

“I thank IPS for raising global public awareness about matters at the heart of the U.N.’s agenda, and I hope it will have an even greater impact in the future.”

U.N. Secretary-General  
Ban Ki-moon



**IPS TURNS 50**





For these young girls in the Sindh province, Pakistan, the prospect of early child marriages means they are exposed to health issues like obstetric fistula.  
Credit: Zofeen Ebrahim/IPS

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Cover Image: United Nations Secretariat Building.  
Credit: UN Photo/Mark Garte

# INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS, THE U.N. AND INTER PRESS SERVICE

By Roberto Savio

Founder of IPS and President Emeritus

In 1979, I had a debate at the United Nations with the late Stan Swinton, then the very powerful and brilliant director of Associated Press (AP). At one point, I furnished the following figures (which had been slow to change), as an example of Western bias in the media:

In 1964, four transnational news agencies – AP, United Press International (UPI), Agence France Presse (AFP) and Reuters – handled 92 percent of world information flow. The other agencies from industrialised countries, including the Soviet news agency TASS, handled a further 7 percent. That left the rest of the world with a mere 1 percent.

Why, I asked, was the entire world obliged to receive information from the likes of AP in which the United States was always the main actor? Swinton's reply was brief and to the point: "Roberto, the U.S. media account for 99 percent of our revenues. Do you think they are more interested in our secretary of state, or in an African minister?"

This structural reality is what lay behind the creation of Inter Press Service (IPS) in 1964, the same year in which the Group of 77 (G77) coalition of developing countries saw the light. I found it unacceptable that information was not really democratic and that – for whatever reason, political or economic – it was leaving out two-thirds of humankind.

We set up an international, non-profit cooperative of journalists, in which – by statute – every working journalist had one share and in which those like me from the North could not account for more than 20 percent of the membership.

As importantly, we stipulated that nobody from the North could report from the South. We set ourselves the challenge of providing journalists from developing countries with the opportunity to refute Northern claims that professional quality was inferior in the South.

Two other significant factors differentiated IPS from the transnational news agencies.

First, IPS was created to cover international affairs, unlike AP, UPI, AFP and Reuters, where international coverage was in addition to the main task of covering national events.

Second, IPS was dedicated to the long-term process and not just to events. By doing this, we would be giving a voice to those who were absent in the traditional flow of information – not only the countries of the South, but also neglected

*"In a world where we need to create new alliances, the commitment of IPS is to continue its work for better information, at the service of peace and cooperation."*

actors such as women, indigenous peoples and the grassroots, as well as issues such as human rights, environment, multiculturalism, international social justice and the search for global governance...

Of course, all this was not easily understood or accepted.

We decided to support the creation of national news agencies and radio and TV stations in the countries of the South because we saw these as steps towards the pluralism of information. In fact, we helped to set up 22 of these national news agencies.

That created distrust on both sides of the fence. Many ministers of information in the South looked on us with suspicion because, while we were engaging in a useful and legitimate battle, we refused to accept any form of state control. In the North, the traditional and private media looked on us as a





Women in Alankulam village in the northern Mullaitivu district of Sri Lanka help dig a community well. Credit: Amantha Perera/IPS.

“spokesperson” for the Third World.

In 1973, the Press Agencies Pool of the Non-Aligned Movement agreed to use IPS, which was growing everywhere, as its international carrier. At the same time, in the United Nations, the call was ringing for the establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO) and was approved by the General Assembly with the full support of the Security Council.

It looked like global governance was on its way, based on the ideas of international economic justice, participation and development as the cornerstone values for the world economic order.

In 1981 all this came to an end. Ronald Reagan in the United States and Margaret Thatcher in the United Kingdom decided to destroy multilateralism and, with it, the very concept of social justice.

One of the first actions taken was to ask all countries working with IPS to cut any relation with us, and dismantle their national systems of information. Within a few years, the large majority of national news agencies, and radio and TV stations disappeared. From now on, information was to be a market, not a policy.

The United States and the United Kingdom (along with Singapore) withdrew from the U.N. Scientific, Cultural and Educational Organisation (UNESCO) over moves to establish a New International Information Order (NIIO) as a corollary to NIEO, and the policy of establishing national systems of information disappeared. The world changed direction, and the United Nations has never recovered from that change.

IPS was not funded by countries, it was an independent organisation, and even

if we lost all our clients from the world of national systems of information, we had many private media as clients. So we survived, but we decided to look for new alliances, with those who were continuing the quest for world governance based on participation and justice, with people interested in global issues, like human rights, the environment and so on.

It is worth noting that the United Nations was moving along a parallel path. In the 1990s, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the sixth U.N. secretary-general, launched a series of world conferences on global issues, with the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – also widely known as the ‘Earth Summit’ – the first in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

For the first time, not only we of IPS – a non-governmental organisation (NGO) recognised by the U.N. Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) –

but any NGO interested in and concerned with environmental issues could attend.

Actually, we really had two conferences, albeit separated by 36 kilometres: one, the inter-governmental conference with 15,000 participants, and the other the NGO Forum, the civil society conference with over 20,000 participants. And it was clear that the civil society forum was pushing for the success of the Earth Summit much more than many delegates!

