
International Intelligence

South Africa Says 'No' To Nuclear Apartheid

South Africa is holding off joining the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership that restricts participants from reprocessing uranium, supposedly as a means of preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons technology.

The Sept. 19 *Mail & Guardian* reports that South Africa does not want to join the U.S.-led initiative, according to Minerals and Energy Affairs Minister Buyelwa Sonjica, because it does not want to give up its right to enrich uranium.

Exporting uranium only to import it refined, instead of enriching it in South Africa, would be "in conflict with our national policy" said Sonjica in Vienna. South Africa is looking for international partners to develop uranium enrichment. It abandoned its nuclear weapons program in the 1990s, but is now set to expand its civilian atomic program.

Earthlife Africa, South Africa's main anti-nuclear lobby group, is now claiming that it is worried about how the South African government will deal with nuclear waste.

According to Solly Phetla, of the Department of Minerals and Energy, used nuclear fuel is not waste, because it can be reprocessed, and 95% of materials recycled, with only 5% remaining to be disposed of. And it too can be used, providing valuable isotopes.

UN Drug Czar Lauds Myanmar and China

Antonio Maria Costa, executive director of the UN anti-drug agency, said, in an interview with the Sept. 18 *International Herald Tribune*, "From our vantage point, we see a region that is rapidly moving towards an opium-free status." The newspaper writes: "Three decades ago, the northernmost reaches of Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar produced more than 70% of all opium sold worldwide, most of it refined into heroin. Today the area averages about 5% of the world total, according to the UN Office on

Drugs and Crime."

The paper also notes that (U.S.-occupied) Afghanistan "is now the source of an estimated 92% of the world's opium, according to the United Nations, which bases its statistics on satellite imagery of poppy fields." Even more damning, the UN reports that "the shift to Afghanistan has led to a near doubling of global opium production."

In contrast, a politically motivated report released Sept. 17 by the U.S. State Department states, "Burma [Myanmar] and Venezuela have failed demonstrably during the previous 12 months to adhere to their obligations under international counternarcotics agreements, and take the measures set forth in U.S. law."

Afghanistan, however, although listed as a drug producer in the U.S. report, was not denounced as "failing miserably," despite its record-setting heroin production.

Also striking about the UN report is the recognition that China has played the central role in cleaning up the Golden Triangle. The *International Herald Tribune* writes: "Thanks in part to Chinese pressure, the area of Myanmar along the Chinese border that once produced about 30% of the country's opium was last year declared opium-free by the United Nations."

British PM Brown Goes After Zimbabwe

Scrambling to put regime change in Zimbabwe back on the top of the agenda, after the progress of South African President Thabo Mbeki's mediation there, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown has threatened to boycott the summit of European Union and African leaders if Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe is allowed to attend.

Announcing his decision in an article in *The Independent*, the Prime Minister said he is not prepared to be at the same conference as a leader responsible for the "abuse" of his own people, widespread torture, and the intimidation of political opponents.

Portugal, which has called the first European Union-African Union summit

in seven years, has invited Mugabe because other African leaders want him to attend. If his invitation were withdrawn, the meeting could collapse.

Brown holds out the carrot of a huge financial package from the U.K. and other Western and African nations to rebuild the country—but only if Mugabe is removed from power.

Just two days before Brown went public with his attempt to sabotage the summit, the South African Cabinet welcomed a recent breakthrough between Zimbabwe's ruling ZANU-PF and the opposition MDC party, on key draft constitutional amendments that could resolve the principal differences and allow for new elections to go forward.

Ecuador-Argentina Ties: 'Cause for Celebration'

Speaking at a state dinner Sept. 19 during his first visit to Argentina as head of state, Ecuador's President Rafael Correa paid tribute to outgoing Argentine President Néstor Kirchner, who will leave office in December.

Since his 2003 election, Kirchner has been a thorn in the side of the international financial oligarchy, because he has bucked its free-market dictates. The financial vultures are also enraged about Correa, whom Kirchner described at the dinner as "a President who will write a very important new page in his country's history, [and is] willing to pose an alternative to the neo-liberal models that have exhausted and destroyed our region."

In its own fight against "the tragedy of neo-liberalism," Correa said, Ecuador has been inspired by the example that Kirchner has set for the region "and the world."

Correa also referenced Argentina's assistance in the restructuring of Ecuador's foreign debt, and the fact that the two leaders have joined together to create a new, regional financial entity, the Bank of the South, "which is an expression of the sovereignty of our peoples." The solidarity between Ecuador and Argentina "is a cause for celebration," he declared.