

Rebirth%20of%20the%20Third%20World

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Rebirth of the Third World

by Jerome Teelucksingh

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Thousands of years ago, Latin America, India and Africa had achieved the status and respect of today's First World countries. Their ancient civilizations could boast of advanced culture, architecture, literature and philosophy; whilst the rest of the world was primitive, uncivilized or barbaric. At the dawn of a new millennium these roles are sadly reversed and seem permanent.

The twin evils of imperialism and colonialism have wreaked havoc on billions of persons throughout human history. The results were irreversible psychological, social and economic damage due to invasions, slavery and forced annexations. These dastardly acts of conquest opened a Pandora's Box of racism, religious bigotry, mineral exploitation, poverty, disease, environmental destruction, oppressive ideologies and countless wars. There was a continuous onslaught against indigenous people which was initiated by European discoverers and explorers. Indigenous people endured burnt villages, confiscation of their land, stolen treasures and looted pyramids. This was part of a sad encounter involving greed and wanton destruction. The centuries of pillage and brutal exploitation of Third World countries are now proudly displayed in museums and archives of First World countries.

However, these grave injustices cannot be used an excuse for operating in an inferior mode on the world stage. Neither apologies from former imperial powers for their past actions nor the casual signing of an agreement will allow for the exploitation to be abruptly curtailed. Today, in developing countries, millions of persons are trapped in vicious cycles of crippling

poverty, mass starvation, the HIV/AIDS pandemic, unemployment and oppressive political regimes. They are painfully enduring genocides, illiteracy, overpopulation, infectious diseases, corruption, desertification, uncontrolled crime, a deplorable health care system and a lack of clean water. The debt burdens, civil strife and regional wars deplete already scarce human and material resources.

The remnants of slavery and colonialism have resurfaced with the emergence of multinational corporations and the implementation of infamous divide and rule policies remain. This neo-colonialism and neo-imperialism are disturbing legacies which constantly disrupt the fabric of fragile developing economies.

The future of the world largely depends on the choices and directions taken by the Third World. The present utilisation of resources and operation of social, economic and political systems need to be modified. The materialization of the self-determination of citizens of the Third World will result in the radical transformation of its role and contribution to world affairs.

All developing countries must adopt a Pan Third World outlook. What is this perspective? It is more than merely a philosophy or abstract concept but an attitude, a way of life and the essence being the urgent need to improve lives and end suffering. The survival of the fittest is applicable to the struggle among countries in the South. In developing societies, the disadvantaged and voiceless are imbued with survival tactics, an extra level of tolerance and a keen sense of discovering the means of continuing the next generation.

Why must developing countries as India, Africa, China, Central Europe, Caribbean and Latin America be continuously jeopardized by economic and social problems ? Why must the Third World forever endure the ignominy of being in a state of uncontrolled flux ? These crises are interrelated and interconnected. Additionally, these crises did not suddenly arise and unless the problems can be traced and properly dealt with, then they will worsen.

The Third World must be truly independent and proud of its accomplishments. They have produced winners of Nobel Prizes and dominated such sports as cricket and soccer whilst their athletes have won the lion's share of Olympic medals. Similarly, their literary minds, philosophers, political scientists and revolutionary leaders have made immense contributions to the world's knowledge.

Yet, whilst many can boast of the achievements of developing countries, a vicious cycle has been evolving. After Third World countries have invested precious human and natural resources to train teachers, professionals, students and scientists, the developed countries

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unscrupulously enter these relatively poor countries to recruit their prized professionals to work abroad for a lucrative salary. The leader must be aware that the residents of a developing country, especially professionals and those with unfulfilled ambitions, are constantly tempted to migrate to a developed country. Why ? Because within a fragile economy, the grass on the other side always looks greener. Indeed, the lure of political stability and efficient social services are some of the factors which serve as an impulse for migration.

