latin American countries and announce that he will withdraw Nicaragua from the infamous army training school. In 2007 similar legislation would have passed with a change of only 6 votes. The English translation of the letter is below. To sign the petition go to: [www.nicanet.org](http://www.nicanet.org).

TO: The Honorable President of Nicaragua Daniel Ortega

FROM: The Undersigned Progressive People of the United States and Friends of Peace Around the World

As you are aware, since 1990 progressive people in the United States have struggled to close the Army School of the Americas (now named the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation.) This year we are close to victory and we appeal to you to give your solidarity support to our efforts by pulling Nicaragua out of the SOA.

As you know, prior to the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution, no army sent more troops to be trained at the SOA than Somoza's National Guard. In 1996 the Pentagon was forced to admit that torture was taught at the SOA when the training manuals were revealed to the public. Withdrawal from the SOA is a way of honoring the thousands of lives lost in Nicaragua at the hands of National Guard who trained at this institute and who led the contra attacks against the Nicaraguan people.

For 20 years after the Triumph Nicaragua did not send troops to the SOA. We were disappointed when, under the Bolaños government, Nicaragua's military officers again began attending SOA training at Ft. Benning, GA. In 2008 Nicaragua sent 78 officers to the SOA.

Five countries have announced their withdrawal from the SOA: Venezuela (2004), Argentina (2006), Uruguay (2006), Costa Rica (2007) and Bolivia (2008).

The announcement of Nicaragua's withdrawal could be the final step to close the doors of the SOA. In 2007 a vote in Congress to close the school lost by only 6 votes. Another congressional vote to de-fund the school will take place this year, with a new line-up of members. Our hope is that the withdrawal of a 6th country will give the necessary momentum to close the school.

During the 1980s Nicaraguans often told North Americans that what they could best do to support the Revolution was to change the US government. With respect for Nicaragua's sovereignty and right to self-determination, we appeal to you to help us accomplish that task by publically ending Nicaragua's involvement in the SOA.

Secondly, we have come to the conclusion that none of the solutions proposed by governments and the United Nations really deal with the causes of climate change.

We have concluded that carbon trading, REDD [Reducing Emissions from Reforestation and Degradation] mechanisms, payment for environmental services, offsets and all market-based mitigation mechanisms are instruments which not only do not fulfill their purported objective but also advance the commodification of life and therefore the destruction of our planet and aggravation of climate change. All of these proposals become "moving targets" which, by continuously changing, try to distract us from the real problems.

The global market and its huge corporations have co-opted UN climate negotiations and have taken them hostage, turning them into a business space which in no way responds to the real needs and urgent measures that need to be taken.

The World Bank, which has been responsible for financing the destruction of the planet, is now taking a leading role in climate negotiations, promoting failed market models that make a mockery of attempts to tackle the climate crisis.

Neither do the technologies that are being developed as a response – such as agrofuels, transgenic plants, the use of biochar, and others that may arise – constitute a real response to climate change. Behind all of these false solutions we find the corporations, with

## Impunity in Colombia:

# The Displaced and the Rule of Law

By Sean Hannley

The rule of law is essential to any society. For people to live their lives and enjoy any freedom of speech, expression or organization, they need to be assured that violence against them, including murder, will not go unpunished. The only way for a government to protect its population against violence is to ensure that those who perpetrate that violence are punished by the state, the alternative being giving everyone their own personal bodyguard. However, an atmosphere of impunity exists in Colombia which is created by the government purposely in order to silence and wipe-out political groups which the government doesn't agree with.

José Luciano Sanín Vasquez recently spoke to Congress and at the AFL-CIO about the issues facing labor rights activists and the labor movement in Colombia. He pointed out that labor laws and standards in Colombia are very poor. Of the 18 million eligible workers in Colombia, only 3 million have a contract and only 5 million receive any sort of benefits. The labor laws in Colombia were created in the 1950s while Colombia was under a dictatorship and provide very few protections for workers, and these policies continue under current President Alvaro Uribe. Uribe's government has denied over 253 requests for union recognition and union coverage of workers has declined 64%, leaving only 20% of workers covered by collective bargaining agreements. A full half of the strikes under this president have been declared "illegal".

Cooperatives are a form of business owned and managed by workers which give people in developing and developed countries an alternative to sweatshop labor; however firms in Colombia are allowed to use a corrupted form of this legal structure to ban individuals from labor organizing, while maintaining exploitive labor practices. Four million workers have jobs under this new form of firm (being used as temporary labor) and are paid half of what a permanent employee would make.

