

„Discovering International Relations and Contemporary Global Issues“

Cultural Relations Policy

News and Background

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About CRP News & Background

Cultural Relations Policy News & Background is a part of ICRP Monthly Review Series and an initiative of Institute for Cultural Relations Policy Budapest. Launched in 2012, its mission is to provide information and analysis on key international political events. Each issue covers up-to-date events and analysis of current concerns of international relations on a monthly basis.

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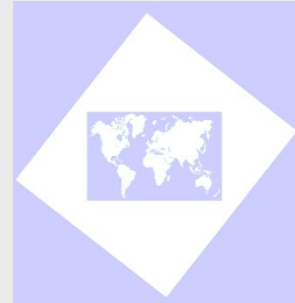
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Further Steps Towards a More Integrated European Union

On 4 June German Chancellor Angela Merkel met José Manuel Barroso, the head of the European Commission to discuss the next step in the process of resolving the euro crisis. The dispute was about the plan of the so-called banking union; throughout – according to Barroso – the members of the European Union could carry out the economic part of the earlier declared aim of the economic and monetary union. Merkel admitted, that the maintenance of the single currency seems to be unimaginable without a stronger cooperation in the economic and fiscal policy. The substance of their conception is on the one part the establishing of a European banking authority, which could oversee the most important, transnational banks and other kinds of financial institutions across Europe. Barroso also highlighted that Europe should have unavoidable arguments about an European deposit guarantee draft. On the other part they suggested to deliver the budgetary issues to European level. On 26 June Barroso said at the European Policy Center in Brussels, that the questions of the taxation and the employment should also ruled by supranational, European

institutions. Although the Germans had not supported the thought of floating euro bonds, they fully approved the banking union plan as a resolution for bailout of the indebted South European countries and banks inside the euro-zone.



José Manuel Barroso Photo: Antônio Milena/Abr [Agência Brasil]

The plan was presented on 6 June and was discussed by the European Council at the end of June.

The investors and trade partners from all over the world have been concerned about the euro crisis, which was obviously shown by the aspiration of the G7 countries' financial ministers and central bank leaders (United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Japan, France, Italy, Germany) to hold an emergency conference call on 5 June. The EU and especially Germany has been exposed to their economic partner's criticism for months about the handling of the financial matters, as it postponed the bailout of the South European countries to the very last minute. The business experts and politicians of the G7 states have been afraid of the spill-over of the crisis, and pushed the European countries to take further measures, which could hinder the crisis to spread over Spain from Greece.

International Cooperation

Barroso and Merkel attended the G20 summit which was held on 20 June in Los Cabos, Mexico. Both of them underpinned the EU's commitment to cooperate with other countries in resolving the problem of the high-level unemployment and the debt crisis. Barroso, the President of the European Commission added, that the countries of the European Union did not ask the countries outside to explain the method of managing a slump, but the EU is still open to work together with members of the international community for the stability of Europe.

**“THE SINGLE CURRENCY IS UNIMAGINABLE
WITHOUT A STRONGER COOPERATION IN THE
ECONOMIC AND FISCAL POLICY”**

International Attempts to Stop Violence in Syria

After the horrific massacre in Houla on 25 May 2012 – where 108 civilians were killed, almost half of them children – the Western European leaders and the US government were trying to exert a larger pressure on the Russian Federation to take more severe steps to restrain the escalating of the conflict in Syria, which seemed to turn to a civil war. Although Russia – as a long time ally of Syria – could have a great impact on the Middle Eastern country, it – colluded with China – vetoed not only the UN Security Council's resolution calling on the Syrian President Assad, to resign in February, but also the resolution of the UN Human Rights Council on 1 June condemning Syria in the most onerous terms the use of force against civilians. On 7 July Russian and Chinese heads of state Vladimir Putin and Hu Jintao adopted a joint statement on Syria in Beijing, which included the common objection to resolving the crisis in Syria by foreign military intervention, and the rejection of supporting a forced regime change without considering the Syrian sovereignty and territorial integrity. Finally the two presidents confirmed their own commitment to advocate the implementing of Kofi Annan's six-point peace plan.