To create a communication space for the two different gatherings, IPS conceived and produced a daily newspaper – TerraViva – to be distributed widely in order to create a sense of communality. We continued to do so at the other U.N.-organised global conferences in the 1990s (on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993, on Population in Cairo in 1994, on Women in Beijing in 1995, and the Social Summit in Copenhagen, also in 1995).

We then decided to maintain it as a daily publication, to be distributed throughout the United Nation system: this is the TerraViva that reaches you daily, and is the link between IPS and members of the U.N. family.

Against this backdrop, it is sad to note that the world suddenly took a turn for the worse with the end of the Cold War at the end of the 1980s, when an endless number of unresolved fault lines that had been frozen during the period of East-West hostility came to light.

This year, for example, the number of persons displaced by conflict has reached the same figures as at the end of the Second World War.

Social injustice, not only at national but also at the international level, is growing at an unprecedented speed. The 50 richest men (no women) in the world accrued their wealth in 2013 by the equivalent of the national budgets of Brazil and Canada.

According to Oxfam, at the present pace, by the year 2030 the United Kingdom will have the same level of social inequality as during the reign of Queen Victoria, a period in which an unknown philosopher by the name of Karl Marx was working in the library of the British Museum on his studies of the exploitation of children in the new industrial revolution.

Fifty years after the creation of IPS, I believe more than ever that the world is unsustainable without some kind of global governance. History has shown us that this cannot come from military superiority ... and events are now becoming history fast.

During my life I have seen a country of 600 million people in 1956, trying to make iron from scraps in schools, factories and hospitals, turn into a country of 1.2 billion today and well on the road towards becoming the world’s most industrialised country.

The world had 3.5 billion people in 1964, and now has over 7.0 billion, and will be over 9.0 billion in 20 years’ time.

In 1954, sub-Saharan Africa had 275 million inhabitants and now has around 800 million, soon to become one billion in the next decade, well more than the combined population of the United States and Europe.

To repeat what Reagan and Thatcher did in 1981 is therefore impossible – and, anyhow, the real problem for everybody is that there is no progress on any central issue, from the environment to nuclear disarmament.

Finance has taken a life of its own, different from that of economic production and beyond the reach of governments. The two engines of globalisation, finance and trade, are not part of U.N. discourse. Development means to ‘be more’, while globalisation has come to mean to ‘have more’ – two very different paradigms.

In just 50 years, the world of information has changed also beyond imagination.

The internet has given voice to social media and the traditional media are in decline. We have gone, for the first time in history, from a world of information to a world of communication. International relations now go well beyond the inter-governmental relations, and the ‘net’ has created new demands for accountability and transparency, the bases for democracy.

And, unlike 50 years ago, there is a growing divide between citizens and public institutions. The issue of corruption, which 50 years ago was a hushed-up affair, is now one of the issues that begs for a renewal of politics. And all this, like it or not, is basically an issue of values.

IPS was created on a platform of values, to make information more democratic and participatory, and to give the voice to those who did not have one. Over the last 50 years, through their work and support, hundreds and hundreds of people have shared the hope of contributing to a better world. A wide-ranging tapestry of their commitment is offered in *The Journalists Who Turned the World Upside Down*, a book written by over 100 personalities and practising journalists.

It is evident that those values continue to be very current today, and that information continues to be an irreplaceable tool for creating awareness and democracy, even if it is becoming more and more a commodity, event-oriented and market-oriented.

But, in my view, there is no doubt that all the data show us clearly that we must find some global governance, based on participation, social justice and international law, or else we will enter a new period of dramatic confrontation and social unrest.

In a world where we need to create new alliances, the commitment of IPS is to continue its work for better information, at the service of peace and cooperation ... and to support those who share the same dream.



In Nepal, Sadhana Ghimire, 23, makes sure to give her 18-month-old daughter nutritious food, such as porridge containing grains and pulses, in order to prevent stunting. Credit: Mallika Aryal/IPS



# HALF A CENTURY OF STRUGGLE AGAINST UNDERDEVELOPMENT

By Pablo Piacentini

Founder of IPS and Head of the IPS Columnist Service

The idea of creating Inter Press Service (IPS) arose in the early 1960s in response to awareness that a vacuum existed in the world of journalism, which had two basic aspects.

Firstly, there was a marked imbalance in international information sources. World news production was concentrated in the largest industrialised countries and dominated by a few powerful agencies and syndicates in the global North.

By contrast, there was a lack of information about developing countries in the South and elsewhere; there was hardly any information about their political, economic and social realities, except when natural disasters occurred, and what little was reported was culturally prejudiced against these countries. In other words, not much of an image and a poor image at that.

Secondly, there was an overall shortage of analysis and explanation of the processes behind news events and a lack of in-depth journalistic genres such as features, opinion articles and investigative journalism among the agencies.

Agencies published mainly 'spot' news, that is, brief pieces with the bare news facts and little background. Clearly this type of journalism did not lend itself to covering development-related issues.