Why must a poor, struggling country have its brightest minds and talented citizens siphoned off to already wealthy developed countries ? This is a grave injustice and the brain drain must be curtailed. Developed countries should be training their own people and not adopt the lazy and unethical approach of constantly seeking diligent and skilled immigrants to continue building their economies at the expense of weaker less developed countries. The recruiting countries have failed to realise that the Third World countries, without their best minds and bodies, will suffer and be vulnerable to political, economic and social instability. And, then it will be the developed countries that will point a scolding finger, chastise, intervene or offer financial assistance to a crisis or problem that seems to be regularly associated with the Third World. Usually, if a developed country's investment is at stake or its people are at risk this would prove to be a factor prompting assistance to a Third World country.

Why would a First World country constantly demand the physical and mental labour from the Third World ? Is it not enough that they are already exploiting the natural resources of the Third World ? There is now the urgency for Third World countries to intervene and volunteer services to other developing countries that are undergoing a political upheaval or experienced a natural disaster.

The remedy for developing countries is that they must recognize and laud their scholars, scientists, artistes, businessmen, artists, sporting heroes and professionals for sacrifices and achievements. These persons will provide the role models for the youths of the nation. Furthermore, in acknowledging contributions this will serve the dual purpose of fostering nationalism and patriotism among citizens who might then be less inclined to emigrate.

Citizens of the Third World must be aware of the advantages of remaining rather than migrating and of contributing rather than criticising. Thus, the inhabitants of developing economies must be aware and appreciate their history, culture and more importantly, their role in rebuilding the society. Among the basic requirements of a society seeking a high productivity is the existence of a reliable security force, an efficient health service, unbiased legal system, clean water, reduction in crime, affordable food prices and political stability.

One of the obvious problems facing Third World citizens is an inadequate sense of their heritage and distorted identity. The concept of nationhood is often not properly constructed and fostered. Possessing and displaying a national dish, currency, animal, instrument, motto, flag and anthem is not sufficient. These are only external symbols and common throughout the world's nations. Supporting a sporting team or participating in a festival is superficial patriotism. Certainly this is only one component of the criteria essential in formulating a nation's identity.

Why must the Third World suffer as a result of recession, inflation or a global financial crisis that originated in a developed country? A major irony in the game of capitalism is that the First World countries with their strong currencies and gold reserves which empower them with a global clout are very dependent on the Third World. If the Third World established its own currency, developed a stock exchange, formed an exclusive trading bloc and prevented migration to developed countries, there will definitely be a world crisis which would seriously undermine the First World. There will only be some semblance of equality and fair play when countries in the South are treated on an equal basis with First World countries.

Why must a Third World nation, seeking partial debt forgiveness, bow to the demands of a prosperous First World country? The Third World must be respected and treated with dignity. They must not be held at economic ransom and be forced to compromise cherished moral and ethical principles. Despite considerable debt cancellation and debtor relief, there seems to be no end to the problem. Obviously this has hindered reconstruction in such countries as Argentina, Bolivia, Bangladesh, Albania, Hungary and Nicaragua. Increasing the financial aid and material assistance to developing countries is only a partial answer to the crippling debt crisis.

Unfortunately, it seems that the Third World has become a financial black hole which forever needs and owes money. These countries cannot continue being debtors, dependent nations and monetary parasites. There must be a decision to escape from the financial abyss and stop accepting international charity and handouts. Only then can these nations boast of being truly independent. Their difficult fight for political independence and bloody severing of colonial umbilical cords must not be in vain. Thus their politically independent status must be carefully guarded, preserved and reflected in their economy.

The Second World, i.e. those countries that have achieved a certain level of growth, and are classified in a higher economic bracket, cannot abandon the Third World. The Second World needs to share knowledge, ideas and technology to ensure more of the least developed countries can be promoted into the more economically refined and respected status of Second World. Likewise, in the basic and traditional class structure, the middle class, cannot forsake

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their former class status and aspire for the life of the upper class. Now, more than ever, there is need to assist the less fortunate, inspire the depressed and those plagued with misfortunes because it is those persons formerly in the oppressed lower class who would best understand the troubles being experienced.

The complexity of the global order is that the Third World, if it is to improve, needs the assistance of the First World. It is a dilemma because as much as the First World blames the developing economies for some of the world's ills— such as overpopulation and pollution, the First World cannot exist without the human and natural resources of developing countries. There is a symbiotic relationship between these two major spheres of the world. Once the Third World is united it will be better able to bargain and trade with the First World.

