

Turner money comes in handy at U.N.

By Farham Haq
INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

UNITED NATIONS - A leverick U.S. businessman Ted Turner stunned U.N. diplomats when he announced that he would donate \$1 billion to the world body, sending analysts into a frenzy of speculation over the precedent his gift poses. Turner wants his billion-dollar donation to be used to create a U.N. foundation which will provide money for de-mining, environmental protection, children's causes, and other worthy activities. But some analysts worry that his gift could usher in an era in which the world's richest individuals and corporations can push their own causes onto the U.N. agenda.

The long-run concern is that the United Nations, like everything else in the modern world, will become increasingly privatized as a result of (relying on) private funding," warned Adamantia Pollis, professor of political science at New York's New School for Social Research. "It's a good thing if it doesn't become widespread, and you

don't have private institutions and corporations beginning to substitute for governments in funding the United Nations," she said.

The billion-dollar offer equals one year of the U.N.'s regular budget, and is several times larger than the yearly contribution of the entire developing world.

But for the United Nations, which has endured a financial crisis largely caused by the non-payment of some \$1.5 billion in U.S. dues, Turner's announcement came as a happy surprise. "It's a billion-dollar day at the United Nations," U.N. spokesman Fred Eckhard said with a smile.

Balanced against the good cheer, however, is the sobering work ahead of ensuring that Turner's promised contribution of \$100 million annually for the next 10 years meets U.N. regulations. Today, officials from the billionaire's charitable Turner Foundation met with U.N. legal experts to hammer out ways in which the offer could be accepted.

U.N. officials noted that the world body is not allowed to use

private donations to pay its costs. As a result, Eckhard said, Turner's offer cannot offset the \$1.5 billion that Washington owes the U.N. regular and peace-keeping budgets. "No one is off the hook," he said.

The donation puts pressure on Washington, the chief U.N. debtor, to pay its arrears, which the U.S. Senate has only been willing to do partially and with strings attached.

"I think (Turner's offer) is a wonderful gesture, and I hope it is a sign of things to come," U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan said. "It shows his belief in the organization and in international cooperation, and I hope it will inspire governments to pay what they owe."

That message was driven home more bluntly by Turner when he announced his offer, decided on at the spur of the moment, as he received a leadership award by the non-profit United Nations Association-USA.

"I've been thinking about the United States not paying, and it's been bothering me for a long

time," Turner told the audience, which included Annan and other top U.N. officials. "I even thought about buying the U.S. debt at a discount, and then going to (Republican Senate Foreign Relations Chairman and U.N. opponent) Jesse Helms and saying, 'Pay me or I'll sue you.'"

Instead, the founder of the Cable News Network said he would donate \$1 billion to help fund U.N. activities, and encourage other wealthy businessmen such as Microsoft founder and chairman Bill Gates and investor Warren Buffett to do the same. "If you're rich, you can expect a letter or a call from me," he said.

Turner founded his network in 1970 with a single television station, building it up over the years until he merged it earlier this year with the Time-Warner Corporation in one of the largest corporate mergers ever.

Turner said that as a result of the merger he earned \$1 billion in the first nine months of this year.

"I'll be as poor as I was nine months ago," he said.

Corporations blast international treaty

INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

WASHINGTON - Some of the world's largest corporations are spending millions of dollars on advertising in an attempt to block an international treaty to restrict emissions of greenhouse gases that are changing the earth's climate.

Even as environmentalists are urging U.S. President Clinton to sign the United Nations agreement, leading U.S. oil, coal, and automobile producers are calling the treaty unfair.

"The agreement will hurt the

economy by demanding cuts in energy use by industrialized countries while exempting such countries as India, China, Mexico, and Brazil," says Jerry Jasinski, president of the National Association of Manufacturers.

The \$13 million campaign, described by advertisers as one of the most intensive campaigns ever mounted over a single political issue, seeks to convince the U.S. public that the agreement is unfair to business and the economy.

"This global agreement isn't

global and puts the entire burden on the U.S. and a few other countries," says one of the many advertisements being aired on radio, television, and in the print media.

Environmental groups have been quick to point out that the United States produces more carbon dioxide per person than any other country and say the ads misinform the public and divert attention from industry's contribution to the problem.

As the December U.N. Climate Change Convention in Japan approaches, the debate here over

global warming is also heating up. If successful, countries will sign an agreement in Kyoto binding targets and deadlines for countries to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases.

Greenhouse gases are produced mainly by the burning of fossil fuels - oil, gasoline, and coal - on which much of modern society runs. Most scientists believe that, once in the atmosphere, these gases trap heat and increase the earth's surface temperature. Over time, they can cause changes in climate, including increased frequency and intensity of storms, floods, heat waves, and droughts, scientists say.

Boom times elude African continent

INTERNATIONAL PRESS SERVICE

BONN, Germany - 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.

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

"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 1997: 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

BRIEFS

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.

Made-in-Nigeria car

PAN-AFRICAN NEWS AGENCY

OWERRI, Nigeria - The first made-in-Nigeria saloon car known as Z-600 has been launched in the eastern city of Owerri.

Nigerian engineer and chief executive of Izuogu Motors, Ezekiel Izuogu, said he con-

ceived, designed and manufactured the car, which has been tested by the country's vehicle inspectors and found road worthy.

"The entire body work and chassis frame is our design from first principles.

We also made the mold from which the body can be stamped out to produce hundreds of thousands of cars," Izuogu said at the elaborate presentation ceremony.

The Z-600, built on 4-stroke 1800 cc engine, Izuogu said, could cover some 30 kilometers on one gallon of petrol. The engine could also be mass produced and put to other uses like agricultural mechanization, standby electricity generator and tricycles, among others, he said.

The unit price of the new car is put at between 150,000 and 180,000 naira (between \$1,800 and \$2,000 U.S.).

Nigeria has several vehicle assembly plants, but new cars have been priced beyond the reach of the average salary earner, forcing many to patronize the booming market of imported used vehicles mainly from Europe. Izuogu said it would require some 200 million naira or \$2.4 million U.S. to set up a factory that would be able to produce about 30 Z-600 saloon cars a year.

Testing criticized by U.S. senator

Government officials say research could save lives

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children who might otherwise contract AIDS through parental transmission. Supporters also say that the studies were reviewed by ethics committees in the U.S., Europe and in the countries where the studies are being conducted.

Preliminary research has found that when taken during pregnancy, AZT reduces the risk of transmitting the AIDS virus to the fetus by two-thirds. But the treatment costs over \$1,000 per mother. The contro-

versial study is trying to find out if the treatment can be as effective with lower and therefore less costly doses.

Critics, like the Washington, D.C.-based group Public Citizen, say it is unacceptable in the name of saving money, to doom unsuspecting mothers and children to death when it can be prevented.

In a letter to Donna Shalala, secretary of the Department of Health and

Human Services, Public Citizen contends that, "Researchers involved in these

experiments have exploited the inadequacies of the health-care systems in these developing countries to conduct research they would never even consider in the U.S."

The studies included 12,211 women in Thailand, The Dominican Republic, Cote d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania and Malawi. Funding was provided by the National Institutes of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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