When reporting an epidemic or a catastrophe in a Third World country, spot

news items merely describe the facts and disseminate broadcast striking images. What they generally do not do is make an effort to answer questions such as why diseases that have disappeared or are well under control in the North should cause such terrible regional pandemics in less developed countries, or why a major earthquake in Los Angeles or Japan should cause much less damage and fewer deaths than a smaller earthquake in Haiti.

Superficiality and bias still predominate in international journalism.

While it is true that contextualised analytical information started to appear in the op-ed ("opposite the editorial page") section of Anglo-Saxon newspapers, the analysis and commen-

tary they offered concentrated on the countries of the North and their interests.

Today the number of op-eds that appear is much greater than in the 1960s, but the predominant focus continues to be on the North.

This type of top-down, North-centred journalism served the interests of industrialised countries, prolonging and extending their global domination and the subordination of non-industrialised countries that export commodities with little or no added value.

This unequal structure of global information affected developing countries negatively. For example, because of the image created by scanty and distorted information, it was unlikely that the owners of expanding businesses in a Northern country would decide to set up a factory in a country of the South.

After all, they knew little or nothing about these countries and, given the type of reporting about them that they were accustomed to, assumed that they were uncivilised and dangerous, with unreliable judicial systems, lack of infrastructure, and so on.

Obviously, few took the risk, and investments were most frequently North-North, reinforcing development in developed countries and underdevelopment in underdeveloped countries.

In the 1960s, those of us who created IPS set ourselves the goal of working to correct the biased, unequal and distorted image of the world projected by international agencies in those days.

Political geography and economics were certainly quite different then. Countries like Brazil, which is now an emerging power, used to be offhandedly dismissed with the quip: "It's the country of the future – and always will be."

At the time, decolonisation was under way in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean. Latin America was politically independent but economically dependent. The Non-Aligned Movement was created in 1961.

IPS never set out to present a "positive" image of the countries of the South by glossing over or turning a blind eye to the very real problems, such as corruption. Instead, we wished to present an objective view, integrating information about the South, its viewpoints and interests, into the global information media.

This implied a different approach to looking at the world and doing journalism. It meant looking at it from the viewpoint of the realities of the South and its social and economic problems.

Let me give an example which has a direct link to development.

The media tend to dwell on what they present as the negative consequences of commodity price rises: they cause inflation, are costly for consumers and their families, and distort the world economy. Clearly, this is the viewpoint of the industrialised countries that import cheap raw materials and transform them into manufactured goods as the basis for expanding their businesses and competing in the global marketplace.

It is true that steep and sudden price increases for some commodities can create problems in the international economy, as well as affect the population of some poor countries that have to import these raw materials.

But generalised and constant complaints about commodities price increases fail to take into account the statistically proven secular trend towards a decline in commodity prices (with the exception of oil since 1973) compared with those of manufactured goods.

IPS's editorial policy is to provide news and analyses that show how, in the absence of fair prices and proper remuneration for their commodities, and unless more value is added to agricultural and mineral products, poor countries reliant on commodity exports cannot overcome underdevelopment and poverty.

**"A journalist specialised in development issues must be able to look at and analyse information and reality from the 'other side.' In spite of globalisation and the revolution in communications, this 'other side' continues to be unknown and disregarded, and occupies a marginal position in the international information universe"**

Many communications researchers have recognised IPS's contribution to developing a more analytical and appropriate journalism for focusing on and understanding economic, social and political processes, as well as contributing to greater knowledge of the problems faced by countries of the South.

Journalists addressing development issues need, in the first place, to undertake critical analysis of the content of news circulating in the information arena.

Then they must analyse economic and social issues from the "other point of view", that of marginalised and oppressed people, and of poor countries unable to lift themselves out of underdevelopment because of unfavourable terms of trade, agricultural protectionism, and so on.

They must understand how and why some emerging countries are succeeding in overcoming underdevelopment, and what role can be played by interna-



tional cooperation.

They also need to examine whether the countries of the North and the international institutions they control are imposing conditions on bilateral or multilateral agreements that actually perpetuate unequal development.

World economic geography and politics may have changed greatly since the 1960s, and new information technologies may have revolutionised the media of today, but these remain some important areas in which imbalanced and discriminatory news treatment is evident.

In conclusion, a journalist specialised in development issues must be able to look at and analyse information and reality from the “other side.” In spite of globalisation and the revolution in communications, this “other side” continues to be unknown and disregarded, and occupies a marginal position in the international information universe.

An appreciation of the true dimensions of the above issues, the contrast between them and the information and analysis we are fed daily by the predominant media virtually all over the world – not only in the North, but also many by media in the South – leads to the obvious conclusion that there is a crying need for unbiased global journalism to help correct North-South imbalance.

To this arduous task and still far-off goal, IPS has devoted its wholehearted efforts over the past half century.



Schoolchildren in Sri Lanka hold up a handmade sign that reads: 'Let's Eradicate Dengue'.