Uribe has accused his political opponents of being the "intellectual arm of the FARC" and tried to create a very

negative view of labor unions among the population. Anti-trade union violence is particularly prevalent in Colombia, with a full 60% of trade union murders around the globe taking place in the country. There have been 2,697 murders of trade unionists since 1986, and 482 under Uribe alone. The trade union movement considers this to be "systematic action for the purpose of elimination" or "genocide." Only 4% of these cases have been prosecuted. This creates an atmosphere of impunity in the country. On those rare occasions when there is an investigation, only the actual killers are prosecuted leaving those responsible for ordering the killings untouched. One judge from Colombia has stated that this is the role that the state wants judges and prosecutors to play—prosecuting the few killers who are caught and not asking questions about who ordered the assassination.

The Brookings' Institute recently put together a panel on the displaced people in Colombia which featured the Swiss Ambassador Thomas Greminger and Roberto Vidal, a professor of law at Pontificia Universidad Javeriana in Bogota. The panel discussed how the

lack of prosecution of paramilitaries and other armed parties is fueling a crisis of displaced persons from the decades long civil war against the FARC. There are now between 2 and 4 million displaced persons in Colombia who have lost everything, are receiving insufficient resources, services and health care and are bringing more extreme poverty into the cities. Displacement comes from the civil war itself, as well as large agri-business projects, the eradication of coca crops, and what is considered by many to be "lawlessness" in the countryside. The rate of unpunished crimes in Colombia is staggering: 400,000 in 2002, 200,000 per year from 2003-2007 and 300,000 in 2008.

The Swiss ambassador has been helping organize European efforts to provide humanitarian assistance, and has said that what is needed to stop the violence is for all parties to come to the table, including women's groups, indigenous groups, labor unions and representatives from both the government and the FARC to put their demands on the table and reach a settlement. He has said that there is a tendency for the government to demand

**See *Displaced*, Pg. 7**

### **Four Steps for Hope and Change in US-Colombia Relations**

*A Project of Campaign for Labor Rights and the Alliance for Global Justice*

We call on the members of the US Congress and the Obama Administration to use their votes and influence to:

- 1) Reject any attempts to pass a US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement;
- 2) End military aid to Colombia;
- 3) Stop the extrajudicial executions and forced displacements of Colombian farmers, unionists, opposition leaders, and indigenous and Afro-Colombian communities;
- 4) Free Colombia's Political Prisoners, arrested on the basis of false, paid, and/or discredited testimony.

Each year, more union members are assassinated in Colombia than in the rest of the world combined and over 4 million Colombians have been forced out of their homes. Sixty per cent of the displaced are family farmers and farm workers. The vast majority of this political violence is at the hands of the Colombian military and paramilitaries; yet the US government supplies Colombia with millions of dollars in military aid each year. In 2008, murders of union members rose 25%, forced displacements rose 41%, and the number of political prisoners grew to more than 7,200. All this is part of a crackdown on dissent so that Colombia's land and resources can be turned over for transnational corporate development. A US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement would complete this process. It would destroy family and sustainable farms in both the US and Colombia, much as NAFTA has hurt farming communities in the US, Canada, and Mexico. **NO MORE MILITARY AID TO COLOMBIA AND NO FTA! END THE REPRESSION AND DISPLACEMENT!**

**To print this petition and begin to collect signatures, go to: [www.clrlabor.org](http://www.clrlabor.org)**

## Heredia from Page 5

the complicity of the governments, who have become simple facilitators of the corporations' business activities. At the same time, it is also the governments who are promoting repression and criminalization of individuals and organizations who resist the imposition of plantations, monocultures and all of these false solutions.

For this reason, we commit to create our own agenda, focused on the needs and struggles of our peoples, to generate and contribute to a wide social movement with the objective of transforming the system from the bottom up.

Within this framework, the defense of the climate, forests and other ecosystems by the people is the only possible alternative for the future we are building. Women are playing a leading role on the path to changing the relationship between people and nature that privileges co-operation over domination and control.

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## Displaced from Page 6

peace before negotiations, a policy which is guaranteed to extend the length of the conflict. The problem of impunity for paramilitaries and other parties involved in the killing of civilians is also reflected in the fact that many of the displaced people who have been surveyed don't want to return to the place where they come from. Not only do many of them feel that because of the war they would be unable to sustain themselves in their point of origin, but they still don't feel safe in the regions where they come from. The situation for the displaced people is getting worse as their numbers grow. The foreign aid to those who have been displaced is substantial but not sufficient and for every \$1 the United States gives to those who have been displaced, they give \$50 to demobilized paramilitaries.