The mentioned vetoes were highly criticized by the Western powers and the Syrian opposition, and made the Russian position in the conflict unclear. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton accused Vladimir Putin of sustaining trade relations with Syria, selling arms to the Syrian government's army and pro-Assad militiamen. She said that was the main reason of the Russian resistance to impose sanctions against Syria. Putin denied the charges in a few hours from Germany, saying Russia did not export weapons to Damascus that could be used for killing civilians. During his European visit at the beginning of June Vladimir Putin met German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande to discuss their opposition on the Syrian issue. The Russian president showed no sign to revise his stances in the question of using force against Syria. He claimed in France that an external intervention could lead to the lack of stability in the region, as the ouster of Bashar el-Assad would provide a ground of following contentions. He emphasized that Russia does not take sides with any country or the United Nations, as well as with Syria in the conflict, and his country is only interested in avoidance of a gruesome civil war. Merkel announced that she had agreed with Putin referring to the

importance of the stability, but there were still differences between them on how to reach that.



Photo: FreedomHouse [Flickr]

Despite the Syrian government had accepted the peace plan of Kofi Annan, the special envoy for the UN and the Arab League to Syria on the condition of a ceasefire, it could not take an effect because of the multiplying, increasingly growing civil casualties, shellings across the country, and death and displacement of tens of thousands. While the opposition blamed the government for the atrocities, and claimed that the permission of the plan by the government could be needed only for buying time to implement more military offensives against the insurgents, Assad was charging armed, foreign financed terrorist groups with perpetrating the killings. On 3 June, in his first public

speech since January, the Alawite president called on all groups in Syria to cooperate with the government, which is the only way to give an end of the crisis. Meanwhile the Syrian National Council urged the defection from the government. According to Robert Mood, the head of the UN Supervision Mission in Syria (UNSMIS), neither parties were disposed to make efforts on starting negotiations, which brought on the escalating of violence in the country. The radicalization of the conflict hindered the work of the observer mission and got more and more dangerous, therefore – under the insurgent's criticism – the UN suspended the operation of the UNSMIS until the circumstances make the observers able to carry out the mandated activities.

This situation raised questions in the Western powers and the Arab League about taking bolder steps by the reassessment of the peace plan. On 8 June Hillary Clinton met Kofi Annan in Washington where Annan said some people think that his initiation based on a peaceful mediation is dead. At the end of June, a UN-backed Action Group assumed a statement about the process of a peaceful transition in Syria. The Group reinforced Annan's plan, calling on both sides to implement the six point without waiting for the others, and aimed

the set up of a transitional governing body, representing the present government and the associations of the opposition.



Photo: delayed gratification [Flickr]

The Syrian revolt – opposed to the Assad-regime – is the most protracted revolt of the Arab Spring, which is not only a political, but also a sectarian conflict, between the Sunni Muslims and – including the Syrian president, Assad – the members of the Alawite branch, an offshoot of the Shia

Islam. As a result of the religious diversity in the Middle East, the conflict in Syria could set off other serious recurring struggles between the same branches – accordingly the supporters and the opposition of the Syrian government – outside Syrian borders, in different countries. At the beginning of June in Tripoli, a Lebanese port city, at least 7 people were killed and 30 wounded, in such a street fight between neighbouring religious groups. The firing started on 1 June after the Sunni Muslims' commemoration about the Sunni Muslim victims of Houla. On the next day the Arab League approved a resolution asking the two major satellite operators to suspend the broadcasting of all the television stations from Syria. Reacting to the suspension the state-run channel in Syria added that the Arab League is trying to hide what happens in Syria at the moment. However, Annan commented the spill-over effect indeed make a sense to this measure.

