Featured Stories

Africa: Mutinous soldiers arrested in Guinea
Asia: Constitutional amendment to limit president’s powers in Pakistan
Latin America: FARC releases two hostages in Colombia

The countries for the Peace & Justice Update have been chosen as areas of focus at the institute.

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The Peace & Justice Updates are written by the Spring 2010 interns at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice at the University of San Diego.

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IAPA = Inter American Press Association (www.sipiapa.org)
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Informer = The Informer (www.theinformeral.com)
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IRIN = Integrated Regional Information Network (www.irinnews.org)
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UGPulse = UGPulse (www.ugpulse.com)
UHRC = Uganda Human Rights Commission (www.uhrc.ug)
UN News = UN News Center (www.un.org/news)
UNESCO = UN Educational, Scientific, & Cultural Organization (www.unesco.org)
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CUBA

Cuba's President Raúl Castro speaks during the closing ceremony of the Union of Young Communists congress in Havana, April 4. (Source AP)

Cuba resists hunger striker 'blackmail': Raúl Castro has referred to recent international pressure over Cuba's human rights records as one of the strongest assaults its communist government has ever faced. In a speech to the annual congress of the Young Communist League, April 5, President Castro said his government “will never yield to the blackmail of any country or group of countries, no matter how powerful they may be.” Castro affirmed of central importance to “let them know that if they try to corner us, we will defend ourselves, first of all with truth and principle.” The new generation of party leaders and community officials gathered at the congress to discuss a future without the president and former president Fidel Castro. Several of the island's best-known “youth” leaders are over 30 but with Fidel Castro turning 84 in August, Raul close to 79, and the president's specially selected stand-in, communist Jose Ramón Machado Ventura only a year older, concern over who will be governing Cuba is increasing.

Cuba’s human rights situation has escalated since the Feb. 23 death of hunger striker Orlando Zapata Tamayo. Journalist Guillermo Faríñas announced his hunger strike demanding the release of 26 ailing prisoners shortly after Zapata's death. Castro refers to the hunger strikes as efforts sponsored by forces in the United States and Europe out to topple Cuba’s government and affirms they been glorified by “Western media.” He said that Cuba will attempt to do all that it can to care for Faríñas. According to Castro the island does not wish for his death but will hold Faríñas responsible if he should die, saying it would be a result of his “self-destructive” behavior. (AP, April 4; BBC, April 5)
Funds pledged for Haiti’s reconstruction at donor conference exceed expectations. A two-day UN donor conference in New York March 31 brought together diplomats and ministers from over 130 countries that joined in pledging funds for the rebuilding of Haiti. Nearly two-thirds of the initial request of $3.8 billion was met by the pledges made by the United States and European Union. The $3.8 billion, needed for the next 18 months, was a fraction of the $11.5 billion package requested by Haitian President René Preval. The final pledges exceeded $5 billion in short-term assistance and an additional $10 billion for the long term. According to Haitian authorities the pledges were “testimony that Haiti is not alone”.

The Interim Haiti Recovery Commission (IHRC), headed by Haitian Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive and UN Special Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton, prepared a 55-page document outlining the reconstruction plans for the country. The long-term goal for Haiti is a “decentralized country based on smaller nodes of population” as a response to the destruction of the densely populated capital city following the earthquake. Some leaders however said that the short-term daily needs of the millions of Haitians must be met before any long-term progress can be made.

Although pledges were hailed as a sign of solidarity, there is still concern about the rebuilding efforts, and in particular just how effective those efforts will be. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton emphasized the necessity for a “transparent recovery,” as well as the need for the international community to work with the government rather than around the government. In an attempt to quell donor concerns over corruption and political unrest, the IHRC’s members are tasked with coordinating and paying out donations.
Besides economic reconstruction, Haiti is seeking a return to normalcy in terms of education. A few hundred schools were set to open April 5. Although the opening of the schools is progress towards reaching UNICEF’s goal of 700,000 students returning to school by the middle of May, there are still many children not in school after an estimated 4,000 schools were destroyed. (Associated Press, April 6; Christian Science Monitor, March 31; NPR, March 31, 2010)

LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

COLOMBIA

Pablo Emiliano Moncayo (right), a Colombian soldier released March 30 after being held hostage by the FARC for 12 years, and his father Gustavo Moncayo (left), who famously demonstrated for his son’s release. Senator Piedad Córdoba stands at left, behind Gustavo Moncayo. (Source: AP)

FARC releases two hostages but prospects for further cooperation are grim. The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) released two Colombian soldiers last week, the first hostage release by the rebel group in over a year. Josué Calvo and Pablo Emiliano Moncayo were picked up in helicopters by a humanitarian mission led by the International Red Cross on March 28 and March 30, respectively. Calvo was captured by the leftist rebel group last year and Moncayo had been held by the FARC since 1997, making him one of their longest held prisoners. Leftist senator Piedad Córdoba played an important role in the negotiations.