Colombia is faced with many problems: extreme poverty, a lack of education, a decades-long civil war and narco-trafficking, all of which need to be addressed. Before many of these problems can be addressed however, the atmosphere of impunity which permeates Colombian society, especially in regards to far-right paramilitaries, needs to be addressed. Only when people are free to speak out and also associate with whomever they choose will they be able to come together and solve the problems that have plagued Colombian society for generations.

We reject plantations and monocultures because they displace communities, destroy forests, pollute the planet and generate further climate change. This rejection is one of the main points on our agenda for the future. We underline the fact that plantations are not forests.

It is on this basis that we propose:

**The defense of land and territories against any type of land concentration in the hands of the few.** We propose an integral agrarian reform, starting out from the integration of women and men in solidarity with their land and the protection of water and the biodiversity which sustains us. We completely oppose market-based agrarian reforms promoted by the World Bank, whose only objective is to displace communities in order to occupy their territories. Our proposal is to establish a relationship to the land in a respectful manner without aggression. We understand that defending the territory is defending our culture and our way of relating among ourselves and with the earth.

**Food sovereignty.** We understand food sovereignty as the right of people to decide on everything that relates to the production of food and agriculture. Food sovereignty starts with the defense of native seeds and with the link to nature. In order to be sovereign, we need to produce locally the greater part of food for our own consumption in harmony with nature, and in this way we can produce food for all in a diversified way in order to avoid monocultures while cooling the planet and fighting climate change. This is the way to achieve healthy and harmonious people and ecosystems.

**Opposing market-based climate mechanisms.** We will resist and denounce as false carbon trading, REDD, as well as similar market-based schemes that may arise in future. We commit to explaining in every possible arena why these will never provide a response to the climate crisis.

**We will implement these objectives by carrying out activities in which we will coordinate with and support each other:**

Education and awareness-raising through the production of educational and audio-visual materials and any other tool that allows us to extend the number of people conscious of the problems;

Carrying out case studies together with affected communities in order to document the impacts of climate change and its false solutions and accompany them in their

struggles against them;

Alliance building with all the social movements that question this economic system, including indigenous peoples, women's organizations, human rights organizations and trade unions;

Supporting movements of people affected by climate change, to help their voices be heard and to reinforce their strategies for survival;

Working at local, national and international level in coordination and solidarity.

We return to our countries in solidarity with the people of Costa Rica in their struggles against free trade agreements, in defense of biodiversity, water, modes of production in harmony with nature and a world of justice and solidarity.

**Signers:**

*World Rainforest Movement (WRM)*  
– Uruguay  
*Federation for the Integral Development of Peasant Farmers (FEDICAMP)*  
– Nicaragua  
*Savia School of Ecological Thought*  
– Guatemala  
*Biofuel Watch* – UK  
*Genetic Resources Action International (GRAIN)* – Argentina  
*WRM / Monitoring of REDD Programs (Reducing Emissions from Reforestation and Degradation)* – Germany  
*Acción Ecológica* – Ecuador  
*Forest People's Program* – UK and Italy  
*Friends of the Earth International*  
– Indonesia  
*Otros Mundos/Friends of the Earth*  
– Mexico  
*Via Campesina* – Brazil  
*COECOCEIBA/Friends of the Earth*  
– Costa Rica  
*Karumbidza Timberwatch Coalition Africa*  
– South Africa  
*Mother Earth Movement/Friends of the Earth* – Honduras  
*The Forests and the European Union Resource Network* – Belgium  
*Institute for Cultural Affairs* – Ghana  
*Focus on the Global South* – Philippines  
*Transnational Institute* – The Netherlands  
*Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology (CESTA)* – El Salvador  
*The Corner House* – UK  
*National Forum on Forest Peoples and Forest Workers* – India  
*Alert against the Green Desert Network*  
– Brazil  
*Foundation for Ecological Recovery*  
– Thailand

## After the 2008 Elections

# The National Endowment for Democracy

*By James Jordan*

During the 2004 campaign, President Bush announced he would increase funding of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) by 100%. Not to be outdone, Democratic presidential contender John Kerry announced he would triple the NED budget.

The 2008 Obama campaign, released a fact sheet that declared “Barack Obama and Joe Biden...will significantly increase funding for the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)...” Then Senator Joe Biden, for the 2003 twentieth anniversary of the NED, co-sponsored a resolution supporting and reaffirming the mission of the NED. The resolution passed unanimously. In the House, there was only one vote against it. Bipartisan support for the NED is pretty much a given.