**“EXTERNAL INTERVENTION COULD LEAD
TO THE LACK OF STABILITY IN THE REGION”**

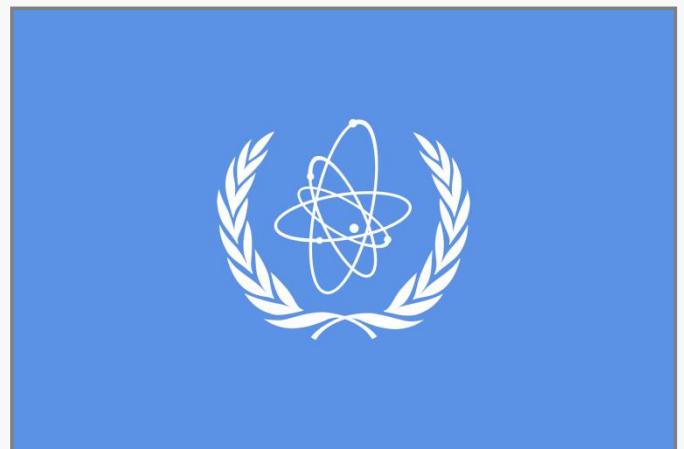
No Progress on Nuclear Talks with Iran

At the end of May 2012 Iran and the so-called P5+1, meaning the permanent members of the UN Security Council (United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China) plus Germany, convened in Baghdad to clear up each other's conceptions about Iranian nuclear developments and to reach a breakthrough on the issue, although it was not succeeded. The representatives postponed further negotiations to the middle of June, which were held in Moscow.

The sensitive point of the conciliation was the high level of uranium-enrichment in Iran, which allegedly has made Iran able to develop nuclear weapons. Iran – referring to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty – had been demanding the right of enrichment for peaceful aims, but the six world powers did not want to recognize that, as they said that the text of the contract had not contained the term of “right to enrich” expressly. Although the Iranian top negotiators had been excusing the sanctions, which were imposed by the Western leaders against the Iranian economy, they did not accepted the proposals of the P5+1, which could have led to the end of the trade restrictions, carried out by the Western powers. The

P5+1's proposal included the 20% limit of enrichment, the export of the uranium, which is enriched to 20%, and the opportunity of an international inquiry in the Fordoo enrichment plant.

On 7 July at the end of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation's summit in Beijing – where Iran also had an observer status – Russia and China announced in a joint statement, that they strictly oppose any initiations to ease the Iranian question by force. The Russian position on the sanctions became clearer after the remark of Yuri Ushakov, a Russian foreign policy advisor, related to the proposed Moscow talks that Russia would support the thought of Iranian's right to peaceful enrichment under the control of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN's nuclear watchdog organisation.



On 8 June the representatives of the IAEA and the Iranian deputies reconvened in Vienna, to make efforts on working toward a mutually acceptable inspection settlement regarding to Iran's nuclear capacity. IAEA officials presented a reconsidered proposal, which included the answers for Iran's earlier raised concerns, but the negotiators of the Middle Eastern country found the document inadmissible, returned to earlier discussed questions, and stated new ones. As a result of the disappointing failure, the parties did not appoint a new date to continue the conciliation.

On 13 June Saeed Jalili, Iran's top negotiator made a speech in the Iranian Parliament, which was aimed to give an account of the nuclear talks. Jalili said that the IAEA could not find any matters with the functioning of the power plants in Iran, as they complied with the requirements of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and running under the inspection of the IAEA. He also mentioned, that the source of the West's problems with Iran is not the confrontations by the reason of nuclear developments, it is rather their basic scepticism regarding to the religious democracy. Ali Larijani, the head of the Parliament added that Iran should not yield to the Western pressure during the negotiations, as Iran does not need a

compromise on its inalienable right to enrich.

The Moscow talks – between 18–19 June – could not lead to progress on resolving the conflict. There was no change in the basic stances on both sides, consequently they did not propose a new session in the used form. They only agreed on the necessary meeting of the experts to look at the technical dimension of the positions. This meeting was held on 3 July, in Istanbul. The lack of the agreement meant not only the protraction of the instability related to the nuclear question, but also the restriction of the economic sanctions against Iran by the Western countries. The embargo on Iranian oil would begin on 1 July with the participation of the United States, Japan and 10 more European countries.



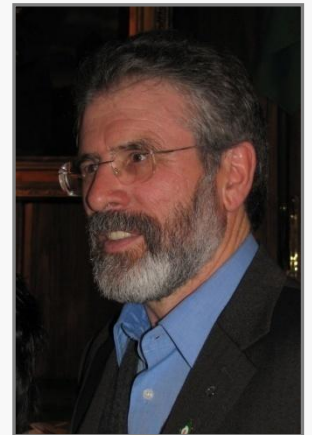
Ali Larijani Photo: Hessam Armandeh [Wikimedia Commons]

A Handshake, Which Could Bridge Three Decades' Hostility

Queen Elisabeth II., the British head of state, who was celebrating the 60th anniversary of her accession to throne at the beginning of June, visited Northern Ireland secondly since last year to enhance the process of the reconciliation between the pro-British groups and the pro-Irish nationalists in the area.

