

Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum
The Global Peace Index: *Its Value and Implications and the Next Steps*
June 12th, 2007

On May 30th, the Global Peace Index (GPI) was released to the international community. It ranks the peacefulness of 121 nations by analyzing 24 indicators of internal and external peacefulness and correlating them with a wide range of other factors, including prosperity, education, corruption, and form of government. Norway ranks first, and the United States is 96th. On June 12, the panelists of this month's Conflict Prevention and Resolution Forum came together to discuss the GPI, opening up a conversation on the inception of the GPI and the key next steps and relevant critical questions that surround the future of the Index. The Panel included: Charles F. (Chic) Dambach, President and CEO, Alliance for Peacebuilding, Harriet Mayor Fulbright, President, J. William and Harriet Fulbright Center, Michael S. Lund, Specialist for Conflict and Peacebuilding, Management Systems International Inc., Ambassador John McDonald, Chairman and CEO, Institute for Multi-Track Diplomacy, and Ola Storberg, First Secretary (Political), Norwegian Embassy.

The discussion commenced with an explanation that a clear and concise definition of peace, along with rigorous ways to measure peace is imperative to the promotion of peace. A brief overview was then presented on the methodology of the GPI. Essentially, twenty-four indicators were chosen (along with thirty-three correlating factors) which were used to rank the peacefulness of 121 countries. The GPI was conceived of and funded by Steve Killelea, an international businessman and philanthropist; the Economic intelligent Unit was tasked with coming up with the measures and with gathering the appropriate data for analysis. The GPI shows that there are many internal factors that seem to correlate with the peacefulness of a country. These include democracy, low levels of corruption, regional integration, high levels of education, and low levels of hostility to foreigners. There were no strong correlations between the external measures used and peacefulness. It was pointed out that the results of the GPI were not as widely publicized in the United States as they were abroad; although the unveiling of the GPI findings was among the top five google stories the week of its publication.

First Secretary for the Norwegian embassy, Ola Storberg, outlined several of the factors that contributed to Norway being ranked number one on the GPI. He began by acknowledging the homogeneity of Norway, along with the country's location and the relative peacefulness of the region. Secretary Storberg explained that two generations ago Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe, but because of the commitment to develop Norway's natural resources and participate in exporting these resources, the country is now one of the wealthiest.

The Secretary attributes much of his country's peacefulness to an equitable division of wealth, low crime rates, and a transparent governing system. Most Norwegians pay high taxes, but Secretary Storberg explained that many people are committed to the principles that govern the choices made by the government as to the use of the collected revenue. Finally, one of the factors that was not included in the GPI, but one that Secretary Storberg believes contributes to the peacefulness of Norway, is the country's dedication to peace and reconciliation work around the world; a key element of Norway's foreign policy. Norway is very supportive of dialogue processes and participates in humanitarian efforts and engagements. The Secretary explained the fact that Norway has no colonial past, and often no direct interest national interesting the countries they work with, helps the Norwegians engage in ways that other countries cannot. The

Secretary did recognize that thus far Norway has not had the amount of immigration other countries have had and that there is a certain amount of xenophobia in Norway.

The panel then discussed some of the pitfalls of the GPI; most notably that the definition of peace was conceived of by seven individuals and that peace as a concept is extremely subjective. Another difficult aspect of the GPI is the implication that the factors that contribute to one country's peacefulness will work for all countries. This is of special concern for fragile or weak countries. One suggestion made by the panel for the improvement of the GPI is to engage in a more extensive vetting process from a broader base, as well as a more in depth review at each phase of the process. There was also the suggestion that the index should include a measure of woman in society. The entire panel agreed that the GPI raises up and legitimates the notion that peace has to be proactive. It was revealed that the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Sydney will house the GPI for the next several years. It is envisioned that the GPI will be conducted annually, several more countries will be added, and the data sources will be improved. This year's GPI results will be used as the baseline for time series analysis.

Finally, the panel discussed some of the next steps with regard to the GPI. Some of the NGOs involved in the GPI have taken the results of the Index to members of congress. This was done in order to encourage policy makers to pay attention to the factors involved in creating a peaceful country. The panel also described the potential of creating a graduate level class on the GPI where students would analyze the Index, both the process and the findings.

For a full audio account of the CPRF on the Global Peace Index please visit:

http://www.sfcg.org/documents/cprf/audio/june_2007.mp3

If you would like to read more about the GPI please visit:

<http://www.visionofhumanity.com>