With such broad support, is it just possible that our concern is unwarranted? We believe it is quite warranted. The NED is over 90% funded by the Federal Government, yet it undertakes foreign policy programs and objectives with no significant public oversight, no open books. In other words, it carries out foreign policy in the name of the US people without being answerable to them.

This has led to some truly anti-democratic travesties, including funding and helping coordinate organizations that have overthrown elected governments, such as it did in Haiti in 2004 and tried to do in Venezuela in 2002. More often it interferes in elections in ways that would be blatantly illegal if used by a foreign country in the United States. What US citizen would tolerate major foreign funding for campaigns in this country? Yet that is exactly what the NED does all the time — even when it breaks the laws of another country.

The US spent more money per voter in the Nicaraguan election in 1990 than was spent per voter in the US Presidential election in 1988 by both candidates combined! During the past two Mexican presidential elections, persons connected to the NED acted as campaign advisors in contravention of Mexican law and interfered in other ways, helping rob the presidency from legitimately elected Center-Left candidates. These are just two examples among many.

While the NED budget is relatively small, it coordinates transnational corporations, public relations consultants, media and information professionals, politicians, intelligence and military ex-personnel, and segments from big labor for projects that are carried out in the shadows of US foreign policy. The NED has four core institutes which also funnel funds from other sources such as USAID. USAID was created to aid development and poverty alleviation efforts. But the NED has only one purpose: to secure governments friendly to transnational corporations and US political and military objectives through manipulating elections or supporting coups if electoral manipulation fails.

The four core institutes of the NED are the International Republican Institute, the National Democratic Institute, the Center for International Private Enterprise, and the American Center for International Labor Solidarity, also known as the Solidarity Center.

Even when Republicans and Democrats disagree about foreign policy tactics and strategies, they mostly support the same political-economic objectives. Iraq is a case in point. For us to understand US “democracy building” in Iraq today, we have to understand US democracy destruction there in the past. Many of us remember when former Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld went to Iraq to negotiate arms sales with Saddam Hussein during the Reagan administration.

That was in 1983, ironically, the birth year of the NED. The US gave Iraq military and other kinds of support throughout the 1980s. This was at a time when Hussein was busy crushing the largest secular democratic movement in the Arab world. The reason the US undermined Iraqi democracy for so many years was because it had both a socialist and a nationalist orientation that had no interest in turning over Iraq’s national resources for huge foreign corporate profits or in cooperating with US political and military plans for the region.

Today, however, the US is busy building a particular kind of Iraqi democracy, with power concentrated in the hands of Big Oil and oil infrastructure companies. Beside whatever opposition to the war

exists, almost all members of the US Congress agree that passage of the Iraq Oil Law by the Iraqi parliament should be considered a benchmark of democracy.

But how can that be true when the law is opposed by two thirds of Iraqis, across ethnic, gender, class, and geographical lines, and when it would lead to the biggest oil profit giveaway in the Middle East? The reason is simple: neoliberal democracy measures political freedom by transnational corporate access to resources. Voting is only “democratic” when it does not challenge private economic power and development. The idea that the people might manage resources to their own benefit is, paradoxically, considered unacceptable. The NED’s version of “democracy” boils down to this: one dollar, one vote.

During the Bush administration, the International Republican Institute (IRI), the NED core group chaired by Sen. John McCain, was having a true heyday. Highlights included support of the unsuccessful coup in Venezuela in 2002 and the 2004 coup in Haiti, in which the IRI provided funding and training to all the major coup players. In Iraq, the IRI has been funded as much as three times more than its other partners in the NED.

Of course, the other core institutes were hardly idle. In 2004, the National Democratic Institute commissioned a poll that was carried out by the rabidly anti-Chavez Venezuelan opposition group, Súmate, which claimed Hugo Chavez would lose an upcoming recall by almost twenty percentage points. They were off by 38% in an election Chavez won by a landslide, certified by organizations such as the Carter Center, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization of American States.

What does the election of Pres. Obama mean for the National Endowment for Democracy? Will this be a time for renewed respect for the sovereignty and electoral integrity of nations? If we want to close the NED, we will need to mobilize to educate policymakers about the real role the NED plays in undermining democracy. We have already seen how strong the personal support of both Pres. Obama and Vice Pres. Biden is for the NED.