Credit: Amantha Perera/IPS

# THIS FLOWER IS RIGHT HERE

By Ernest Corea

Former Editor Ceylon Daily News and Sri Lankan Ambassador to the United States

Where have all the flowers gone? Yes, of course, those are the opening words of a beautiful song made famous by such illustrious singers as Joan Baez, Harry Belafonte, Vera Lynn and the Kingston Trio, among others. It was a great number made greater by the different styles in which singers of different musical temperaments belted it out.

But what has that got to do with a news and feature service – Inter Press Service – which has survived in a relentlessly competitive field and become internationally known as the voice of the underdog?

The flowers in the song whose first few verses were written by Pete Seeger have gone to their graveyards. Similarly, non-traditional news services, news magazines, features services, and other innovative and non-traditional purveyors of information and opinion have sprouted like seasonal flora only to disappear – presumably on their way to that great big information graveyard in the skies.

Numerous efforts have been made by information entrepreneurs, journalists, publishers, and others to create a lasting and relevant instrument of communication different from those already well established, but most have failed. Some have frayed, withered and died faster than one can say Rabindranath Tagore.

That is an exaggeration, of course. (It's early in the morning as I write, when exaggerations come faster than ideas.) In more prosaic terms, many such efforts, launched with great enthusiasm and hope, have faltered and flopped.

A few have survived, demonstrating that given the right circumstances and resources, alternative forms of dissemination can survive and flourish. Prominent among them is Inter Press Service, much better known by its shortened form, IPS.

The story goes that several years ago a messenger in a South Asian capital entered the office of a newspaper publisher to announce that “a gentleman from IPS is waiting to see you.” The publisher, already overloaded with tasks, each of them potentially a crisis, growled in reply: “Why would I want to meet somebody from the Indian Postal Service. Those buggers can't even deliver a letter to the address clearly written on the front of an envelope.”

Doggedly the messenger, pejoratively known as a “peon,” the imported term bestowed on messengers by sahibs representing His/Her (unemployed) Britannic Majesty, says: “Not postman. Pressman.”

Irritated by now to a point dangerously close to incipient apoplexy, the publisher looks as if he is going to burst like an over-inflated balloon when the peon announces: “Sir, he is from Inter Press Service.”

Calm is restored. The danger of an apoplectic outburst passes on like a potential monsoonal shower that turns out to be not even a drizzle. The publisher composes himself and wears his welcoming look. The peon is instructed to let the visitor in and also order up some tea for him.

The representative of Inter Press Service (now internationally known and rec-

“IPS not only reflects (in its coverage) the realities of the “other.” It is actually part of the other, bringing to the attention of audiences, readerships, and so on, activities – or lack of opportunities for activities – that go to the very heart of human development.”

ognised as IPS) comes in and is welcomed in a businesslike fashion, but with obvious warmth. And well he should be, for IPS was and continues to be like a breath of fresh air entering a room whose windows have rarely been opened.

For many years, representatives of developing country media (this writer among them) complained bitterly at regional and international conferences that circumstances compelled them to publish or broadcast news and views about their own countries, towns and villages, and people – people, for goodness sake – written by strangers in far-off lands, many of whom had never visited the countries they were writing about. They had no hesitation in writing, broadcasting or publishing advice on how such countries should be organised and governed.

Several efforts were made to correct



# THE GROUP OF 77 AND IPS AT 50

By Mourad Ahmia

Executive Secretary of the Group of 77

When the Group of 77 commemorated its 50th anniversary recently, Inter Press Service (IPS) news agency was not far behind.

Established in 1964 as the largest news agency of the global South, IPS has been the voice of both developing nations and the Group of 77 for the past 50 years.

Both are linked together by a single political commitment: to protect and represent the interests of the developing world.

The 50th anniversary celebration of the G-77 and IPS represents an opportunity to enhance and strengthen the joint partnership in projecting and promoting the concerns of the countries of the South.

For five decades the agency has, in its own way, provided technical help to delegations of the South in promoting the global development agenda of the South.

The integral role played by the Group of 77 in economic diplomacy and projecting the development interests of the global South is a testimony to its continued relevance in the ongoing global development dialogue.

IPS's priceless contribution in that endeavor translates into promoting a new platform for global governance through critical information and communication.

IPS supported the publication for many years of the first ever G-77 newsletter: "The Journal of the Group of 77," as well as publishing special editions of Terra Viva on various occasions, particularly the celebration of anniversaries of the Group of 77 and the South Summits.

The initiative to establish a global net-

work of news agencies of the South, launched in 2006 by the G-77 and IPS under the chairmanship of South Africa, is still a work in progress.

Meanwhile, the G-77 has its own 50-year history of accomplishments.

When it was established on Jun. 15, 1964, the signing nations of the well-known "Joint Declaration of Seventy-Seven Countries" formed the largest intergovernmental organisation of developing countries in the United Nations to articulate and promote their collective interests and common development agenda.

Since the First Ministerial meeting of the G-77 held in Algeria in October 1967, and the adoption of the "Charter of Algiers", the Group of 77 laid down the institutional mechanisms and structures that have contributed to shaping the international development agenda and changing the landscape of the global South for the past five decades.