In 2007 Moncayo’s father, Gustavo Moncayo, walked across Colombia wearing chains for 46 days in protest of the FARC holding his son and others hostage. It is believed that the FARC is holding at least 20 other police officers and soldiers as political prisoners in addition to several hundred kidnap victims being held for ransom, but it does not appear likely they will release any of them in the near
future. The FARC is pressing the government to reciprocate by releasing imprisoned FARC members, but President Álvaro Uribe’s administration has not been very receptive to such requests.

In addition to releasing the two hostages, on April 1 the FARC handed over the remains of Julian Guevara, a police officer captured by the rebels in 1998 who died of a tropical disease in 2006 while still in captivity. As with Calvo and Moncayo’s releases, Córdoba was instrumental in negotiating the return of Guevara’s remains and the International Red Cross facilitated the handover.

It appears that the FARC is increasing its visibility as May’s presidential elections approach. The rebels are thought to be responsible for several recent attacks, including the March 24 explosion of a car bomb in the Pacific coast port city Buenaventura that killed nine and the March 22 torching of seven trucks on the Buga-Buenaventura highway. (Christian Science Monitor, March 30; Washington Post, March 31, April 1, 2010)

GUATEMALA

First Lady Sandra Torres de Colóm with her husband, President Álvaro Colóm (Source: The China Post)

First Lady again summoned to speak before Congress about use of Council of Social Cohesion funds. On April 8, Congresswoman Roxana Baldetti subpoenaed First Lady Sandra Torres de Colóm for a second time to report to Congress about the use of funds for the Council of Social Cohesion (CSS). Torres is the director of the CSS, President Álvaro Colóm’s flagship social program. Baldetti and her colleagues, Nineth Montenegro and Rosa María de Frade, originally requested Torres to address Congress in March, but the First Lady replied that she was not obliged to respond to Congress, nor did she have time in her schedule to do so before the Easter holidays.

On April 6, Torres countered the subpoena with an invitation for the three congresswomen to meet with her in the presidential palace. The invitation was extended through a third party in a press release, which the three women declined to acknowledge. In recent months the CSS has suffered criticism, specifically about transparency and nepotism issues in the Mi Familia Progresa (My Family Progresses) program.
The Mi Familia Progresa program provides money to poor mothers if they send their children to school and the children get regular medical check-ups. In February, the Constitutional Court ordered Education Minister Bienvenido Argueta to step down for not providing financial information on the Mi Familia Progresa program. Bienvenido was reassigned to a new post in early March. Baldetti stated if Torres does not appear before Congress April 14 she will receive only one more subpoena and then Baldetti will take the issue to the Constitutional Court. (Prensa Libre, March 19, April 6, 7, 9; El Periódico, April 6; Huffington Post, February 26, 2010)

HONDURAS

A photo of murdered journalist Joseph Hernandez Ochoa is held during a protest. (Source: CNN)

Honduras now considered one of the deadliest countries for journalists. On March 26 Jose Bayardo Mairena and Manuel Juarez, radio journalists for Excelsior and Super 10 respectively, were murdered, bringing the death toll of journalists to five in the month of March. Honduras joins Mexico in being considered the most dangerous country in the Western hemisphere for journalists to work. On April 4 Jose Aleman, a correspondent for the national newspaper Tiempo, fled the country after receiving threats on his life and following a break-in to his house by two unidentified armed individuals. Carol Cabrera, a reporter for Radio Cadena, has refused to leave the hospital as she recovers from wounds she suffered from an attack in March, citing fear for her life. Two international institutions – Inter American Press Association (IAPA) and World Association of Newspapers (WAN) – condemned the death of the journalists and called on President Porfirio Lobo to put an end to impunity, saying, “There is no greater incentive for those who resort to violence than the lack of punishment for their crimes.” A principal concern is the restriction of freedom of expression as well as self-censorship of the media out of fear. Carlos Lauria, Senior Program Coordinator for the Americas for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) explains, “These
attacks are seriously restricting freedom of expression and undermine citizens’ right to be informed on issues of public interest.” The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also described how these acts against journalists weaken freedom of information, “the cornerstone of democracy.”