Her Majesty was the first monarch, who travelled to the Irish islands after the defection of the Irish Republic, in 1921. In that year, six counties in the province of Ulster voted for staying the part of the British Crown and – labelled as Northern Ireland – joined to the United Kingdom. This part of Ireland has strongly divided by the protestant unionists, and the catholic republicans. The tensions amounted to a thirty-years-long political and sectarian strife from the early 1960's – called as The Troubles – which caused the death of 3,500 people. 60 percent of the victims – including Lord Louis Mountbatten, the cousin of Queen Elisabeth II., and many soldiers, who were serving in the name of the Queen – were killed in the outrages committed by the Irish Republican Army (IRA). This period of shootings and bombardments drew to a close with the Good Friday peace agreement in 1998.

On 27 June Queen Elisabeth II. met Martin McGuinness, the Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland and the member of the Sinn Féin, the most popular republican party in Northern Ireland. McGuinness had been leading the IRA before he began his political career. Their public handshake was described by the press and the political elite as a historical turning point in the peace building process. They met each other at an arts event in Belfast, which Michael Higgins, the Irish president, also attended. During the historical handshake, McGuinness whispered the words "good bye and Godspeed" to the Queen in Irish, who smiled, but did not respond. The British head of state wore a green dress, which could have a symbolic value for the Irish nationalists, whose colour is green.



Gerry Adams

Both sides took risks because of the meeting, regarding to its reception by the publicity. McGuinness used to get serious threats from the radical groups of IRA because of his contribution in the

reconciliation. Just after the encounter with the Queen, McGuinness said, although it was pleasant to shake hands with Queen Elisabeth, he is still wedded to the thought of join the Irish Republic.

John Reid, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland between 2001 and 2002 and Garry Adams, the president of the Sinn Féin welcomed the mentioned appointment, but both of them stressed, that the heritage of the past could not be changed and probably it will take generations to bring on the rest of the conflict.



It proved to be the case after the affray between pro- and anti-British groups at the night of 26 June in Belfast. The republicans – as a sign of their protest against the Queen's visit – placed an Irish flag on a mountain that looks at the city. That was the trigger of the street fight according to the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

During her stay Queen Elizabeth visited Enniskillen, where 11 people died in IRA bombings in 1987. She was greeted by masses, waving the Union Jack, and by Owen Paterson, who is responsible for certain foreign affairs matters as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in Northern Ireland. Paterson invited the Queen to a praise for the Diamond Jubilee in the Anglican church of Enniskillen. After the event she also attended at a smaller service in the Catholic church of the town. Prince Charles called the 86 years-old Queen's trip in Ireland her greatest achievement in her life. Garry Adams, the president of the Sinn Féin added that they are ready to fix the relations with the British. According to him Ireland is on the way of change as a result of the peace building process and the economic crisis.

Growing Tensions between the UK and Argentina

Proposed Referendum in the Falkland Islands

On 12 June 2012 the government of the Falkland Islands (Islas Malvinas in Spanish) announced, that there will be arranged a referendum next year on the subject of its political status, which could put an end to the territorial disputes between the United Kingdom and Argentina. The Falklands belongs to the United Kingdom since 1833 – except when Argentina invaded the islands for 74 days in 1982 – but the Argentines used to assert their own sovereignty over the archipelago referring to the geographical proximity and the Argentine legacy after the collapse of the Spanish colonial empire, which – according to the South American country – also contained the Falklands, called in Spanish Las Malvinas. They used to affirm, that the British forces assaulted on the Argentines at the Malvinas in 1833, expelled the islanders and destroyed the Argentine authorities.

According to the opinion of the government of the Falkland Islands' the referendum serves the aim of the Falklands' inhabitants to express their willingness to remain British, and dismiss the doubts about their views worldwide. Gavin Short the chair of the island's legislature declared his

confidence regarding to the choice of the islanders to stay the self-governing part of the United Kingdom. He named the statements of the worldwide-spreading Argentine propaganda – including the Falklanders uncertainty about their future, and the irrestraint as hostages by the military forces of the UK – absurd.