Over the years, the Group has gained an increasing role in the determination and conduct of international relations through global negotiations on major North-South and development issues.

The Group has a presence worldwide at U.N. centres in New York, Geneva, Nairobi, Paris, Rome, Vienna, and Washington D.C., and is actively involved in ongoing negotiations on a wide range of global issues including climate change, poverty eradication, migration, trade, and the law of the sea.

Today, the G-77 remains the only viable and operational mechanism in multilateral economic diplomacy within the U.N. system. The growing membership is proof of its enduring strength.

From 77 founding member states in 1964 to 134 and counting in 2014, it is the largest intergovernmental organisation of the global South dealing with the Development Agenda.

The Group was created with the objective to collectively boost the role and influence of developing countries on the global stage when it became clear that political independence, to be meaningful, required changes in the economic relations between North and South.

Thus, political independence needed to be accompanied by economic diplomacy with the ultimate objective of the re-form of the international economic order.

Today, the G-77 represents the greatest coalition of humanity and remains a vital negotiating instrument in economic multilateral diplomacy, and for ensuring international peace and justice through international cooperation for development within the framework of the United Nations.

This has been the thrust of the joint expression of South-South solidarity since the Group's creation, and its collective voice has spread to every institution and international organisation representing the hopes and aspirations of the majority of humanity.

The integral role played by the G-77 in economic diplomacy and projecting the development interests of the global South is a testimony to its continued relevance in the global development dialogue.

The Group has, through its compact Executive Secretariat limited resources, managed to work successfully with its development partners to analyse issues and propose alternative solutions to development challenges.



'Copyists' (transcribers) in Afghanistan can earn up to one dollar for each letter or document they prepare for their illiterate customers.

Credit: Karlos Zurutuza/IPS

this imbalance but nobody seemed able to design the appropriate model. Gemini news service? Gone. Lankapuvath? Reduced to the level of a government gazette. Depth News? Up there with the dodo. Pan Asia News? Difficult to locate even through the internet. Then, IPS came along.

The founders of IPS dealt with reality, as IPS does even today, not with slogans. Politicians and political journalists could play around all they wanted with a "new international information order" or whatever their pet formulation might be. IPS would, instead, attempt to service media outlets, print and electronic, with material written by journalists mainly from the South writing about the South from the South. Authenticity, thus, is a key IPS strength.

Even in its U.N. Bureau which is not country specific but, in effect, covers the world, the rich flavour of internationalism is seamlessly combined with national concerns of small and pow-

erless countries, whose interests are insouciantly ignored by the maharajahs of international news dissemination.

IPS is different. It is authentic, as already pointed out. It is also down-to-earth and makes a strenuous effort to cover events, processes and trends emanating from developing countries and intertwined with the interests of those countries – and their peoples.

Contemporary history has demonstrated that failure to identify those interests and meet them leads to societal disequilibrium, dysfunctional politics, and disjointed economic development.

Thus, IPS not only reflects (in its coverage) the realities of the "other." It is actually part of the other, bringing to the attention of audiences, readerships, and so on, activities – or lack of opportunities for activities – that go to the very heart of human development.

IPS is capable of functioning as both a catalyst and monitor of development. Other efforts to create and nurture such an institution have failed, mainly because they lacked high professional standards as well as funding.

The standards side has now been well established and IPS is not merely "recognised" but has won prestigious awards for the style, content, and relevance of its coverage. Often, it covers the stories that should be covered but are ignored by media maharajahs.

This effort has continued for 50 years. Can IPS continue to survive and thrive? It could and should – but only if it has the resources required. Even the most exquisite bloom cannot survive unless it receives the tender loving care it deserves. IPS is too critically important a media institution to be allowed to languish for want of resources. Moolah should not trump media relevance.



# TOWARDS A GLOBAL GOVERNANCE PLATFORM

By Ramesh Jaura

IPS Director General

Inter Press Service News Agency has braved severe political assaults and financial tempests since 1964, when Roberto Savio and Pablo Piacentini laid its foundation as a unique and challenging information and communication system.

Fifty years on, IPS continues to provide in-depth news and analysis from journalists around the world – primarily from the countries of the South – which is distinct from what the mainstream media offer. Underreported and unreported news constitutes the core of IPS coverage. Opinion articles by experts from think tanks and independent institutions enhance the spectrum and quality offered by IPS.

As the social media transforms the communication environment, IPS is determined to consolidate its unique niche and is tailoring its offer to adapt to the changes under way, while remaining true to its original vocation: make a concerted effort to right the systematic imbalance in the flow of information between the South and the North, give a voice to the South and promote South-South understanding and communication. In short, nothing less than turning the world upside up.

The fiftieth anniversary coincides with IPS decision to strengthen coverage not only from the U.N. in New York, but also from Vienna – bridging the U.N. there with the headquarters – as well as from Geneva and Nairobi, the only country in Africa hosting a major U.N. agency, the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP).

Turning 50 is also associated with a new phase in IPS life, marked not only by challenges emerging from rapid ad-

vance of communication and information technologies, but also by globalisation and the world financial crisis.

