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**HEADLINE:** The world must not let America set its agenda: **JEFFREY SACHS:**

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**BODY:**

By far the hardest challenge facing the world community today is to keep long-term goals in mind in the face of urgent and bitter divisions over Iraq and the war on terrorism. The problems of Aids, poverty and environmental degradation will not wait for a new consensus on Iraq or the Middle East.

In its desperation to resolve the crisis in Iraq, the Bush administration is touting a plan for reconstruction that, it is estimated by international financial institutions, will cost Dollars 55bn (Pounds 33bn) over the next four years. At the same time, the US is starving international initiatives in disease control, development assistance and environmental improvement. But global consensus will not be reached, nor the war on terrorism won, on the basis of a narrow, one-issue agenda.

The Bush administration seems to forget that the war on terrorism is but one of many wars to fight. The horror of September 11 2001 must never be minimised, but the 3,000 deaths on that day are exceeded every single day in Africa by children dying of malaria, a preventable and treatable disease. And malaria deaths are accompanied by mass deaths from Aids, tuberculosis, under-nutrition and other preventable or treatable killers. Why, then, is the US spending less than Dollars 100m to fight malaria each year, while spending 1,000 times that, about Dollars 100bn a year, on the war on terrorism, with its fronts in Afghanistan and Iraq?

The central problem is global leadership. Though the US accounts for less than 5 per cent of the world's population, and terrorism represents a comparably small part of the world's burgeoning problems, the rest of the world has let the US set the agenda. The US has defined the global agenda for the past two years as the war on terrorism, while allowing all other global problems to fester.

The Bush administration obsessively sees every problem through the lens of terror and accordingly considers itself excused from the struggle against poverty, environmental degradation and disease. The irony is that without solutions to these problems, terrorism is bound to worsen, no matter how many soldiers are thrown at it. Indeed, the military approach may provide no solution whatsoever.

The world community does not have to let the US set the agenda. Indeed, it has already identified its priorities in a series of important decisions in recent years. The Millennium Development Goals, adopted in September 2000, set out specific, quantified targets for poverty reduction. The Doha Declaration, adopted in October 2001, defines the priorities on trade reforms that will support efficient and equitable international development. The Monterrey Consensus, adopted in March 2002, defines donor countries' commitments to development financing (including a commitment to make "concrete efforts toward the target of 0.7 per cent" of donor gross national product). And the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, adopted in September 2002, specifies international goals for environmental stewardship.

These priorities have been pushed aside by the US preoccupation with terrorism. It is crucial that they be put once again at the centre of the global agenda - just where the world's leaders put them in the first place. Unlike the war in Iraq and its troubled aftermath, the Millennium

Development Goals, the Doha Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation were subscribed to by all the member governments of the United Nations (or the World Trade Organisation in the case of Doha).

Re-establishing an appropriate global agenda will require much greater leadership outside the US government. Most importantly, the developing world, representing four-fifths of humanity, needs to find its voice. The Group of 22 developing countries - now admittedly weakened by defections - showed in last month's trade negotiations in Cancun that they can hold their ground against unfair agricultural trade practices imposed by the rich countries. However, they have yet to show an ability to put forward a constructive agenda. The new Group of

Three - Brazil, India and South Africa - could become the critical nucleus of the democratic developing countries, but it will have to work much harder than it has done so far to prepare serious proposals for global consideration if it is to become more than a curiosity.

The United Nations agencies, much maligned in rightwing US circles but needed more urgently than ever before by the world - including the US - also have a responsibility to rebalance the international agenda. This is especially true of the agencies that deal with global finance, such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Financing is vital for success in the battles against poverty, disease and environmental degradation.

If Iraq needs Dollars 55bn over the next four years for reconstruction, according to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, what do the poorest countries need to keep their people alive and get a foot on to the ladder of economic development? The same technical experts that helped identify Iraq's needs should go to work on the needs of Ghana, Tanzania, Bolivia and dozens of other countries that are in truly desperate straits. Of course, the US champions Iraq's needs while suppressing an honest evaluation of the needs of the other countries.

The IMF's management should stop grumbling in private that there is simply no donor money to help impoverished countries, and instead raise its voice in public protest against donor - and especially US - miserliness. The Fund's executive board should also stop voting in favour of US-rigged programmes in which the world's poorest countries are told that they must live - and die - on health budgets of less than Dollars 10 per person per year. All IMF programmes should be able to meet a basic test: that they are sufficiently bold and generous in terms of donor support to enable well-governed countries to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Of course all of this will require facing down the hidden dominance of the US in the governance of the IMF.

The next big test of the global agenda will come at the donor meeting on Iraq in Madrid later this month. Will any country tell the US that its international agenda is askew? Will any country say to the US that impoverished countries, the Global Fund to Fight Aids, TB and Malaria, and the control of greenhouse gas emissions deserve at least as much attention and help as Iraq? Will any country, in sum, say that the world agenda should be set by the world, not by the US alone?

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