In the Caribbean and Latin America, the United States has proven to be a bully with many disguises. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the United States' foreign policies such as Dollar Diplomacy, Monroe Doctrine, Good Neighbour and Big Stick, have been a curse to the region and were designed to closely monitor the economic and political developments of these neighbouring countries.

Sanctions against a country should be condemned. Why should the folly of one leader be responsible for the fate of millions of innocent persons ? Another effective and less debilitating, yet peaceful, strategy should be implemented. For almost half a century, the United States spitefully enforced an embargo on Cuba. This should have been an opportunity for Third World countries to openly condemn this action and display solidarity for a fellow nation in crisis. Instead the majority of developing countries were concerned with self-preservation and maintaining good relations with the United States and international organizations. Undoubtedly, the United States, with its naval base, is a squatter at Guantánamo Bay in Cuba. They have no right or justification to inhabit part of Cuba or any other country. The United States has used that base to air its dirty laundry from the prying eyes of the United States public and its most recent 'guests' being Iraqi prisoners of war.

Likewise, the involvement of the United States in the Middle East and the subsequent invasion of Iraq was an excuse to protect oil interests and ensure there was no disruption of the precious supply of oil to the United States. However, the United States conveniently used the leadership of Saddam Hussein as an excuse for intervention. The Third World must stop being cowards and hypocrites. They must play an active role in changing the course of international relations. They must reject the paternal autocracy which governs their relationship with developed countries.

The cowardly actions of Osama Bin Laden in destroying the World Trade Center in New

York resulted in Islam being stigmatised as a religion of destruction, hate and terrorism. Also, the search by the United States for one spineless, cold-blooded individual meant the killing and suffering of hundreds of innocent women and children and destruction of cultural artefacts in Afghanistan. The United States undertook the role of a vigilante and ignored the rational and logical advice of the United Nations and other countries.

The money and effort wasted to destroy Iraq and Afghanistan could have been wisely used to assist in the battle against AIDS or curb drug trafficking. It is ironic that after destroying Iraq, the United States embarked on a programme to rebuild the devastated country. Whilst one hand is destroying the other hand is reconstructing. A well-rehearsed role which is deserving of an Academy Award from Hollywood. It seems like a deliberate ploy to forever keep certain countries in a dependency state and maintain the global status quo. Additionally, First World countries will be very eager to initiate and prolong conflicts to justify their military spending and paranoid security measures.

The United States and other developed countries must stop meddling in the affairs of other countries. The United States government is guilty of using the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to destabilize countries and plan assassinations of foreign leaders. Instead the United States should deal with its domestic crises such as the massacres in schools by teenagers at Colorado in 1999 and Minnesota in 2005, and the psychopaths who are serial killers. Likewise, Britain should examine itself in the mirror and try to curb the increase in smoking and alcoholism among its teenagers, the rise in divorces and increase in racism. Nobody anointed developed countries as global policemen to patrol the world maintaining peace and security.

Substantial international intervention is needed to protect weaker countries because ignoring or isolating any problem further reduces the chances for speedy cordial international relations. Now more than ever, there is a need for mediators to act wisely and speedily in such conflict situations. There should neither be insubordination nor alienation.

The reality of the world's present economic system is that it thrives on inequalities and competition. There is a need to seriously undertake the challenge to reduce inequalities instead of passively accepting that the social problems of a capitalistic society are irreversible. The intellectuals and activists cannot keep accepting and believing that poverty and unemployment will always exist. Those in authority are afraid to disturb the status quo and dismantle certain aspects of the world's economic system for fear of catastrophic repercussions. This is a precaution that contributes to untold suffering and death. Capitalism is allowed to thrive in an environment which fosters neo-imperialism and neo-capitalism. But this is only because a practical, viable alternative system has not been devised.

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It is probably one of the world's glaring paradoxes that the Third World countries receive monetary aid from developed countries, who lack a conscience, which initially became industrialised and wealthy as a result of earlier (and still continuing) exploitation of mental and physical labour from these very developing economies. This financial assistance would eventually be returned in the repayment of a Third World debt to a developed country. The monies from the repaid debt would be used to both improve the First World country and again used as aid to a developing nation. In effect, capital is being 'recycled' and little remains in the Third World.