The latter is causing deeper social inequalities, and greater imbalances in international relations. These developments have therefore become thematic priorities in IPS coverage.

The consequences of “turbo-capitalism”, which allows finance capital to prevail over every aspect of social and personal life, and has disenfranchised a large number of people in countries around the world constituting the global South, are an important point of focus.

IPS has proven experience in reporting on the issues affecting millions of marginalised human beings – giving a voice to the voiceless – and informing about the deep transitional process which most of the countries of the South and some in the North are undergoing.

This latter day form of capitalism has not only resulted in dismissal of workers and catapulted their families into the throes of misery, but also devastated the environment and aggravated the impact of climate change, which is also playing havoc with traditional communities.

IPS also informs about the critical importance of the culture of peace and points to the perils of all forms of militarism. A Memorandum of Understanding between IPS and the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC) provides an important framework for seminars aimed at raising the awareness of the media in covering cross-cultural conflicts.

Nuclear weapons that are known to have caused mass destruction in Hiroshima and Nagasaki 69 years ago, represent one of the worst forms of militarism. IPS provides news and analysis as well as opinions on continuing efforts world-wide to ban the bomb. This thematic emphasis has elicited positive reactions from individual readers, experts and institutions dealing with nuclear abolition and disarmament.

As globalisation permeates even the remotest corners of the planet, IPS informs about the need of education for global citizenship and sustainable development, highlighting international efforts such as the United Nations Global Education First Initiative. IPS reports on initiatives aimed at ensuring that education for global citizenship is reflected in intergovernmental policy-making processes such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Post-2015 Development Agenda.

IPS reports accentuate the importance of multilateralism within the oft-neglected framework of genuine global governance. It is not surprising therefore that IPS coverage of the United Nations and its social and economic agenda is widely recognised as outstanding in the global media landscape.

This is particularly important because the news agency has come to a fork in the road represented by the financial crunch, which is apparently one of the toughest IPS has ever faced. However, thanks to the unstinting commitment of ‘IPS-ians’, the organisation is showing the necessary resilience to brave the challenge and refute those who see it heading down a blind alley.

At the same time, IPS is positioning itself distinctly as a communication and information channel supporting global governance in all its aspects, privileg-



Girls in a classroom in the República de Ecuador school in Viña del Mar, Chile. Credit: Diana Cariboni/IPS

For 50 years the G-77 contributed to the formulation and adoption of numerous U.N. resolutions, programmes, and plans of action, most of which address the core issues of development. Its role in generating global consensus on the issues of development has been widely acknowledged by world leaders, diplomats, parliamentarians, academia, researchers, media and civil society.

It is a tribute to the historical validity of the conception, purposes, and endeavours of the Group, which have withstood the test of time.

The essential rationale for the Group was, and remains, to strive for a wider participation of developing countries in global economic decision-making and for inserting a development dimension in international institutions and policies within the framework of the United Nations system.

The Group presently consists of 134 countries, comprising over 80 per cent of the world's population and approximately two-thirds of the United Nations membership.

The Group is the world's second largest international organisation after the 193-member United Nations, and many countries, from emerging developing economies to least developed countries and small island developing states have chaired the Group, ranging in regions from Africa, Asia-Pacific to Latin America and the Caribbean.

2014 marks a milestone in the life of the Group with the celebration of the fiftieth year of its establishment, a period during which it has nearly doubled in membership and multiplied its south-south cooperation achievements while continuing to operate as a coalition of nations in promoting North-South dialogue for development.

It is remarkable that with such a diverse membership and without a formal constitution it has managed to endure the world's political and economic turbulence for 50 years and remain true to its original mission in promoting the United

Nations' development agenda.

The G-77 has devoted five decades working to achieve development. It adheres to the principle that nations, big and small, deserve an equal voice in world affairs.

Today the Group remains linked by common geography and shared history of struggle for liberation, freedom and South-South solidarity.

In its 50 years, the Group of 77 has solidified the global South as a coalition of nations, aspiring for a global partnership for peace and development.

Today, the Group of 77 is recognised for its work to promote international cooperation for development towards a prosperous and peaceful world.

The commitment and dedication of the Group in selflessly shaping world affairs has benefited billions of lives world-wide, and such recognition of its significant contribution during the Group's fiftieth anniversary is most appropriate.

Happy 50th anniversary for both G-77 and IPS!



ing the voices and the concerns of the poorest and creating a climate of understanding, accountability and participation around development and promoting a new international information order between the South and the North.

IPS has the necessary infrastructure and human resources required for facilitating the organisational architecture of an information and communication platform focused on 'global governance' (GGICP). Whether it

is the culture of peace, citizen empowerment, human rights, gender equality, education and learning, development or environment, all these contribute to societal development, which in turn leads towards global governance.

In order to harness the full potential of communication and information tools, adequate financial support is indispensable. Projects that conform to the mission of IPS – making the voiceless heard by the international community, from local to global level – are one way of securing funds.

But since projects alone do not ensure the sustainability of an organisation, IPS is exploring new sources of funding: encouraging sponsorships through individual readers and institutions, enlightened governments and intergovernmental bodies as well as civil society organisations and corporations observing the UN Global Compact's 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labour, the environment and anti-corruption, which enjoy universal consensus.

