

## WORLD BRIEFS

### BENIN SIGNS AFRICAN ENERGY COMMISSION CONVENTION

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia (PANA)-Benin became the second OAU member state (after Algeria) to sign the convention on the establishment of the proposed African Energy Commission. The country's ambassador, Georges Whannou, who is based in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), signed the document, said an OAU release issued in Addis Ababa. Whannou stated that his country was pleased to be in the forefront in signing the important instrument and would hasten to ratify it to ensure the speedy establishment of the commission. The assistant OAU Secretary General responsible for administration and finance, Vijay S. Makhan, who received the envoy, underscored the importance of the convention. He paid tribute to Benin's commitment to the goals of the continental organization and suggested that Cotonou could play a bigger role during the transition to the African Union by appointing a Resident Permanent Representative to the OAU. Whannou also signed the Protocol to the Treaty Establishing the Pan African Economic community, Pan-African Parliament, the African Maritime Transport Charter and the Convention for the Establishment of the African Center for Fertilizer Development.

### NIGERIAN STATE'S GOVERNMENT TACKLES CHOLERA OUTBREAK

KANO, Nigeria (PANA)-Authorities of Kano state in northern Nigeria have set up four medical committees charged with treating victims of the cholera outbreak, which has claimed more than 500 lives in the state. Kano Health Commissioner Mansir Kabir, told PANA that members of the committees would travel the state to treat the victims in their homes, as part of efforts to reduce the fatalities resulting from the infectious disease, characterized by chronic diarrhea and vomiting. Kabir said the medical officials would also chlorinate wells and provide health education to residents in the state. Contaminated water and poor sanitary conditions are some of the reasons being adduced for the cholera outbreak, even though the commissioner also said it could be linked to a similar outbreak in the neighboring Niger Republic. The cholera outbreak hit Kano and two neighboring states, Katsina and Jigawa. Most of the victims in Kano are being treated at the Infectious Diseases Hospital in the state capital, the only hospital in the state equipped with facilities to treat such health problems. International assistance to tackle the problem has not been forthcoming, probably due to fallout of the controversy generated by the alleged unethical testing of some CSM (Cerebro Spinal Meningitis) drugs on some children in the state by American pharmaceutical company Pfizer.

### SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTER SAYS RABID AFRO-PESSIMISM IS ON THE RETREAT

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (PANA)-South Africa's deputy foreign minister Aziz Pahad says the rabid Afro-pessimism that prevailed a few years ago is on the retreat and positive events on the continent have proven many skeptics wrong. In an address to the South African Institute of International Affairs in Cape Town, Pahad said the reality is that the last 10 years have seen a move towards multiparty democracies throughout the continent. He pointed out that since the early 1990s, 42 of 48 sub-Saharan states have held multiparty presidential or parliamentary elections. "These developments signal a realization that for African to develop, countries need to adopt policies aimed at providing democracy, good governance and human rights. "There are of course exceptions to these changes, but these are outnumbered by countries willing to adopt change," Pahad said. He said the OUA Summit held in Algiers in July 1999 heralds one of the positive turning points in the continent's history, because a firm commitment was made to devise a foundation for Africa's recovery. Pahad said the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is a pledge by African leaders, based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development. "The initiative is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world.

## INTERNATIONAL

# Powell: Opposition agrees to talks

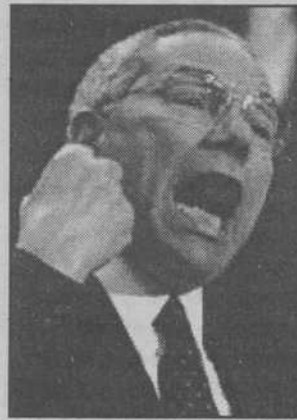
WASHINGTON (AP) - The victorious northern alliance has agreed to participate in U.N.-brokered talks about forming a new power-sharing government in Afghanistan, Secretary of State Colin Powell said.

"The purpose of the meeting would be to bring together a number of leaders representing different parts of Afghanistan, different ethnicities, different tribes, and see if we can get an interim government in place and then stand up a broader government over time," Powell said.

A string of successes over the past week has enabled alliance forces that once controlled a small part of northern Afghanistan to command two-thirds of the country, including the capital, Kabul.

The United States has pressured the northern alliance to share power with other factions - including Pashtuns in the south - and to let the United Nations oversee assembly of a new government.

Powell hoped the meeting organized by the top U.N.



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envoy for Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, would take place in days but did not say where it would be held. "We've got to get this moving," he said on "Fox News Sunday."

"The holdup had been the northern alliance," Powell said, "and with this announcement today, we should be able to move forward quickly." The breakthrough came as a result of meetings in the region between northern alliance leaders and James Dobbins, the Bush administration's special envoy for Central Asia.