Two hopeful signs came when the



State Department announced that the US regarded as an “internal matter” the Feb. 15 referendum in Venezuela on doing away with term limits. It passed by over eight percentage points. In March the State Department issued a statement after Republican Congressmen warned voters in El Salvador that remittances would be cut off and their family members deported from the US if the FMLN candidate won the presidency. The State Department said publically that the US had no favored candidate in the race.

Certainly this was a far cry from the behavior of the Bush Administration. One

must compare the attitude of the State Department today to what was happening in late 2007, when a whole package of constitutional reforms were being voted on in Venezuela. The US government spent some \$8 million trying to manipulate the electoral outcome and several coup plots were uncovered leading up to the vote. In that case, the reform package lost by less than 2%.

Needless to say, it would be nothing but naïve to propose the idea that Venezuela, or any other country, is

free of the prospect of US interference just because we have a new president. NED programs are still being funded and carried out in Venezuela that were begun under the Bush administration. But it is crucial to understand that even new programs are not subject to oversight by Congress. There is nothing to guarantee that the IRI, for instance, will cease the nature of its interference — because its books are closed and it is not subject to US voters.

The NED’s bipartisan support just cannot be understated. The new President of the NED is former House Democratic Majority Leader Dick Gephardt, who was previously the Vice Chair of the NED Board. The NED has funded coup plotters that have tried to overthrow elected governments not only in Haiti and Venezuela, but in Bulgaria, Ukraine, Mongolia, and elsewhere. The NED

has funded known Nazi collaborators in Eastern Europe, such as Lazslo Pasztor, of the Free Congress Foundation who, in 1990, counseled the NED about groups to support in Hungary. Democratic leadership did not stand silently by while these travesties occurred, it participated in them.

The NED was founded by Congress in 1983 at the initiative of the Reagan Administration, and Congress sets its budget every year. However, it is considered a private organization. Why? Because Congress says it is. It is beyond comprehension that a taxpayer-funded

the CIA.”

Michael Plattner is a Vice President of the NED. In an article for the Journal for Democracy, he spells out quite clearly the endowment’s world view: “Globalization has fostered democratization, and democratization has fostered globalization. Moreover, both trends generally have furthered American interests and contributed to the strengthening of American power...It is worth emphasizing that the international order that sustains globalization is underpinned by American military predominance.”

The base that elected President Obama

is fundamentally more progressive than his administration. It is this organized base that is most capable of making the old adage true: “If the people will lead, the leaders will follow.”

But there are two central matters we must understand about US and neoliberal democracy in relation to the worldwide struggle for participatory democracy:

One: the biggest reason that it makes sense to close the NED is that its program is anti-democratic, no matter what the name says, and details about and the true nature of its activities remain hidden.

Two: Democrats are not going to fundamentally challenge the apparatus of US manipulation of foreign elections unless you and I force them to.

One way to build a movement for real democracy is to join the Respect for Democracy Campaign and to circulate the Respect for Democracy petition demanding that the NED be abolished. More information about this campaign is available at [www.respect4democracy.org](http://www.respect4democracy.org) or by calling 520-243-0381(MST).

When we ask ourselves what the Democratic landslide and election of Pres. Obama means for our struggle, the answer is simply this: It’s not up to anyone else; it’s up to us. We, the people, must create the movement from the ground up for an end to the NED. We must wage the struggle for real People Power both at home and around the world.



organization created by and funded by Congress is somehow considered “private.”

But that “private” is the loophole that frees the NED from public oversight and scrutiny. This kind of shadow foreign policy is what makes it possible for the State Department to declare a Venezuelan election an “internal matter” at the very same time that US-supported coup plots may be underway. No matter how progressive a direction our elected government may be moving, as long as we have shadow institutions like the NED, pernicious efforts can be pursued in our names, with our taxes — and without our approval, oversight, or knowledge. Allen Weinstein, who helped write the legislation creating the NED, said in a 1991 interview, “A lot of what we do today was done covertly 25 years ago by

# Month In Review

## Economy

On April 1, the National Assembly passed the revised 2009 national budget with 49 votes. The two vote majority came from Sandinista deputies and votes from the Nicaraguan Liberal Alliance (ALN). Constitutional Liberal Party (PLC) deputies walked out of the session. According to Sandinista Deputy Wálmaro Gutiérrez, President Daniel Ortega cut US\$65.6 million from the draft he had sent to the Assembly in January based on a Central Bank projection that foreign reserves will fall US\$40 million by the end of the year. Gutiérrez said that the government's intention was to maintain social sector spending [health and education] including salary raises for government employees which he said were still far from what was just but which were all the government could afford at this time. He said that the government might ask for further modifications halfway through the year.

