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Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Chevron, and the think tank The Center for Strategic and International Studies have teamed on a new project to promote "economic development, livelihoods, and reduce poverty worldwide."

*"We can help countries to begin to build the infrastructure that can attract and properly use private investment and business development which then produces the jobs for its people,"* said Rice, who used to sit on the board at Chevron before becoming part of the Bush Administration.

While the launch was short on details, there were many references to the important role the United States plays in improving welfare around the globe. Rice said it was both a moral obligation, and one that was good for national security as well.

*"You don't want another Afghanistan out there," she said. "You don't want the northern border of Mexico to look like a failed state. You don't want Yemen, as it's doing to become the next Somalia or the next Afghanistan."*

Thus far, US involvement in Afghanistan has not had a positive effect. Despite a 10 year US presence in Afghanistan, the country still has one of the world's highest rates of infant mortality and death in childbirth.

The meeting is part of a larger campaign on the part of Chevron, to try to win back the support

of the public, after refusing to pay an \$8.6 billion court-ordered payout. The company it bought, Texaco, was found to be responsible for poisoning the Ecuadorian Amazon rainforest, which led to the deaths of 1400 people.

A judge in a court in Ecuador ordered Chevron to pay the fines but it was ignored, and a US judge supported their decision to ignore the local courts.

Instead, Chevron seems to be spending the money on marketing, a move deeply criticized by Han Shan, the coordinator of the Clean up Ecuador Campaign.

*“Chevron is continuing a scorched earth, legal political and pr offensive to evade accountability while people in Ecuador continue to get sick, die of oil related illness, cancer ,”* Shan said.

Greg Palast made the documentary, Rumble in the Jungle, which examines what happened to the people who live in the village which was not only polluted by Texaco, but then abandoned and left to fend for itself.

*“They are doing the opposite of their PR campaign,”* Palast said. *“In fact they impoverished and poisoned an area and one reason it’s the poorest area is because Chevron went in there, its Texaco unit, and made it poor”* .

Many say the irony in the US to leading the way in development and poverty reduction around the globe is that it does not have that under control on its own soil.

Writer and activist Rania Khalek said it is always questionable when a company works to spend so much money to promote themselves. If they spent that same amount of money simply paying for the damage they have caused it would actually help the people.

Corporations just care about *“their bottom line,”* she said. The goal is not to help people but to

make it easier to do business.

Khalek contended that the government often gets involved because the eventually go to work for these companies or once worked for them. It's part of the revolving door mentality between major corporations and the government.

The goal of these joint programs is not to help people but to make business better for the company.

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