

# What's This? Corporations and the U.N. Get Chummy

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The connection between governments and corporations has been powerfully evident through the so-called military-industrial-government complex. The corporate manufacture of arms for our own trumped-up "defense" needs and for sales to other nations is a central factor in people's inability to meet their real needs and build peaceful societies.

Disarmament activism requires us to root out the legal and mental "supply lines" of this insanity. Is it possible that we can begin to take away from *all* corporations their power to wield more legal rights than "We the People"? Their power to colonize our minds? To accumulate untold wealth and exercise illegitimate authority over us? Too many citizens and legislators believe they can't keep corporations out of people's deliberations, democratic processes, daily lives or souls! We need to turn such thinking around.

An important opportunity to take on that task can be found in a recent proposal calling for the United Nations to form partnerships with some of the world's largest and most life-denying corporations. We should not be surprised at this development.

## A Return Engagement for the MAI

Remember the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI)? It was concocted by multinational corporations working chummily with the 29 well-off countries that make up the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development. Angry people and activist organizations around the world shouted a loud NO to this corporate-government plot that would have let capital and corporate managers run roughshod over national and local laws intended to protect workers, environments and communities.

However, many of us knew the MAI would work its way back onto the scene, and we've recently caught sight of it in none other than the United Nations, which contemplates becoming handmaiden to global corporatization. The



Paul Normandia/Corporate Watch

phrase "globalization with a human face" is a grotesque cosmetic fix, a layer of paint on a rotten structure. Its latest manifestation is a Global Compact announced by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan last July, without public support from the governments of member nations.

It consists of U.N.-corporate partnerships resting on principles drawn from international human rights, labor and environmental agreements. The Compact is "intended to enhance cooperation between the U.N. and

private corporations" ... to advance popular social values "as part and parcel of the globalization process," ... and to "ensure that markets remain open" (note the MAI language).

Among the giant corporations endorsing the Compact are those against which activist organizations and communities have waged struggle after struggle over violations of environments and workers the world over: Nike Corporation, Royal Dutch Shell Corporation, DuPont Corporation, Unilever Corporation, Daimler-Chrysler Corporation, Deutsche Telecom Corporation, and Rio Tinto



Campaign members, left to right, Virginia Rasmussen, Nadine Winslow, Ben Sher, Mary Zepernick (seated), Paula Schnepf and son Nicholas, Molly Morgan (seated), and Charmaine Sprengelmeyer.

Mining Corporation. These assaulters of land and people are being asked to ensure the "social dimensions of the