The wave of violence against journalists is an example of a general trend of rising violence in the country. A report released by Honduras’ Commission for Human Rights (CONADEH) showed that Honduras now has the highest murder rate in Central America. In 2009 the murder rate was 66.8 for every 100,000 Hondurans, a substantial increase from 46.2 murders per 100,000 in 2006. (CNN, April 2; CPI, April 1; Honduras Weekly, April 5; IAPA, April 6; La Prensa, April 6; Latin American Herald Tribune, March 30, 2010)

SOUTH ASIA

NEPAL


Maoist leader calls for Prime Minister’s resignation as constitution deadline approaches. Unified Communist Party Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M) chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal, alias Pachandra, announced at a rally April 6 that there would be a mass movement against Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal until he agrees to step down, due to his inability to foster the drafting of the new national constitution. Dahal stated, “[Our party] believe[s] the main obstacle to the peace process is the current government.” The constitution deadline is May 28, 2010, less than 50 days away. Its construction is at an impasse due to dissent among the Constituent Assembly (CA). Dahal argues there is still time to finish the constitution if the current government is dissolved and a “national unity government” is formed. The Himalayan Times quoted Dahal as saying, “Once a national unity
government is formed it will be possible to draft the constitution within one and a half months and
the peace process to end within a month.” He further argued he should lead the government, since
his Maoist party has approximately 40 percent of the seats in parliament.

The Maoists are not the only party to call for the prime minister’s resignation. Upendra Yadav,
chairman of the Madhesi Janadhikar Forum (MJF), the fourth largest party in parliament, also called
on Prime Minister Nepal to step down. Like Dahal, Yadav also cited Prime Minister Nepal’s failure
to produce a constitution and further the peace process. Additionally, some of the prime minister’s
own party members have suggested he resign, which may provide the two-thirds vote needed to
force his ouster. Prime Minister Nepal is also under fire for a deal he made awarding a contract for
Machine Readable Passports (MRPs) to an Indian company without going through a competitive
bidding process as required by the Procurement Act. The Supreme Court has ordered a stay on the
contract until it can further review two writs submitted against the government. The court is
expected to make a decision April 12. (AsiaOne, DNA, IANS, NepalNews, April 6; The Himalayan
Times, April 7; República, April 6, April 8, 2010)

PAKISTAN

Pakistan evaluates changes for amendments to the constitution. On April 6 Pakistan’s Parliament
initiated debate on a raft of amendments intended to restore the Constitution. Under the proposed
changes the president would no longer have the powers to dismiss the prime minister, dissolve
Parliament or appoint the powerful military chiefs. In theory the changes would initiate the
reorganization of power. The president would move closer to figurehead status, and the prime
minister would acquire new powers. The amendments are vital to improving the long-term health of
the country’s beleaguered democracy. It could lift Pakistan’s prospects to have stronger, more
effective civilian governments, which has been highly encouraged by the Obama administration. The
new constitution would imply a shift of power in favor of the provinces, giving them significant
control over their finances and education programs among other things, after decades of being
governed from Islamabad. Pakistani analysts have said that such reorganization of power could
potentially result in great instability of government if it is not handled delicately. The changes are
expected to pass in April, representing a rare moment of consensus in Pakistan’s fractious politics.
Lahore analyst Hasan-Askari Rizvi said that he believed that changes have improved prospects for
Pakistan’s shaky democracy. Rizvi stated, “Pakistani politicians have actually agreed on something, they are not in the habit of agreeing on anything.” (NYT, April 6)

SRI LANKA

A Buddhist monk is forced into a van as police break up a demonstration in Colombo (Source: AFP)