## IPS AT 50, LEADS THAT DON'T BLEED

By Thalif Deen

UN Bureau Chief and Regional Director IPS North America

**T**arzie Vittachi, a renowned Sri Lankan newspaper editor and one-time deputy executive director of the U.N. children's agency UNICEF, once recounted the oft-quoted story of an African diplomat who sought his help to get coverage in the U.S. media for his prime minister's address to the General Assembly.

The diplomat, a friend of Vittachi's, said the visiting African leader was planning to tell the world body his success stories in battling poverty, hunger and HIV/AIDS.

"How can I get this story into the front pages of U.S. newspapers?" he asked rather naively.

Vittachi, then a columnist and contributing editor to Newsweek magazine, jokingly retorted: "Shoot him – and you will get the front page of every newspaper in the U.S."

As the old tabloid journalistic axiom goes: "If it bleeds, it leads."

But in its news coverage over the last 50 years, IPS has led mostly with "unsexy" and "un-bleeding" stories, long ignored by the mainstream media.

As IPS commemorates its 50th anni-

versary this year, its news coverage of the developing world and the United Nations has been singled out for praise because of its primary focus on social and politico-economic issues on the U.N. agenda, including poverty, hunger, population, children, gender empowerment, education, health, refugees, human rights, disarmament, the global environment and sustainable development.

Congratulating IPS on its 50th anniversary, U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was quick to applaud IPS' "relentless focus on issues of concern to the developing world – from high-level negotiations on economic development to on-the-ground projects that improve health and sanitation.

"I thank IPS for raising global public awareness about matters at the heart of the U.N.'s agenda, and I hope it will have an even greater impact in the future," he added.

In its advocacy role, IPS was in the forefront of a longstanding campaign, led by world leaders, activists and women's groups, for the creation of a separate U.N. entity to reinforce equal rights for women and for gender empowerment.

U.N. Assistant Secretary-General Lakshmi Puri, deputy executive director of U.N. Women, last week praised IPS for its intensive coverage of sustainable development and gender empowerment.

She said IPS has been "a leader" in realising a more democratic and equitable new information, knowledge and communication order in the service of sustainable development in all its dimensions: social, economic and environmental.

"Its enterprising role has also been evident in the way it championed the creation of U.N. Women: a new gender equality and women's empowerment and rights architecture within the U.N. system.

"We have partnered with IPS to advance this most important project for humanity in the 21st century," said Puri. "IPS joined our political mobilisation drive for a stand-alone gender equality and women's empowerment goal through sustained engagement and compelling content."

She said IPS has demonstrated "its unwavering commitment to development issues through supporting our efforts to mainstream gender perspectives in the

G77, particularly via the Declaration of Santa Cruz 'For a New World Order for Living Well' of June 2014, and the historic pre-summit international meeting on Women's Proposals for a New World Order."

She also said IPS has joined the public mobilisation campaign – "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture It" – as a Media Compact partner, and is throwing its full support behind Beijing+20.

"I wish IPS 50 more years of dynamic evolution, courageous reporting of truth, built on the foundations of reportage from the front-lines of ground experiences, and of providing game changing third-eye wisdom and policy perspectives on all endeavours of humanity and of imagining a better world for women and girls," Puri declared.

Over the years, IPS has also given pride of place for coverage of disarmament and development – and specifically nuclear disarmament.

Jayantha Dhanapala, a former U.N. under-secretary-general for disarmament affairs, said last week there is special significance in the fact that this anniversary is being celebrated together with the Group of 77 and UNCTAD, highlighting the umbilical link with the developing world of the global South.

Giving voice to these important trends, IPS emerged to challenge the monopoly of the news exchange system and its dominance by the developed world, he added.

Drawing on the vast reservoir of hitherto globally unrecognised journalistic talent in the global South, Roberto Savio and Pablo Piacentini co-founded an organisation that has braved challenges of resource mobilisation and unfair competition, said Dhanapala.

"Having spent many years in the area of peace and disarmament with the United Nations, I am personally grateful to IPS for espousing the cause of disarmament, especially nuclear disarmament, and for identifying the priority of a nuclear weapon-free world where weapons of mass destruction must be eliminated and conventional weapons reduced from current levels in achieving general and complete disarmament," he said.

"Only then can we have peace and security with development and human rights flourishing in collective and co-operative global security," said Dhanapala, president of the Pugwash Conferences on Science & World Affairs (1995 Nobel Peace Laureate) and a former ambassador of Sri Lanka.

When the United Nations launched a new series in 2004 drawing attention to the "10 Most Under-Reported Stories of the Year", IPS was far ahead of the curve having covered at least seven of the 10 stories in a single year: AIDS orphans in Africa; Women as Peacemakers; the Hidden World of the Stateless; Policing for Peace; the Girl Soldier; Indigenous Peoples and a Treaty for the Disabled.