Central Bank President Antenor Rosales said that the government was now expecting an economic growth rate for this year of between zero and 1%. The Central Bank also announced a credit line from the Central American Bank for Economic Integration of US\$200 million to help the national financial system confront any liquidity crisis.

The Agency for the Promotion of Investment in Nicaragua, also known as ProNicaragua, reported at the end of March that foreign direct investment in Nicaragua rose from US\$335 million in 2007 to US\$600 million in 2008. The figure for 2006 was US\$287 million. The steep rise in 2008 was attributed to investment in the energy sector. Javier Chamorro Argüello, director of ProNicaragua, said that while the international economic crisis could make attracting investment "more difficult," the goal is to maintain 2008 levels for 2009.

The Social Economic Observatory (OSE), on March 11 denounced the "great disparity between the price of the basic basket of goods," which Nicaragua uses as a measure of the cost of living, "and the minimum wage for workers." The OSE reported that in February the cost of the basic basket was US\$450 for a month for a family compared to the monthly minimum wage for agricultural workers

of US\$70. Inflation in February was .58%, a considerable drop from the 1.52% inflation in February 2008, but higher than in January 2009. Accumulated inflation for 2009 is .64% for an annualized rate of 10.78%, a major improvement over the 18.35% during the same period of 2008.

## Politics

Bayardo Izaba, director of the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), appeared before the Inter-American Human Rights Commission in Washington, DC, on Mar. 24 to express the concern of his organization about what it called an accelerating tendency in Nicaragua for the National Police to be subordinated to the interests of President Daniel Ortega. He said that the president is attempting to turn that institution into an instrument for repression. He said that the citizenry is resisting because it cost them such a great price to achieve a non-repressive force. To that he added concern about the fragility of democratic institutions in Nicaragua and the politicization of those institutions along with persecution of many civil society and human rights organizations. Izaba asked the Commission to make an on-site visit to Nicaragua to learn about the situation and urged the Commission to accelerate the cases filed previously by CENIDH with relation to the cancellation of the legal recognition of two political parties, the Sandinista Renovation Movement and the Conservative Party.

Enrique Quiñonez and Allan Rivera Siles switched their party designation from the PLC to the Independent Liberal Party (PLI) following former ALN leader Eduardo Montealegre. Prior to the reshuffling of right-wing delegates in the National Assembly, the PLI had no representation in the legislature. The newly minted PLI delegates will vote as part of the Nicaraguan Democratic Bench. They said that the PLC has maintained what they called "an eternal pact" with the FSLN and thus was not a true opposition party. Bluefields Mayor Harold Bacon Brokamp and several city officials embarrassed PLC leader Arnoldo Aleman by switching to the PLI after the former president announced that there would be no more desertions. A former PLC member who did not wish to give her name said, "There is a lot of unhappiness

in the PLC because it is so close to the Sandinistas; that's why we are going over to the PLI."

Deputy Guillermo Osorno of the Christian Path Party which was allied with the PLC, and PLC Deputy Carlos Olivas both left the PLC and declared themselves independent. They have been voting recently with the FSLN. Thus, the never ending saga of shifting alliances among Nicaragua's political class continues.

Rival marches in several cities resulted in clashes requiring police intervention on Feb. 28. A coalition calling itself Citizens United for Democracy (UCD) which has been accused of accepting money from the US Embassy, organized marches to protest alleged fraud in the Nov. 2008 municipal elections. The marches were also supported by opposition political parties. The National Workers Front (FNT), affiliated with the FSLN, organized rival gatherings as what they announced would be part of the kick-off to celebrate of the 30th anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution in July. There were clashes, including some injuries, in several cities, including Managua, Chinandega and Leon, but the gatherings proceeded smoothly in Masaya and Jinotega.

## Poverty Reduction

On March 11, the National Assembly gave final approval to an affordable housing law which stipulates that, for purposes of making the down payment, employers must allow employees to draw on the current balance of the severance pay they earn for each year on the job. Mortgage interest will be subsidized by the government. Employers will not have to facilitate home purchase for more than 20% of their employees in any one year. The homes must be between 385 and 645 square feet in area, with a maximum cost of US\$20,000. The down payment would be about US\$1,000 and the monthly mortgage payment about US\$150 to be paid off in 25 years.

The law passed with votes from all political parties with provisos that no citizen movement or grouping will receive preference and all government subsidies must be included in the national budget. Supporters hope that it will reduce the nation's 750,000 housing deficit. However, Jose Adan Aguerri, president of the Superior Council of Private Enterprise

(COSEP), said that neither the government nor private business had the capacity at this time to make the law function as it was designed. He said that the requirement for businesses to turn over to workers their severance pay would decapitalize local companies.