Twelve Buddhist monks demonstrating against Fonseka’s detainment arrested. Police officers arrived April 5 at a demonstration in front of Colombo’s main police station to break up the otherwise peaceful protest by a group of Buddhist monks against the detainment of former General Sarath Fonseka. When the monks resisted arrest, police forced them into vans. Four of the monks had started a hunger strike April 4 and were taken to a hospital following their arrest. Charges against the monks have not been announced, nor has information on their release. The Sinhalese majority in Sri Lanka is Buddhist, but these demonstrators have aligned themselves politically with the opposition. Likewise, Fonseka was formerly a close ally of President Mahinda Rajapaska and joined him in defeating the rebel Liberation Tiger of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in 2009, but had a falling-out with the president soon after. Fonseka was arrested and held without charges after running against Rajapaska in January’s presidential elections and is still being detained by the government, but is running as an opposition candidate in parliamentary elections April 8.

In efforts to prepare for the parliamentary elections, Rajapaska has been holding rallies around the country to gain support, including trying to appeal to the Tamil minority. Rajapaska hopes his party, United People’s Freedom Alliance (UPFA), will gain the two-thirds parliamentary majority needed “to change the constitution to his liking,” according to a Washington Post article.
Sri Lanka has designated 20,000 troops to support 60,000 police in handling pre-election violence prevalent in the country. The independent Center for Monitoring Election Violence (CMEV) has reported hundreds of recent small election-related clashes. (AFP, April 4; BBC, April 5; Washington Post, April 1)

SOUTHEAST ASIA

PHILIPPINES

Former Maguindanao Andal Ampatuan Sr. (Source CNN)

Philippines dismiss charges of rebellion against clan leader. Prosecutors charged Andal Ampatuan Sr. his four sons and followers March 29 for allegedly plotting to stage an armed uprising after the government began to crack down on them when they were linked to a November 23, 2009 massacre of 57 people. The slaughter was unprecedented even in a country known for election violence and political killings. Among the dead were more than 30 journalists with their staff, placing the Philippines at the top of the list of the world’s most dangerous places for journalists. Other massacre victims included relatives and supporters of the Ampatuans’ political rival, Esmael Mangudadatu. They were on their way to an election office to file Maguadatatu’s candidacy papers when their convoy was stopped at gunpoint. Maguadatutu and his relatives and supporters were later shot to death on a nearby hilltop. President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo declared martial law for a week in Maguindanao, a southern province in the island of Mindanao, to deal with what the military stated to be an attempted rebellion by pro-Ampatuan forces shortly after the massacre. Judge Vivencio Baelig cleared the Ampatuans and their followers of rebellion charges for lack of evidence. The detainees were separately charged with multiple murders and are ineligible for bail but remain in custody for their alleged role in the massacre. (AP, March 29)
SUDAN AND UGANDA

SUDAN

During a rally a young Sudanese boy holds up an election poster of South Sudan's president Salva Kiir of SPLM, which recently decided to partially boycott the elections. (Source: Wall Street Journal)

ANALYSIS: Vote in Sudan question. The first multi-party vote in Sudan in 24 years is scheduled to take place just days away, but candidates are dropping out of the running and opposition parties are boycotting the elections. On April 6, South Sudan’s main political party, the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) decided to boycott the elections in some northern states. Among the reasons cited for the boycott was the alleged government control of media as well as biased legislation. SPLM secretary general Pagan Amum explained that the party’s candidates would still participate in elections in the southern provinces as well as two regions along the contested north-south boundary line. The Umma Party, a key northern opposition party, has also chosen to boycott the elections after the government did not respond to the party’s request that conditions be reformed.

The opposition parties decided to go forward with the boycott despite President Omar al-Bashir’s threat to stall the 2011 referendum: “If they (the south) say there will be no elections, we will say there will be no referendum – will they accept this?” Bashir remarked during a rally. Many analysts believe that the referendum will result in the South seceding from the North, and becoming an independent state.