British Prime Minister David Cameron said he would look up and defend the result of the referendum in virtue of the United Nation's charter, which enumerated the term of self-determination, as one of the most important principles in the international relations. Cameron called on the members of the international community to comply their assumed obligations by joining to the UN, and respect the decision of the Falklands' citizenry.

The spokesman of Cameron announced that the British government disputed the plan of the referendum with the Falklanders, but had no role in the initiation.

On 14 June, at the 30th anniversary of the end of the Falklands War, Argentine president Cristina Fernández de Kirchner pleaded the United Kingdom in writing to lift the age of colonialism and to try finding a peaceful resolution on the issue of the Malvinas' sovereignty. She added that there are 39 UN resolutions, which have claimed from the UK and Argentina to bring on the end of the conflict by negotiations. Finally, in her article the Argentine president also emboldened the UK to fulfill its responsibilities under the UN resolutions. Later on that day, in response to the Argentine approach, Cameron – in his speech, that was made as memorial to the British victory over the Argentine in 1982 – refused to negotiate about the Falklands' sovereignty and warned that the UK is prepared to protect the islands.

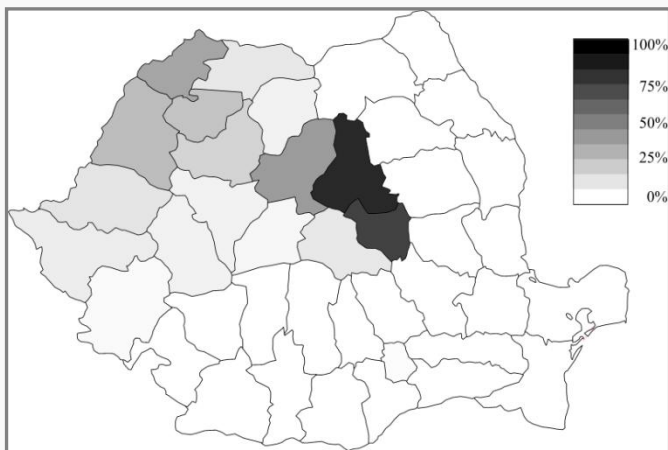
The Argentine president has been trying to enforce her country's demands through economic and diplomatic pressure. Argentina prosecuted five British oil companies by reason of exploring the seabed at the coast of the islands. The members of the South American trade association Mercosur approved a joint action to prohibit the docking of Falkland Islands' ships at their ports. On 14 June President Kirchner attended the session of

the UN's Special Committee on Decolonization in New York, where she broached the question of the Falklands. She said they do not require from the UK to recognize their truth, the Argentine only ask them to discuss the conflict at a table. Roger Edwards, the representative of the Falkland Islands replied, that Argentina has not only attempted to impede the islanders exerting their democratic rights, but also has bothered them for something, they have incorrect interpretation about. He alluded that the islands have never possessed by Argentine people.

On 20 June the Argentine head of state and the British Prime Minister met each other before the opening session of the G20 summit in Los Cabos, Mexico. Though there were no formal negotiations between them in Mexico, both of them reiterated their stances in the question of Falkland Islands' sovereignty during an informal conversation. At the moment, when President Kirchner tried to get out a paper, which summarized the content of the UN resolution 40/21 of the November 1985, that requires a peaceful solution from the parties in the Falkland conflict through negotiations – Cameron left her behind. The Prime Minister explained that all the UN resolutions are under the UN charter, which implies the principle, that the nations have the right of making decision about their own fate all over the world, and that's what the Argentine should respect.