There is a need to vigorously promote a positive Third World consciousness among the Third World diaspora residing in First World or developed countries. The taxes paid by the Third World immigrants residing in First World countries return as international aid to the developing countries of these migrants. The diaspora from countries in the South should realize their pivotal role and must pledge a greater commitment, both intellectual and financial, to ensure a stable and permanent path of progress in their former homelands. The task of rebuilding is an uphill journey but the rewards far outweigh the sacrifices.

Second and third generations of Third World immigrants must realise that their past is rooted in the Third World. They must awaken and increase the overall support for the Third World movement. In a strict geographical or economic sense the Third World can be identified but with increasing immigration to the First World, the boundaries of the Third World will soon be ambiguous and difficult to define. Interestingly, there are sections of First World countries that have parallel conditions to the Third World. Thus, there are slums and overcrowded towns which create a Third World scenario within the developed countries. It is these crowded cities that are the magnets which attract Third World migration. Everyone has a role to play in aiding the Third World immigrants and understanding the plight of refugees. Their problems are often complex and involve situations which many in First World countries will never encounter.

Economic and political ideologies are nightmares which have failed humanity. The promises of equality, full employment and happiness remain as illusions. Possibly because of the need for humans to have freedom and also the greed for an unequal share in natural resources. It is certainly human nature rather than the economic system which perpetuates and intensifies many of today's social problems.

There is a need to develop new, more effective tactics, design better policies and monitor their implementation in an effort to eradicate and solve the crisis in all developing countries. Undoubtedly, developing societies must be carefully analysed and the necessary models imported from First World countries cannot simply be implemented. These must be properly

tailored and monitored to ensure the impact of legislation is beneficial to the majority, rather than a minority of the population. This would demand high levels of creativity as those concerned with improving the suffering masses search for and experiment with different economic and political systems.

Why must a developing country's currency be so devalued and worthless that its people are forced to sell body organs ? Why must thousands die because of a lack of basic medicine or food ? In developing countries the basic law of Economics-- supply and demand, is not consistent. There is always a high demand because supply is usually low. Even when supply is plentiful, the demand remains high because of the fear that the supply would soon be low. It is this basic overturning of the law of supply and demand which is an indicator of the serious state of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). Political and economic concepts and phrases such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP) are meaningless to the poor. The unemployed and the poor working class do not care about these economic terms relating to the productivity of a country. One thought is on the minds of those in poverty and struggling on a daily basis – survival.

There is a need for the Third World to take a great leap backward and seriously assess their course of action. Why ? Because they are unwilling participants in a pseudo international economic order in which the developed countries continue to dominate trade and the developing countries are given token roles, a voice but no power, and deceived into believing they will benefit. Poorer nations are hurtling headlong in a mad rush to embrace globalization without understanding the drastic implications on their economies.

Social service organisations as the Rotary, Kiwanis and Lions coupled with religious leaders need to desperately increase their collaboration with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society organisations, volunteers, international bodies and concerned citizens to ensure that such priorities as the progress and peace among developing nations are achieved. The need for networking cannot be exhausted. Among developing countries, there is a need to strengthen the bonds of friendship and encourage the exchange of ideas, technology and labour.

Each citizen of the Third World, who is mentally and physically able, should be involved in some form of worthy activism or voluntary endeavour. No activity is too simple, too insignificant and unworthy if it involves easing the burdens of another living creature. Each drop of sweat, every cent, every second spent in a worthwhile activity will surely go a long way in saving souls and improving the environment in the Third World. Citizens must be taught to avoid postponing, until retirement or later in life, the decision to begin an activity that could save someone's life today and increase the happiness of a soul. Many

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underestimate the power of one person making a difference. The burden of the world must not be on the shoulders of a few humanitarians and philanthropists.

One of the major barriers to unity of the Third World is religion. There is a need for peace among the diverse religions, denominations and sects. For too long innocents persons have been killed and scorned by others of different religious faiths. Over the centuries, millions of lives have been lost and psychologically scarred due to religious wars and forced proselytization. The tensions are further complicated with fundamentalists and radicals claiming their action is justified because it is done in the name of God.