Dr. Shashi Tharoor, a former U.N. under-secretary-general and head of the Department of Public Information (DPI), who originated the series, recounted the role of IPS in covering under-reported stories.

Reiterating his comments, Tharoor said last week: "I have followed IPS' reporting for three decades, and worked with them at close quarters during my media-related assignments at the United Nations.

"I found IPS an excellent source of news and insight about the developing world, covering stories the world's dominant media outlets too often ignore," said Tharoor, currently a member of parliament for Thiruvananthapuram in India's Lok Sabha.

He said IPS reporters marry the highest professional standards of journalism to an institutional commitment to covering stories of particular concern to the global South.

"They are indispensable to any reader who wishes to stay abreast of what's hap-

"I thank IPS for raising global public awareness about matters at the heart of the U.N.'s agenda, and I hope it will have an even greater impact in the future."

U.N. Secretary-General  
Ban Ki-moon

pening in developing countries around the world," said Tharoor, a prolific writer and author of 'The Elephant, the Tiger and the Cell Phone'.

In recent years, IPS has been a three-time winner of the annual awards presented by the U.N. Correspondents' Association (UNCA), having won a bronze in 1997 (shared with the Washington Post) and two golds in 2012 and 2013 (one of which it shared with the Associated Press) for "excellence in U.N. reporting".

Additionally, IPS' Gareth Porter was also honoured in 2012 with the Martha Gellhorn Prize for Journalism, whose past winners included the Guardian, the Independent, the Sunday Times and Wikileaks.

The Washington-based Population Institute, which gave its annual media awards for development reporting, singled out IPS as "the most conscientious news service" for coverage relating to population and development.

IPS won the award nine times in the 1990s, beating out the major wire services year in and year out, conceding occasionally to Reuters and the Associated Press (AP).

Barbara Crossette, a former U.N. bureau chief for the New York Times (1994-2001) and currently U.N. correspondent for The Nation and contributing writer and editor for PassBlue, said, "I am among those many journalists who follow the IPS reports daily, not only for insight into events and



people at the United Nations, but also — and maybe more so — for coverage of global news from the perspective of the developing world.”

She said she also looks forward to some of “the controversial commentary from IPS writers with different perspectives than those we hear most in the Western media, where reporting from the U.N. itself has generally sunk to a new low in American and numerous European publications and broadcasts.

“As for news from inside the U.N., IPS’s close attention to the issues of women in the organisation and in its work inter-nationally has been consistently stellar,” said Crossette, who cited the Vittachi anecdote in the 2007 ‘Oxford Handbook on the United Nations’ published by the Oxford University Press.

“No other news service has covered so reliably the establishment, the people and the ongoing challenges of U.N. Women and what that all means to the level of commitment member states really have to making the new U.N. agency strong



Progress on gender equality in the Pacific Islands.  
Credit: Catherine Wilson/IPS

and effective at a time when it is clear how central a role women must play in development,” said Crossette, who was also the Times’ chief correspondent in Bangkok (for Southeast Asia from 1984 to 1988) and in Delhi (for South Asia, 1988-1991).

Described by some as a “socially responsible” media outlet, IPS has consistently advocated the cause of civil society and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) worldwide.

James Paul, who monitored U.N. politics for over 19 years as executive director of the New York-based Global Policy Forum, said IPS has made a tremendous contribution to the movement for global justice over the past 50 years.

It is hard today to imagine the world as it was then, in 1964, a moment when colonialism was ending, when the democratic spirit was running strong, when there was a worldwide movement to seize the institutions and transform them, he added.

“IPS arose to confront the information monopolies and to bring a fresh approach to news that would reflect and nourish the spirit of those times,” Paul said.

He said IPS immediately won a place of honour and inspired those working for democracy, justice and peace: people who needed an alternative to the arid journalism of the powers-that-be.

“In the five decades that have followed, it has held true to that vision serious investigation of global developments, honest thinking, engagement for justice, the very best journalism day in and day out”.

He added: “I am always impressed by the commitment of IPS to reporting the underlying issues, to drawing on historical memory, to bringing to events a sense of humor, hope and possibility, even in the darkest of times. We can count on IPS to use proudly the optic of human rights, economic justice and peace.”

Though news is not so monopolised today, its purveyors in both South and North are still too often the mouth-pieces and propagandists of power, he noted.

“Clearly, then, IPS is more important than ever. A luta continua! I salute the founder, Roberto Savio, and the hundreds of talented journalists who have worked with him over the years,” Paul said.

“In particular I salute the remarkable IPS U.N. correspondent, who has embodied the IPS spirit and kept us all so well informed about what is happening. We need a collection of his dispatches. Happy Birthday, IPS!”

Cora Weiss, International Peace Bureau, Hague Appeal for Peace, said: “Every day IPS’ (electronic newsletter) Terra-Viva, brings news I cannot find any place else. It’s news that matters.”

And it’s news that gives voice to people who are under recognised, news that covers issues critical to our well being and survival, she added.

“I appreciate your coverage of women, of threats to peace, of nuclear weapons and policies to abolish them, of climate change affecting islands and islanders, and so much more. Keep it coming!” Weiss said. ■