Speaker of Hungarian Parliament Visits Romania during Elections

On 5 June 2012 Vasile Blaga and Roberta Anastase, the chairs of the two Houses of the Romanian Parliament requested László Kövér, the speaker of the Hungarian Parliament and the honorary president of the Hungarian Civic Party (MPP), one of the registered Hungarian ethnic parties in Romania, in writing to delay the date of his trip to Romania until the end of the local elections in the country. Kövér refused the application in his letter addressed to the Romanian representatives and declared he would travel to a Schengen country as



Map: Hungarians in Romania



a private citizen. He also called on the Romanian legislature to express its concerns about his proposed journey, if it hurts the rule of law. Blaga and Anastase replied that they hope Kövér would respect the sovereignty of Romania and would not resort to disturb democratic processes in the country as it would oppose the European principles and would impede the enforcement of Hungarian minority's interests. During his last visit at the end of May Kövér starkly convicted the measures of the Romanian government, which were imposed against the re-funeral of a Hungarian author, József Nyírő.

Turkey Urges to Use Force against Syria

On 25 June 2012 Turkey initiated a NATO assembly in the subject of the shooting down of an unarmed, reconnaissance Turkish aircraft by the Syrian government in international airspace. Turkey had been attempt to persuade the members of the military alliance to handle the attack in accordance with the 5th article of the NATO treaty, but the chance of a joint military intervention seemed to be improbable, as the world powers – despite the cumulative tensions as a result of the perpetrated civil war in Syria – would not provoke another war in the Middle East. The Syrian government announced that its air defence had downed the jet by anti-aircraft weapon as it violated the country's



Map: AteshCommons [Wikimedia Commons]



airspace. In addition the Syrian authorities could not hand over the airplane to Ankara. The Turkish government rejected the statement and explained that the mentioned jet was not surveilling Syria, as it was testing the radars of Turkey and after the pilots had realised the indications of the Turkish control centre the plane departed the Syrian airspace and was assailed in international area. They claim that the Turkish plane had not got any warnings from Syria and insisted that there is a radio record, which bears witness to the recognition of the jet by the Syrian militia.

Resurgent Tensions in the Southern Caucasus

On 4 and 5 June 2012 four Armenian and five Azeri soldiers were killed in border conflict between the two countries. The Armenian government accused Azeri military forces of trying to violate the Azeri-Armenian border with a hostile aim. The Azeri government firstly denied the violent interferences and the deaths on the Azeri side, and said the Armenian victims were killed due to confrontations inside the Armenian army, but later it verified the deaths of Azeri soldiers and blamed the Armenian forces to be intending to make



Armenian artillery near Armenian-Azerbaijani border



incursions to Azerbaijan. The two countries waged a war against each other over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh nearly two decades earlier. Recently Azerbaijan has begun to spend a major part of its budget for armament. On 6 June a Karabakhi soldier was also shot down and two other soldiers were wounded by Azeri forces, who were trying to move into Nagorno-Karabakh according to the country's defence ministry.

Papuan Separatist Leader Killed

On 14 June 2012 Mako Tabuni, a long-time leader of the Papuan separatists was killed by the Indonesian police in Jayapura. He perpetually put the issue of a referendum about Papua and West Papua's secession from Indonesia on the agenda. His death exploded a debate about its circumstances between the Indonesian authorities and the human right organizations' activists, and led to violent protest actions committed by the inhabitants of the province. As a result of a contentious election, Papua and West Papua belong to Indonesia since 1969, but according to experts the voice of the

Papuan oppositions has become stronger for a couple of months.



Free West Papua Protest in Melbourne. Photo: Nichollas Harrison

“THE VOICE OF THE PAPUAN OPPOSITIONS
HAS BECOME STRONGER”

Earth Summit 2012

The third high-level UN conference on sustainable development was arranged by the officials of the UN, dealing with economic and social affairs in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil between 20–22 June. The event was attended by heads of states, leaders of governments, deputies of trading companies and the deputies of the international non-governmental organisations from 192 countries. The president of the United States, the British Prime Minister and the German Chancellor missed the meeting referring to the priority of the European debt crisis. The summit served three aims from accepting a new political statement regarding to the advocacy of sustainable development, through the monitoring of the faults and deficiencies in the implementation of earlier approved agreements, until the outlining of new global targets. It was



Photo: Presidencia de la Nación Argentina

about how to create a green economy which could simultaneously purport the growing of the capability of the economy, as well as the increase of the social welfare, while protecting the environment, and about constructing an international body to take the coordination more effective in the topic. The Earth Summit 2012 ended up with a convention, which has the title of "The Future We Want" and in which the concerned states reiterated their willingness to carry out the idea of sustainable development.



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