Many persons need to be re-taught and re-socialized into understanding the fact that this world and humanity existed before organised religion. Furthermore, there is a need to be aware that religion was meant to improve and strengthen the relationship between humanity and God. Instead, many unscrupulous persons use religion as a mask and shield to accomplish earthly goals. It is unfortunate that in the name of religion many are oppressed, deceived, exploited and condemned. Does God want or expect these antisocial actions ? Some certainly act in a self-righteous manner as if God is bloodthirsty, revengeful and enjoys human suffering.

Many Christians from developed countries seem concerned with saving the souls of 'heathens', 'pagans' and 'idol-worshippers' resident in the poorer countries of the world. These pseudo-Christians offer a hollow salvation which cannot alleviate the poverty and pain of the poor. The extravagant televangelists live comfortable lifestyles and wallow in their ill-gotten riches. These charlatans and Judases offer useless plasters to cover festering political sores and a crippled economy. Their public healings are like circuses with a gullible audience. They expect the poor to wear a crown of thorns, bear heavy crosses and still generously contribute from their pittance.

No religion is better than another religion. Likewise, no religion or denomination guarantees a place in Heaven, a better life after death, more happiness or a quicker path to enlightenment than another religion or denomination. Thus, to embrace all of humanity there is a need to emphasize similarities rather than differences in the religious teachings. Christians, Hindus, Muslims, Jews, Buddhists and tribal religions must join hands and rid their hearts and minds of petty jealousies and trivial squabbles.

Countries experiencing religious friction can take steps to defuse this tension by promoting inter-religious contact at schools, forums, festivals, public and private gatherings. Gradual and increasing awareness of various belief systems will sow the seeds of religious peace.

Even the condemnation of atheists and agnostics by religious persons needs to be questioned. Why ? Because these are expressions of speech that should be allowed to exist or at least be tolerated in a democracy. Open-minded and rational persons must initiate the process in the home and ensure its continuation and success.

Another major challenge facing developing countries is the curse of racism. There is need for more racial and ethnic tolerance. One of the common traits of humans is the tendency to hate, alienate, condemn and destroy fellow humans due to physical differences. Belonging to a particular ethnic group is further complicated as this often means adhering to certain religious doctrines and cultural practices. Opposition and discrimination based on inherent physical characteristics must stop.

The wounds of racial bigotry and ethnic strife are deep and far-reaching. Tribal differences in Africa or Latin America, polarization of various ethnicities in the Pacific, Caribbean, South America, and caste prejudices in Asia— are all responsible for untold suffering, sadness and loss of lives. The struggle between the Third and First Worlds cannot be simplified as poor versus rich or Blacks against Whites. In developing economies as Central Europe, there are persons with blue eyes, white skin and blond hair. They suffer from similar problems as fellow Third World coloured citizens in India and Africa.

The Third World needs more positive voices and minds as a medium to transmit a message of understanding and peace among the various ethnic groups. If there is to be positive change, then an entire generation must be radically transformed in its mode of thinking and lifestyle. There is an urgent need to effectively use the media (radio, internet, television, newspaper and cinema) to promote the positive aspects of peaceful co-existence in ethnically and religiously diverse societies. A simple act of being more tolerant in the workplace, community and home will not only positively influence others but teach children, the next generation, to love and not discriminate in a multicultural setting.

Third World countries need to embark on a social and moral revolution to reverse and curb the continued importation of destructive and exploitative value systems from First World countries that have gradually eroded traditional family values. These are usually promoted in the media and tend to glorify or promote common-law relationships, infidelity, smoking, alcoholism, domestic violence, homicides, rapes, gambling and pornography. Obviously, democracy is being abused and a nation will suffer when there is a steady flow of unchecked information entering the homes and minds of its citizens.

It is vital that countries in the South monitor and regularly assess the social and psychological impact and content of imported concerts, television shows, movies and music.