The uncertainty that clouded the elections in the final days before the vote did not come as a surprise, as there had been many questionable practices occurring throughout the election process according to various Nongovernmental Organizations and human rights organizations. On March 21 Human Rights Watch stated, “Political repression and other rights violations ahead of the April general elections in Sudan threaten prospects for a free, fair, and credible vote.” Even if the vote went forward, the alleged flaws in the election process led International Crisis Group to say that the
international community “should acknowledge that whoever wins will likely lack legitimacy.” The credibility of the vote was also questioned in light of concerns about voter education and the complexity of the voting process, in which some individuals would have to cast up to 12 ballots. The presidential, legislative and gubernatorial elections were set to begin April 11 and polling was to last two days. (Associated Press, April 7, April 8; Human Rights Watch, March 21; ICG, March 30; IRIN, April 8; Reuters, April 6; Sudan Tribune, April 7; VOA, April 7, 2010)

UGANDA

LRA leader Joseph Kony (center, in white) and other LRA officers (Source: Reuters)

U.S. Congress debates legislation to authorize military action against LRA. The U.S. House of Representatives is debating legislation that would address atrocities being committed by the Ugandan rebel group Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA). On March 11 the Senate passed the Lord’s Resistance Army Disarmament and Northern Uganda Recovery Act, a bipartisan bill that would approve military action and would require President Barack Obama to make a plan to resolve the conflict. Solutions may include rebel demobilization and coordination with governments in the region. The LRA is responsible for a recent wave of civilian murders and kidnappings in villages in Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Details of the most deadly incident in the past few months, a December massacre in the Makombo area of DRC, emerged in just the last few weeks. A March 28 Human Rights Watch report documented the massacre, in which the LRA killed 320 people and kidnapped an additional 250 individuals.

The LRA emerged in the late 1980s in resistance to President Yoweri Museveni. After increasing pressure from the Ugandan armed forces, the rebels retreated into DRC in 2005 and have since been launching violent attacks in CAR and DRC. There has been much speculation recently about the whereabouts of LRA leader Joseph Kony; he is currently thought to be in CAR. Kony and other top
LRA leaders are wanted by the International Criminal Court. The LRA and the Ugandan government engaged in peace talks during 2006-2009. Kony’s attendance and participation was an issue throughout the process, including his repeated failure to sign a peace agreement in 2008. The government announced in 2009 it was stopping the talks. (AllAfrica, March 25; HRW, March 28; LAT, April 5, 2010)

WEST AFRICA

CÔTE D’IVOIRE

Above: "The Elephants" (Source: GoAfrica)

Feature:

UN expands approach in hopes of building sustainable peace. Football is the world’s most popular sport. With this year’s World Cup scheduled to take place in South Africa in June, football is sure to bring tourists, revenue, and international attention to the Continent. Yet the United Nations believes that football can bring something else to one of Africa’s troubled nations: peace.

Officials with the United Nations Operation in Côte d’Ivoire (UNOCI) have announced a new “multi-faceted” plan to build peace among Ivoirians in the lead-up to general elections which have been repeatedly delayed since 2005. In addition to more traditional efforts aimed at ensuring the cooperation of President Laurent Gbagbo and promoting voter registration efforts, the UNOCI
plan calls for organized athletic competitions – a mini marathon and a football tournament – to crystallize relationships among Ivoirians and increase levels of social capital within the country.

“All these initiatives have the same objective,” said a UNOCI spokesperson. Each approach has been aimed at, “maintaining peace and security, preserving the achievements made so… and producing the definitive electoral list as soon as possible.”

While the connection between a football tournament and voter registration efforts may seem vague, the concept of sport as a vehicle for stronger social bonds has been endorsed by the UN for the past decade. Since former Secretary General Kofi Annan created the position of Special Advisor on Sport for Development and Peace in 2001, the UN has held that, “Sport can… help build a culture of peace and tolerance by bringing people together on common ground, crossing national and other boundaries to promote understanding and mutual respect.”

Long a source of excitement for Ivoirians, football has reached new heights in popularity. The national team, affectionately known as “The Elephants” qualified for this year’s World Cup and boasts one of the world’s premier players in forward Didier Drogba. Despite the Elephants’ misfortune in drawing a particularly difficult group of opponents in their first round pool, Ivoirians are hoping that Drogba and newly hired veteran coach Sven-Goran Eriksson can help the club advance to at least the second round.

