WORLD BRIEFS

SOUTH AFRICAN PRESS UPHELD APARTHEID POLICIES

JOHANNESBURG (IPS) — "The mainstream liberal newspapers were guilty of violating the basic human rights of Black people by denying them information," journalist Jon Qwelane told a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) media hearing taking place in Johannesburg. "The existence of separate apartheid-style newspapers necessitated the demarcation of news rules on racial lines. Even if it wasn't said in words, in practice it was there," he said. "I want to charge all the mainstream newspapers, every single one of them, English language and Afrikaans language, with collusion with apartheid," Qwelane said. More than 5,000 newspapers, journals and magazines are registered in South Africa and the major newspaper groups, Times Media Limited (TML), Nasionale Media, Perskor, and Independent Newspapers remain dominated by whites.

HARARE TO HOST SADC WOMEN'S BUSINESS EXPO

HARARE, Zimbabwe (PANA) — Harare will host a Southern African Development Community (SADC) women's exposition from Nov. 19 to 26. The effort is aimed at giving women-owned, small-scale enterprises commercial exposure. Organized by the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) in collaboration with the United Nations Volunteers (UNV), the expo will also provide a forum for women to discuss specific constraints and opportunities in developing their enterprises. "The expo will address the need of breaking the isolation of small-scale producers to give them and their products commercial exposure," organizers said. The expo will exhibit, among others things, mining products, ceramics, carpentry products, textiles and leather products. Community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, government and private organizations working with women's groups will also participate at the exposition.

UNDP TO HELP ZAMBIA ESTABLISH DISASTER UNIT

LUSAKA, Zambia (PANA) — The United Nations Development Program has signed an agreement to help Zambia establish a disaster management and mitigation unit. The deal is intended to strengthen Zambia's capacity to deal with disasters. UNDP's acting resident representative in Zambia, Omoefe Oyaide, said that although accidents and natural disasters such as drought could not be prevented completely, their impact on the population and the economy could be mitigated if appropriate response measures were in place. "It is our hope that if and when they do arise, the country will be ready to respond quickly and effectively," he said. Zambia is not prone to earthquakes and severe cyclones. However, the country has had its share of natural and man-made disasters like droughts, road, air and mining accidents, the influx of refugees and the recent spate of fires in which property has been lost.

INTERNATIONAL

Global investment boom bypasses Africa

Special to Sentinel-Voice

BONN (IPS) — The world's poorest countries, mostly in Africa, are being left behind as other developing nations take advantage of increasing flows of foreign investment to the South, according to a report released by trade officials.

Africa, home to 34 of the world's 48 lesser-developed countries (LDCs), is lagging behind as growth in foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Asian and Latin America-Caribbean regions sets new records, say experts from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

"Overall, Africa's share (excluding South Africa) of developing country inflows was less than four percent in 1996, its lowest share since the early 1980s, and a further indication that the region is not participating in the global FDI boom," says UNCTAD's "World Investment Report 1977: Transnational Corporations, Market Structure and Competition Policy."

If South Africa is added, FDI inflows into Africa were slightly ahead of 1995 levels at $5.3 billion, compared to $4.9 billion, but below the continental record of $5.8 billion in 1994.

Africa's oil-producing countries took slightly more than 70 percent of the FDI that did come to Africa in 1996, with Nigeria by far the largest single recipient. Nigeria drew $1.71 billion in FDI in 1996, followed by Egypt, which drew $740 million. The LDCs, countries with a per capita gross national product of less than $699 and a maximum population of 75 million, can only stand and watch as new FDI flows into resource-rich countries like Nigeria, burgeoning new markets like China, or strategic traders like Singapore.

FDI into Latin America and the Caribbean rose by 52 percent in 1996, the largest increase attained by any region of the developing world. With inflows of $39 billion, in comparison to $25 billion in 1995, Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 30 percent of all FDI flows into developing countries.

Caribbean region joins forces on trade

By Wesley Gibbings
Special to Sentinel-Voice

PORT OF SPAIN (IPS) — Latin American and Caribbean researchers are keeping a close eye on the performance of trade and investment arrangements in the area under six regional integration schemes that have been posting steady growth over the past few years.

Intra-regional exports among the various blocs within the hemisphere increased by 150 percent between 1990 and 1995.

One study conducted by the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean concludes that the phenomenal impact of trade growth among members of the Central American Common Market (CACM) and the Southern Common Market (Mercosur) has the potential to spread to other regional and sub-regional groupings such as the Caribbean Community (Caricom), a 15-member grouping.

Next in importance are the ties between the Group of Three (G3) and the CACM and Caricom. Then come relations the Andean Community has with CACM and Caricom. The weakest links are to be found in Mercosur's ties with CACM and Caricom and CACM/Caricom relations.

Colombia and Venezuela are both members of the G3 and the Andean Community. Venezuela, Mexico, Brazil and Colombia are the Latin American countries that do the most business with the CACM and Caricom.

Mexico, with a population of 90 million, Colombia, with 34 million, and Venezuela, with 24 million, are also a part of the Association of Caribbean States. Analysts say they are big enough to provide a market for Caricom goods and services.

"These countries are large enough to absorb these surpluses and if we are able to reach new agreements on trade, the various restrictions which have been imposed by some Caricom countries will surely be something of the past," one analyst says.

Caricom, currently wrestling with its own efforts to establish a single market, accounts for just two percent of all exports in the Latin American and Caribbean region, while trade among the Caribbean countries themselves has never exceeded 12 percent of total trade.

One expert is also arguing that improving intra-regional investment can enhance trade between the regional groupings to the advantage of the smaller territories of Central America and the Caribbean.

Chilean economist Eduardo Gana has also observed a virtual convergence of tariff levels among the various groupings and says that Mercosur, the Andean Community, CACM, and Caricom tariff rates are now quite similar.

Minimum values are in the region of nine percent in El Salvador, Bolivia and Uruguay, while maximum values of between 13 and 17 percent can be found in Honduras, Nicaragua, Peru and Argentina.

In tariff terms, the greatest market opportunities for Caricom countries in Latin American Integration Association (LAIA) countries — notably Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Mexico and Venezuela — are in the areas of farm products (in Argentina and Brazil) and in mining products and certain branches of industry, such as chemicals, basic metals, paper and printed matter.

Gana, however, argues that while there have been a number of agreements between countries in LAIA, CACM and Caricom "they have not generated all the positive effects hoped for."