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If there is to be beneficial change, then the psyche, philosophy and ethos of Third World citizens must be altered and must reflect a new vision. Indeed, the self-determination and goals of developing countries must not be derailed or distracted by the trivial, harmful and useless cultural and social garbage which obscures the dreams and morality of the youths. Unless there is a plan to purge the media of this entertainment filth and defy the intruders and marauders then the spiritual values and morals will vanish and educational standards will be diluted. Subsequently, the Third World will remain trapped in a cesspit of underachievers and imbeciles.

Undoubtedly, there is a dire need to formulate a comprehensive Third World agenda, based on moral and ethical principles to serve as a blueprint for the continued growth of the Third World. There cannot be compromises, temporary or limited unity of the South. A country needs to be united at all levels in the society. This should be a high priority for all developing nations. An illustration is Nigeria which must be united as a nation, then continue the nation-building progress to the regional level, before the entire continent of Africa can take the first step towards comprehensive unity. Similarly, the Brazilians, Hungarians, East Indians, Polish or Romanians must be united as a nationality, as a people, and as a nation before they can form alliances and promote South-South cooperation. The Third World cannot boast of being united when individuality exists and there are wars in the Middle East, hatred among Hindus and Muslims or senseless environmental destruction.

Residents of developing countries are painfully aware that unity does not necessarily mean residing in the same geographical region. This is only one of the prerequisites. In tackling obstacles there is a dire need for cooperation and collective work at the local, regional and national levels. Citizens need to remove their blinders and adopt an open-minded, patriotic, pro-active approach to transform the family, neighbourhood, city, country and region. It is a gradual step-by-step process and unless there is a consensus for positive change, then it is useless to attempt or expect a change in the state of any nation. Rural and urban areas, poor and rich, Black, Brown, Yellow and White must unite to assist the oppressed, sick and hungry. We all belong to humanity's quilt and no nation or ethnicity is superior or better than another.

It is essential to empower the poor with skills and initiate schemes to combat rural and urban poverty. Promotion of more grassroots organisations and the development of domestic and sub-regional markets will greatly improve the economic strength and exports of any developing nation. There is now a growing need for expertise to train and advise locals on strategies to boost private and public sector growth.

There is a need for more leaders like Hugo Chavez, President of Venezuela, who is using

profits from the oil industry to assist the poor in his country. But Chavez is confronted with a dilemma. He is very critical of the United States and accused them of masterminding a coup to overthrow him. However, Chavez still allows the United States oil companies to continue operations in Venezuela. This situation in Venezuela is typical of what occurs in other countries in the South. If there is to be a radical transformation then the Third World must acquire the technology to harness and manage their resources and stop depending on the developed countries. Indeed developing economies have been indoctrinated to believe that the First World will always possess a monopoly over technology.

Usually sustainable growth and improvements occurring in the developing countries are not truly reflective of the entire society. There is unequal progress as rural areas and the poor do not benefit. Indeed, unchecked industrialization and urbanization result in disproportional growth. The encroachment on tribal and prime agricultural lands must not be allowed. The knowledge and oral histories of indigenous people must be preserved. These are priceless, invaluable aspects which should not be foolishly sacrificed or overlooked in the headlong rush to become 'progressive'. It is unfortunate that a great deal of the wisdom, philosophy and experience of many tribes still remain undocumented. The valuable history and experiences of the elders, healers, fishermen, shamans and hunters have the solutions to many of the problems facing humanity.

Thousands of tribes in New Guinea, Borneo, Alaska, Africa, Canada, the United States, Latin and South America seek protection from encroaching civilization and modernisation that threaten their simple lifestyles. Tribal groups need protection and assistance in sustaining their communities and regaining the balance between humanity and the environment. The world must remember to be more sensitive and aware of the importance of tribal cultures and the contributions of indigenous people to the planet.

It is unfortunate that every year, the earth is burdened by an increasing human population. There is an urgent need for the Third World to become more environmentally sensitized. Furthermore, improper disposal of hazardous substances, the release of toxic fumes into the atmosphere and creation of slums have a burdensome effect on the sustainable development of the planet. There must be an enforcement of environmental laws and stiffer penalties to discourage abusers of the environment. The First World must stop its pontifical trite and desist from blaming the developing countries as being largely responsible for the rapid environmental degradation and population explosion. The developed countries must stop using the Third World as a dumping ground for its toxic chemicals.

