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## Sub-Sahara Needs Quick Help to Avert Disaster

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It is an old story that has been told time and time again. Africa's sub-Sahara has runaway population growth; its natural resources are increasingly being strained; economic stress is mounting; and African governments' programs too often are tilted to serve the elite class, rather than fix fundamental structural problems in withering economies. But Robert S. McNamara, former president of the World Bank, is out retelling the story—hoping the world will not just listen but will act decisively.

The decline of sub-Sahara has been documented thoroughly by the World Bank and other organizations in recent years, but McNamara says little has been done by African governments and outside countries to effectively deal with these population, finance, and resource problems. Unless action is taken soon, he says, "the disastrous famines that are currently restricted to years of drought and to only a few countries will become everyday occurrences affecting a majority of the sub-Saharan nations."

McNamara aired his views in a speech delivered 1 November in Washington. To partly address this problem, he recommends increasing bilateral trade with the region by 30 percent, hiking World Bank lending substantially, rescheduling the debt of sub-Saharan nations, and establishing a special research program to probe African ecological issues. McNamara's remarks came in a presentation before the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research to honor the late Sir John Crawford, an Australian economist who helped found the organization.

For countries such as Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Tanzania, Zaire, and 39 others, says McNamara, time is running out. Vast ecological damage resulting from deforestation and population surges will lock these societies into decades of increasing poverty, famine, and perhaps social strife, McNamara says, unless problems are tackled now. And unbridled population growth is the root cause of the continent's woes. Since 1950, the population of the sub-Saha-

ra region has grown from 172.4 million to 363 million in 1980. This will double again by 2000 and double still again by 2025 if the fertility rate of 6.7 children per woman persists. To slow rates of growth, aggressive birth-control measures must be adopted by countries, McNamara notes.

Even if this is relatively successful, the population will continue to mushroom for the next four or five decades. To feed these people, governments will have to place much greater emphasis on improving agricultural production, which has been declining in recent years in many instances. Increases in domestic food production, however, are likely to fall short of the current population growth rates of 3.2 percent during the next two decades, McNamara says. So existing levels of malnutrition will grow worse in the near future.

Literacy rates and educational systems in the region must be improved significantly if these nations are to take control of their destiny, McNamara states, adding that the international community's efforts to help sub-Sahara must focus on long-term solutions, not just emergency relief. International aid should be increased, he says, even if it means cutting back on military assistance to other countries.

"If we don't make those joint efforts, then all of us must prepare ourselves for a scenario of suffering and starvation and economic collapse in Africa beyond anything we have seen thus far."—**MARK CRAWFORD**

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## BNL Security Fix Stalls Restart of Beam Reactor

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Experiments at Brookhaven National Laboratory's high-flux beam reactor have been at a standstill since September and may not resume until next year. The Department of Energy's Chicago operations office has closed the facility to upgrade security systems protecting stocks of highly enriched uranium 235, which fuels the 60-megawatt (thermal) neutron source.

DOE notified the lab in late September that a planned shutdown for maintenance would be extended to address security deficiencies. Lab officials have declined the specifics of the

security improvements, but scientific staff members are clearly irked by the prospect of having to delay some experiments. Laboratory officials, who are under orders not to discuss the situation, wonder why the reactor cannot resume operations while security is being upgraded.

The Chicago operations office says there is no date certain for restarting the reactor. Noting that there is a substantial stock of U-235 on site, one DOE official stated that "The guard force at the laboratory has to be trained to meet potential threats." The improvements in security at Brookhaven, he adds, are part of a general upgrade of federal facilities around the country—not a response to any specific threat, or anticipated effort by terrorists to acquire fissionable materials.—**MARK CRAWFORD**

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## Spy Trade Might Free Two Soviet Scientists

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Two dissident scientists, Andrei Sakharov and Anatoly Shcharansky, could be freed by Soviet officials if the upcoming 19 to 20 November meeting between President Reagan and Prime Minister Mikhail S. Gorbachev comes off well. According to the *Bild Daily*, a West German newspaper, the two prominent human rights activists could be released as part of a spy exchange allegedly being negotiated by officials in Moscow and Washington.

State Department and Soviet Embassy officials claim to have no knowledge of the pending deal, except for media accounts. The Associated Press wire, however, reported on 31 October that the ongoing negotiations were confirmed by a Soviet journalist, Victor Louis, who often is funneled information by Soviet government officials. But one State Department official cautioned against expecting too much. "Every time there are high-level talks like this, there are rumors of an imminent release. I do not think we will really know until it happens."

Under the alleged arrangement, several Soviet and other Eastern Bloc spies were to be traded for Sakharov, Shcharansky, and perhaps a dozen more Western agents belonging to the United States, Britain, and West Ger-