With many Ivoirians still divided along ethnic, religious, and political lines following years of civil war, exclusionary politics, and false promises of democratic representations, any efforts which carry the prospect of mutual respect and understanding are welcome developments. UNOCI officials hope that the goal of peace will be celebrated by football fans on both sides. (All Africa, April 1; UN Website, Web Newswire, April 4, 2010)

GUINEA

Convalescing Dadis Camara remains an incendiary figure in Guinea despite his prolonged absence (Source: World Bulletin)

One dozen soldiers arrested on mutiny charge. A high level source within the Guinean military has confirmed that a dozen soldiers were arrested April 2 on charges of mutiny and disrupting the peace. The soldiers are alleged to have subdued their commander, seized weapons from the Kaleya military...
barracks located just outside the capital, Conakry, and taken to the streets to incite violence among
the public. On April 1, the source, who chose to remain anonymous, told the African Free Press,
“The arrested soldiers…blocked cars and robbed passengers before entering the center of
Forecariah [a town near the barracks] and firing shots in the air in broad daylight.” Shortly after
reports of the violence surfaced, an elite group of Guinean soldiers arrived to disband the mutinous
outbreak. One dozen soldiers were arrested, including, “the ones suspected of being the brains
behind the operation.”

One such “brain” was Lieutenant Marcel Guilavogui, the nephew and confidant of ousted military
junta leader Moussa Dadis Camara. To some observers, Guilavogui’s leadership links the uprising to
Dadis Camara and hints that the ousted dictator still commands a following in the country—a
worrisome development for Guineans trying to keep ethnic tensions at bay as they prepare for a
transition to democratic rule in June.

Dadis Camara seized power in a military coup in December 2008 and ruled until December 2009,
when he was shot by an aide. He has since been convalescing in Burkina Faso and has ostensibly
renounced his claim to power. Nonetheless, Camara’s presence is still felt in the southeastern forest
region, where ethnic groups loyal to the former dictator threaten to disrupt the transition.

News of the Kaleya uprising comes just weeks after interim president General Sekouba Konaté
delivered a speech at another military barracks in which he warned that any insurrection would be
met with a swift and severe government response. “We will destroy any ethnic-minded person who
will go against the democratic process!” Konaté said to the gathered soldiers in mid-March. “It is a
solemn warning. I know how recruitment has been made but I am warning you.” The recent
developments at Kaleya may test Konaté’s willingness to make good on his earlier admonition.
(Afrique Avenir, March 13; African Free Press, April 3; Reuters, April 2, 2010)

LIBERIA

President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Source: Reuters)
Feature:

Sirleaf launches initiative to empower girls and young women. On March 30, President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf formally launched a national initiative targeting girls and young women throughout Liberia. The Economic Empowerment of Adolescent Girls and Young Women (EPAG) will be a three-year pilot program with the goal of training 2,500 Liberian women ages 16-27. With funding assistance provided by a wide variety of partners – the Clinton Global Initiative, the Nike Foundation, the Government of Denmark, and the World Bank – the program, according to Sirleaf, is, “aimed to increase economic opportunities for adolescent girls as part of efforts to reconstruct our country following a 14-year civil war.”

Currently, over 1,200 young women are enrolled in the program. According to government figures, 65 percent of these women are receiving training in small business operation, while 35 percent are receiving general workforce training. This focus on preparing women for work as entrepreneurs reflects a tailored approach specific to the Liberian economy, which has traditionally relied upon women-run small businesses to provide goods and services. Filling these needs with productive workers is necessary if Liberia is to combat current unemployment levels, which hover at 85 percent, according to the International Labor Organization (ILO).

For Sirleaf, the program represents a new approach to rebuilding the Liberian economy. “EPAG is unique for three key reasons: [it focuses] on girls; it is market driven; and it offers high-quality training. It is, therefore, fair to say,” she continued, “that the EPAG project is not only for girls; it will benefit the entire community.”

During the presidential campaign, Sirleaf had promised to increase training and funding for young women seeking to become entrepreneurs. Though results remain to be seen, the establishment of EPAG is a significant step towards the fulfillment of that promise. Moreover, efforts to boost employment and economic activity in Liberia remain much needed not only for Sirleaf’s campaign pledges to be realized, but also for the sake of long-term peace in the country. In remarks at an IPO conference in 2006, Sirleaf cited the troubling interconnection of, “unemployment and idleness,” both of which “have a propensity for social disenchantment. For us, employment is synonymous to peace.” While EPAG alone will not erase Liberia’s “idleness”, if it can adequately prepare young women to take on roles in an evolving economy, the program can play an important role in combating unemployment trends.

(Africa Review, April 2; All Africa, March 30, March 31; Liberian E-Mansion, March 30, 2010; ILO, June 7, 2006)