It is not too late for developing countries to declare war on pollution and recognize the need for drastic environmental measures. Environmental issues such as endangered species,

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deforestation, global warming, climatic change, and protection of the marine environment, need to be regularly discussed in the classrooms. Governments, the private sector, regional and international organizations must increase environmental awareness programmes. The public needs to be constantly aware of the uses and availability of environmentally#friendly alternatives and the destruction of our global home. Recycling should be a common practice among households and companies.

The destiny of the Third World depends on the willingness of its people to initiate change. One of the main reasons for the present condition of the South is that its people are too busy fighting among themselves and thus unable to understand the larger disparity between the First and Third Worlds. They argue and debate over petty differences such as language or land ownership and the superiority of ethnicity, religion, gender, class and caste. The result being that nobody is fully empowered. Why bother with these irrelevant matters and insignificant issues when millions of human lives are poor, oppressed, suffering, hungry and dying ?

The existence and functioning of international bodies and agencies in outlining development plans for the Third World cannot and should not be condemned. These organizations include the United Nations, the World Bank, International Labour Organization, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Monetary Fund. Likewise, associations such as the African Caribbean and Pacific countries (ACP), Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), Association of Caribbean States (ACS) and Group 8 (G-8) need to be aware of the importance of devising policies which are efficient, relevant and effective in overseeing the development of Third World economies.

Despite the repercussions of their economic policies, their initial objective was to strengthen economies and alleviate distress. Their roles should include the guidance and nurturing of weaker countries until they can be sufficiently independent. International financial organizations must be more humanistic in their outlook. For instance, there was overwhelming support from both developing and developed countries as they rallied to assist Southeast Asia after the tsunami killed 225,000 persons.

The critical decisions of world leaders often have a negative impact and serious long-term repercussions which determine the quality of life or extent of suffering of millions of members in the Third World family. The family in a thatched, broken home in a devastated nation or the depressed refugee in a lonely apartment in a ghetto are awaiting signs of hope, inspiration and optimism from the world's decision makers and leaders.

Some organizations are sympathetic and sincere but others are unscrupulous and remain

aloof from the suffering masses of the developing world. Thus, the policy-makers and discontented must carefully weigh their options and long-term impact of decisions and treaties before entering into agreements. The dissatisfied cannot believe that violence will be the answer to such a problem but must peacefully, offer alternatives and highlight shortcomings for improvement and advancement.

First World countries must answer the questions- is debt reduction or cancellation the solution? In attempting to solve problems- are the developed countries providing short-term or long-term solutions? Are policies in need of restructuring, and if not, what are the alternatives for producing tangible benefits for the grassroots population ? Are these policies creating havoc or disrupting the tribal, city and village life ? It is obvious there is an underlying attempt to maintain the status quo and unbalanced nature of development for the interests of the developed nations. But, the Third World is part of the global village and it should not remain marginalised.

The Group of 77 (G77) should be aware that the leader of a Third World country is either its greatest asset or biggest downfall. These leaders need to reconcile differences and have earnest dialogue on the state of affairs in developing countries. Leaders must be pragmatic, sympathetic to the poor, aware that the wealth of a nation is temporarily entrusted in their care and accountable to those being governed. A myopic leader, self-centred and possessing a poor sense of governance only serves to perpetuate the stereotype of developing countries as backward and incapable of proper self-rule. Thus decisions must be weighed carefully and cautiously. Democracy and voting must not be made a sham by dictatorial leadership as this only serves to hasten the intervention of a developed country to restore basic and fundamental rights.

There is need for a new breed of politicians whose performance will not merely be winning an elections based on charisma or organizational abilities. Third World politicians should be banned from holding foreign bank accounts beyond a stipulated limit. If there are to be any visible benefits resulting in improved living, there must be measures to prevent a misuse of funds by politicians for personal use. He or she must be sincere, able to devise new strategies for survival in the competitive global economy, and build alliances. All leaders of the Third World must have a working knowledge of all sectors of society to ensure effective implementation of policies.