The foreign minister for Afghanistan's deposed presi-

dent said Sunday that a delegation "should be heading hopefully soon into Europe" for talks, alliance spokesman Haron Amin said in Washington. Amin said the minister, Abdullah, indicated that Germany was a possible site for the gathering.

"It's very important for the international community to be part of this whole peace process," Amin said on CBS' "Face the Nation." He also said the participation of "all ethnic groups on a proportional basis" is critical to the success of a new government.

Brahimi has outlined plans for a two-year transitional government backed by a multinational security force.

Powell hopes the meeting can lead to the beginning of administrative control of Kabul in advance of a "more comprehensive, broad-based government."

That, in turn, "may well require some military presence on the ground" to ensure the delivery of humanitarian supplies or provide "a level of stability in the towns that are being liberated," he said on ABC's "This Week."

Powell also played down the direct role of Afghanistan's exiled king, 86-year-old Mohammad Zahir Shah, in ruling the country.

"It seems to me that his role would continue to be symbolic as opposed to being the executive or the chief executive of the new government," Powell said.

The secretary said he believed suspected terrorist mastermind Osama bin Laden still was in Afghanistan, though on the run from U.S. airstrikes. "I have seen no intelligence or information to suggest" he has left, Powell said.

"It's getting harder for him to hide, as more and more territory is removed from Taliban control," Powell said. "I don't think there's any country in the region that would be anxious to give him guest privileges if he showed up."

On the military front, U.S. B-52s bombed Taliban positions in the hills outside the city of Konduz, the last Taliban foothold in the north.

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## Haitian human rights advocates threatened with death

By Ives Marie Chanel

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (IPS)-President Jean-Bertrand Aristide's government is under pressure to ensure the safety of human rights advocates and activists following a recent series of death threats against them.

The Platform of Haitian Human Rights Organizations (POHDH), a coalition of about a dozen groups, said threats have been made against the lives of some 15 prominent rights workers in the country.

In a twist suggestive of state complicity, the names of the 15 appeared on a list reportedly circulated by top police officials.

They include Serge Bordenave, a jurist who and POHDH secretary-general, and Pierre Esperance, executive director of the Haitian office of the National Coalition for Haitian Rights (NCHR), which is based in New York.

Six human rights groups, in a letter to Aristide, urged him to ensure the safety of the people whose names appear on the apparent hit list.

The letter's signatories included the International Center for Legal Resources and

the Christian Committee for Human Rights in Latin America.

They also requested that appropriate measures be taken to find and dismantle the groups issuing the threats.

"We have condemned this situation. We have no desire to go underground, and will continue to do our jobs. Impunity in this country must end," Esperance told IPS.

"We have information from reliable sources that several top police officials feel threatened after a meeting with President Aristide, who asked them to correct the situations we've pointed out. They have decided to act," Bordenave added.

The NCHR sent Jean Marie Cherestal, Haitian prime minister and president of the Superior Council of the Haitian National Police (CSPNH), a written complaint against politicization, human rights violations, and corruption in the police department.

The document states militants from human rights organizations are being targeted for their opposition to Aristide's "Operation Zero Tolerance" crime-fighting initiative.

Aristide announced the drive Jun. 28 at central police headquarters. Human rights organizations denounced it as an invitation to violence, political assassination, and vigilante justice.

Their warnings appeared to be vindicated when, according to a subsequent account in the leading daily newspaper *Le Nouvelliste*, a witness described seeing a summary execution of a robbery suspect in front of the presidential palace.

The witness said police officers were escorting the suspect to court from the Anti-Gang and Investigative Service, housed next door to the palace, when an assembled crowd began stoning him.

He was then shot in the head.

Similar lynchings have been reported all over the country and most are said to occur with at least the tacit approval of police officials.

Each incident has drawn criticism from rights groups.

In turn, Paul Raymond and Rene Civil, two leaders of grassroots organizations close to the ruling Lavalas party, have accused the rights groups of supporting the opposition.

Raymond and Civil have demanded that the government use the "zero tolerance" policy against the human rights activists.

The two are themselves the objects of arrest warrants in connection with the April 3, 2000, murder of journalist Jean Leopold Dominique but police have yet to serve out the warrants.

Human rights groups, meanwhile, have documented a dozen cases in which individuals found guilty of human rights violations, corruption and illegal drug trafficking were allowed to join the police force-and in some cases were promoted to command positions.

"The human rights situation has deteriorated because of impunity," Esperance said.

The NCHR has said it has growing evidence that armed civilian groups are operating in close cooperation with public agencies and with the tacit approval of police.

It also has described Haiti as being in the grip of "worrisome" political intolerance.

Law enforcement officials, however, say they are using necessary force to combat unacceptable levels of crime.