

## **Eminent scholars highlight UN's role in shaping core global values**

*Authors of 'UN Ideas that Changed the World' lecture at ESCAP*

Bangkok (UN/ESCAP Information Services) -- The United Nations has not only played a significant role in developing core values such as human rights and gender equality but also in giving those ideas their practical form and carrying them forward, according to two eminent scholars overseeing a project to document the intellectual history of the organization.

Sir Richard Jolly and Dr. Louis Emmerij, co-authors of “UN Ideas that Changed the World,” the 17<sup>th</sup> and final volume in the series, were speaking today at the Distinguished Persons Lecture sponsored by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in Bangkok.

Their decade-long work seeks to highlight the values and principles developed over the 64-year existence of the United Nations that have been the driving force in human progress, promoting international economic and social development, and protecting human rights.

For instance, the concept of human rights for all, Sir Richard noted, developed after the creation of the United Nations even though conditions in some countries such as the United States, where African-Americans did not have the right to vote, and the Soviet Union with its gulags, seemingly might have precluded it.

“Yet despite this, a vision of human rights for all still emerged,” as embodied in the UN Charter and in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, he said.

Dr. Emmerij then highlighted some of the policies resulting from the nine core UN ideas identified in the book, including the concept for the Human Development Report and its national offshoots, and the evolution of fairer international economic relations.

Noleen Heyzer, United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP, said publication of the book could not have been timelier, with the world debating the future of multilateralism and questions being asked about the role of the United Nations.

“Reading this book reminds one of the crucial role the UN has played in over its 64 year history,” she said. “It provides a response to the – sometimes – unfair criticism of our organization. It fills a historical gap in raising awareness of our contributions to human development.”

The lecture also marked the formal launch of the book in the Asia-Pacific region. Ambassador Manaspas Xuto, President of the United Nations Association of Thailand (UNAT), also spoke at the event.

Sir Richard is a special adviser to the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and architect of the widely-acclaimed Human Development Report. He

*Headquartered in Bangkok, ESCAP is the largest of the UN's five Regional Commissions in terms of its membership, population served and area covered. The only intergovernmental forum covering the entire Asia-Pacific region, ESCAP works to promote sustainable and inclusive economic and social progress. More information is available at [www.unescap.org](http://www.unescap.org).*

served for 14 years as Deputy Executive Director for Programmes in UNICEF, where he was directly involved in efforts to ensure more attention to the needs of children and women in the making of economic adjustment policies, along the lines set out in the book he co-edited, "Adjustment with a Human Face."

Dr. Emmerij has published more than 130 articles on the economics of education, labour market questions, economic and social policy, and development studies. He has held, among others, the positions of Special Advisor to the President of the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington D.C. from 1993 until 1999; President of the OECD Development Center from 1986 until 1992; and was the Rector of the Institute of Social Studies at The Hague and Professor of Development Economics from 1976 to 1985.

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