In March President Ortega announced on Saturday that the Department of Carazo is the first department to be “free of illiteracy,” meaning that literacy now exceeds 95%. Ortega thanked Fidel Castro and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez for their help in the new campaign at the celebration of the 29th anniversary of the 1980 Literacy Crusade which won a UNESCO award. To eradicate illiteracy the Ortega government has used the Cuban methodology “Yes, I Can” that teaches a person to read in only 65 days. Eighty Cubans and 33 Venezuelans who had helped in the Bolivian literacy campaign also worked with Nicaraguans in the Nicaraguan campaign. The “Yes, I Can” methodology enabled Bolivia to become the third state in the Bolivarian Alternative for Our Americas (ALBA) to eliminate illiteracy.

#### Women’s Issues

Rumors continue that Nicaragua’s Supreme Court will find the 2006 criminalization of therapeutic abortion to be unconstitutional in May. Court Vice-President Rafael Solis confirmed that a draft decision exists based on “the life of the woman, as much as the life of the child, is protected by the constitution.” Solis made reference to Vatican declarations of March 21 which criticized the excommunication of medical personnel in Brazil who ended the twin pregnancy of a nine-year old girl.

The Catholic hierarchy denounced what they called a “political accord” to allow the decriminalization of therapeutic abortion and said that they would increase their pressure on President Daniel Ortega and on the National Assembly. Bishop Juan Abelardo Mata exhorted the justices to analyze the decision and urged “that it not be based on compromise or to respond to international forces or to balance between parties.” He said that the government says it is of the people, so it must protect the life of the people. He said that the bishops have begun to speak with President Daniel Ortega and the Supreme Court justices so that they “rethink what they are going to do.”

Martha Maria Blandon of the Feminist



**Nicaragua Network celebrated its 30th anniversary in Washington, DC on March 21, 2009 with dinner and toasts (with Nicaraguan rum) by the executive committee, sister organizations, friends and supporters. Pictured above clockwise from the left are Katherine Hoyt, Nicaragua Network Co-Coordinator, Jenny Atlee, Quixote Center, Norwin Solano, Nicaragua Center for Human Rights (CENIDH), and Bayardo Izaba, CENIDH. Nicaragua Network was founded at a conference on Feb. 24, 1979.**

Movement said that her group has provided the government with information about cases where public clinic doctors have pressured women to carry to term anencephalic pregnancies (where the fetus has no brain and is thus unviable outside the uterus). This type of action, she stated, has caused couples to break up and psychological damage to the women.

March 8th, International Women’s Day, was celebrated in a variety of ways including an FSLN-organized march of several hundred in Managua. Speakers ranging from Managua Vice-Mayor Daisy Torres (FSLN), to representatives from the most humble neighborhoods called on all Nicaraguan women to claim their full rights and to take their due place in the social, economic and political life of the country. Several banners along the march route called for women’s rights to full birth control, and on the government to reinstate therapeutic abortion, reversing its controversial decision support its criminalization shortly before the 2008 presidential election.

Speakers spoke of the various government programs, especially free health care and schooling, Zero Hunger and Zero Usury, saying that they were beginning to free women from the traditional burdens of multiple work loads, giving them a measure of dignity and self-

confidence previously denied them, and some chance of improving the lot of both themselves and their children.

However, in a statement showing the class divisions in the women’s movement, feminist Sofia Montenegro said, “These programs, Zero Hunger and the rest, are mere palliatives. What’s really going on here in Nicaragua is a retrenchment in women’s rights. We women need to get out into the workforce, to make our own way, not be tied even further to the house by having to take care of pigs and cows as well as our children.”

#### International Relations

Nicaraguan Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs Manuel Coronel announced that Nicaragua would return to trade talks in Brussels April 23-24 with the European Union after EU Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner expressed EU willingness to discuss Nicaragua’s proposal for the creation of an US\$80 million development loan fund, 90% of which would come from the European countries. The Central American countries are still not in agreement about the amount of the fund nor the amount that they should contribute to it. Nicaragua walked out of the meetings April 1 over the EU’s refusal to include the development loan fund in the discussions.

President Ortega chaired on Mar. 25 the XXV Summit of the Central American Integration System (SICA) in Managua. The goal of the meeting, according to President Martin Torrijos of Panama, was to “arrive at common positions in the face of the challenges that our countries face” with relation to the international financial crisis and the upcoming Summit of the Americas, April 17 - 19.