Often corrupt officials have access to billions of dollars in aid and contributions of food and equipment which never reach the needy and deserving citizens. Laws must be strictly enforced to discourage such practices and the guilty must be punished. It is essential for Third World countries to have dedicated, trustworthy personnel to prevent bribes and

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nepotism. They must constantly monitor financial and material donations or loans. Transparency and accountability are needed in the private and public spheres. This should be ingrained in the hearts and minds of all politicians, managers and employees.

As much needy persons as possible should benefit from humanitarian efforts. Thus, effective, not elaborate, checks and balances are crucial in monitoring and identifying unscrupulous persons. It is a necessity that a leader must carefully choose persons who will effectively harness human resources to maximize its potential. If not, such a leader of a developing country will undoubtedly feel the wrath of discontented masses in protests and revolutions.

The Third World must guard against the exploitation of its natural resources and disruption of its socio-political systems by devious individuals and organisations. Some of citizens, devoid of patriotism and nationalism, are willing to sell the riches of their country to already wealthy foreigners. Developing countries need to be wary of the wolf in sheep's clothing.

The role of the opposition in the political life of a country is usually more of a hindrance than a good. The opposition and ruling parties are intent on gaining and maintaining power at all costs, even at the risk of dividing the population and destroying lives. The never-ending desire for control of the political levers of power, at the expense of peace and stability, must be stopped. Often the opposition exists merely as a token that democracy exists because the opposing politicians disagree with bills and refuse to approve legislation which are beneficial to citizens.

A Third World leader cannot have the extravagant tastes of a First World leader. A country with a debt burden should avoid hosting an expensive event such as a beauty pageant, or erection of a costly monument. These financial disasters must be discouraged since the country achieves only brief popularity, limited financial returns and little or no benefit to the less fortunate citizens. It is a logical, sane and rational decision to invest the taxpayers' money in the provision of efficient social services, funding hospitals, institutions for the physically and mentally challenged, homes for elderly persons and assisting a medical search for cures. Obviously, the lives of needy citizens remain unchanged. On any government's agenda, profits must never be placed above the needs and demands of the people.

The problems of the 21st century are diverse and there is an urgent need to embark on a campaign to promote complete unity in developing economies. Indeed, it is critical that these countries make a pledge to send a powerful and urgent message requesting that differences and divisiveness be put aside and there be unity to combat the multitude of problems facing the Third World. Tribal chiefs, mayors, ambassadors, kings, prime ministers and presidents must be encouraged and assisted in dialogue that will bring peace to neighbourhoods, towns,

villages and states. Now there is a need to permanently remove the stigma of being a Third World.

In this era of globalization, rapid technological advances and space exploration, the poor and downtrodden of the world must not be forgotten. Now is the time for each person to embrace and adopt a philosophy of caring. It is time to join minds and hearts to develop a stronger international network to alleviate and eventually restore the Third World to her majestic beauty and fame. It will arise like the phoenix and never die.

Each individual has a role to play, be it policy-maker, politician researcher, activist, student, religious leader, office worker, unemployed, vendor, insurance agent and academic. Each person must decide on his or her role because there is too much useless talk and wasted hours at conferences, in documentaries, committees, seminars and workshops. New terminology, speeches, commissions, grandiose ideas of an alternative economic system and books filled with ideas and projects on alleviating Third World distress have failed to materialize into possible and useful remedies and are therefore useless in alleviating the suffering of the real world. For too long international and local efforts have a limited impact, narrow scope and often remain theoretical.

Now is the time for direct action and visible results. There is a need to educate and increase public awareness and solve the multifarious problems. Ideas and plans need to be properly assessed, enforced and monitored. We need to take action to ensure our ideas, slogans and dreams become a reality. Obviously, when we stop paying lip-service and offering token assistance, only then we can seriously embark on our mission.

History has continuously proven that revolutions, coups, revolts, violent protests — all bring sadness, unnecessary loss of lives and wanton destruction. Often the change resulting from violence is only temporary and at times there is a return to the original scenario or the situation only becomes worse. Throughout the world there must be a silent revolution, bloodless and without expectation of glory and honours. The one goal must be to preserve, glorify and restore the Third World. The ultimate challenge of the new millennium is to effectively utilize the world's severely limited resources to alleviate the depressing situation that faces more than half of the world's population.