On Mar. 30 four of the six Central American presidents and the Prime Minister of Belize met with U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden. Those who did not attend the San Jose meeting were Manuel Zelaya of Honduras (because of “agenda problems”) and Ortega of Nicaragua who felt, as did some other political figures, that the SICA meeting should have been the venue for the meeting.

El Nuevo Diario and La Prensa ran stories that the Nicaraguan government has reached an agreement with the United States to destroy the SAM-7 surface-to-air missiles in its military arsenal. The Office of the Presidency issued a denial. The papers reported on an alleged March 12 memo signed by an official in Nicaragua’s embassy in the US, Alcides Montiel, to Foreign Minister Samuel Santos that an agreement had been reached. Nevertheless, the official response from the Office of the Presidency stated, “It is not planned at this time to sign an accord between the government of Nicaragua and the government of the United States.”

Presidential economic advisor announced that on April 2, government officials had met with representatives of the countries that are members of the Budget Support Group (Germany, Denmark, Finland, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Japan, the European Union and multilateral financial institutions) and agreed that on June 12 they would decide whether or not to resume budgetary support for Nicaragua. The funds that the Budget Support Group usually lends Nicaragua each year to reduce its fiscal deficit were frozen at the end of last year due to opposition allegations of fraud in the November municipal elections.

The United States government decided on March 11 to continue the suspension of US\$64 million in Millennium Challenge Account funds for Nicaragua for another 90 days. US Ambassador to Nicaragua Robert Callahan said, “We are going to continue working on the three highways

that are contracted, that is 68 kilometers of new highways in the regions of Leon and Chinandega, and we are going to continue with the rural small businesses, and with the technical assistance for small farmers in the same zone.” He continued, “That, I believe, shows our commitment to the people of Nicaragua.” With relation to the Nov. 9 elections, Callahan said, “The Nicaraguans have 90 days to resolve the



Central American presidents gathered in Managua for the SICA summit.

problem, the doubts, about the elections. If the government can resolve this problem in 90 days, we will immediately renew the aid.”

Bayardo Arce, President Daniel Ortega’s economic advisor, said that he considered “positive” the decision to continue the suspension rather than cancel the aid. He confirmed that MCA projects already under contract continue in the western part of the country.

The Foreign Ministry released a document entitled “White Book: The Reality of the Municipal Electoral Process of 2008 in Nicaragua” that lays out the government’s position that the elections were not fraudulent. The document notes that 11,308 precincts participated in the elections at 4,047 polling places around the country. The results of only 45

precincts were appealed to the Supreme Electoral Council (172 were resolved by Departmental Electoral Councils). The CSE, in those cases, confirmed the decision of the lower tribunals. To read the entire “White Book” go to [www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/48893](http://www.radiolaprimerisima.com/noticias/48893).

#### Miscellaneous

Several former banana workers have accused Dole Foods of attempting to bribe them to speak out against the lawyers Juan Jose Dominguez and Antonio Hernandez of California who have successfully represented banana workers affected by the pesticide Nemagon against Dole in the courts of that state. Jose Benito Vindel, who worked on a banana plantation

in Chinandega from 1973 to 1979, said that he was visited six times by two foreign men he said were agents of Dole. Vindel said they offered him US\$60,000, US visas for him and his family, and work and housing in the United States if he would cooperate with them.

The Organization of American States (OAS) has asked the international community to help complete the removal of all landmines from Nicaragua this year. The call was made by Christopher Hernandez-Roy, director of the OAS Department of Public Security at the kick-off of a regional meeting with the title “Advances and Challenges to Achieving a Latin America Free of Antipersonnel Mines.” He noted that Nicaragua has completed 98% of its plan for landmine removal and that he can see a time when all Central America is free of landmines.

### Celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Sandinista Revolution

*Work on Projects to develop Food Sustainability and Eradicate Malaria*  
ECHOES of SILENCE ECO-CULTURAL BRIGADE to NICARAGUA

**JULY 14 - 29, 2009**

*Fight global warming and disease working on grassroots organic food and eco-drainage projects; sing with legendary Nicaraguan musicians; record radio shows with children living on Managua’s city dump; dance the Zapateado. Live in a family community, sharing its daily life and working locally. Travel to Sandino’s legendary North Country: learn about the model eco-community he founded; meet fair trade coops; join peasant farmers in pioneering water conservation and agro-forestry projects. Spanish helpful, but not necessary.*

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