

# UNITY

## THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

Compiled from Federal parliamentary and other sources relevant to Australia's obligations to the United Nations

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**NOTE:** This week UNity is on <http://www.unityunaa.blogspot.com/> The new website which is under construction is nearly completed. Reminder emails will contain both links in the transition period. Please note some links may need to be copied and pasted into the address space/browser.

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#### A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

##### **BAN MEETS BUSH IN NEW YORK**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon was heading to Washington on Thursday (14/2/08) for talks with US President George W. Bush and other senior officials.

The UN and US leaders are discussing climate change, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), human rights, counter-terrorism, and international peace and security. (The MDGs are timed targets to address ills, such as poverty, illiteracy and HIV/AIDS.)

They are also expected to discuss Darfur, Kenya, the Middle East, Iraq and Afghanistan. Mr Ban was also scheduled to meet US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

##### **ACTION NEEDED 'TO SAVE CHILDREN FROM WAR ABUSE'**

The UN Security Council must "take concrete and targeted measures" against those parties that persistently use or abuse children during armed conflicts around the world, UN envoy Radhika Coomaraswamy told the Council, urging that well-meaning words be transformed into effective actions (12/2/08).

The Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, she noted the ongoing impunity for persistent violators that used or abused children during war. From the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to Myanmar and from Sri Lanka to Uganda, parties to armed conflicts killed, maimed, abducted or sexually assaulted children; denied humanitarian access to children in need; and recruited and used child soldiers, she said. In total, at least 58 parties were known to be offenders.

Ms Coomaraswamy called for the establishment of a mechanism by the 15-member council to review and oversee targeted measures against violators to end their impunity. The targeted measures could include the imposition of travel restrictions on leaders and their exclusion from any governance structures and amnesty provisions, the imposition of arms embargoes, a ban on military assistance and restriction on the flow of financial resources to the parties concerned.

UN Children's Fund executive director Ann M. Veneman told the Council that it was possible to reintegrate children used by armed forces and groups, especially once they are given the necessary skills and assistance to become productive members of their communities.

UNICEF was already working in several countries – notably the Central African Republic (CAR), Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan – to reintegrate children. She highlighted the particular vulnerability of girls and women during armed conflicts because of sexual violence.

A recent UN report stated children were still recruited and used in armed conflicts in at least 13 nations worldwide. They included Afghanistan, Burundi, Chad, the CAR, Colombia, the DRC, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, Somalia, Sudan, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/sc9246.doc.htm>

UNICEF REPORT: [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_42833.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_42833.html)

##### **21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY CHALLENGES FOR UN SECURITY COUNCIL**

Colin Keating, executive director of a new independent think tank, Security Council Report, offered an analysis of whether the UN Security Council is up to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, at an Australian National University public lecture on Tuesday(12/2/08).

"The situations in Kenya and Pakistan have already brought major new challenges for diplomats in 2008," said Mr Keating earlier. The lecture was entitled *The future of the United Nations Security Council*.

"The Security Council and UN peacekeepers were already at historically high levels of activity in 2006-2007. NATO, the EU, the US, the Nordics, New Zealand and Australia also seem to be stretched to the limit."

He argues it is time for in-depth examination into whether the current machinery for international collective security was ready to live up to its potential and covers recommendations necessary for institutional reformation that the Security Council must undergo in order to maintain future relevance.

Colin Keating was previously New Zealand Ambassador to the UN and served on the Security Council in 1993 and 1994. He was council president during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and led the Council Mission to Somalia and chaired the Council Committee on Sanctions against Iraq. He is a member of the ANU Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy Advisory Board.  
DETAILS: Martyn Pearce on 02 6125 5575 or 0416 249 245.

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **CLIMATE CHANGE CALLS BY DEVELOPING NATIONS**

Participants at a UN high-level debate underlined the urgent need for world action to complete negotiations over a new global post-2012 agreement on climate change by 2009, with special attention to the needs of developing countries that have contributed less to global warming but have been more adversely affected, according to China View on Tuesday.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, John Ashe, of Antigua and Barbuda, said that "urgent action" was needed now to fully implement the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol.

He urged developed countries to take the lead in addressing climate change by making commitments relating to financing and technology transfer to developing countries.

"The road to Copenhagen, where the concluding talks on the current process on the Bali roadmap will be held in 2009, will be a difficult one, particularly for developing countries and the poorest and most vulnerable," Mr Ashe said.

"We need effective and comprehensive global response, within the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, to cover adaptation, technology transfer and financing, as well as mitigation," the four building blocks of the Bali plan, he said.

Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar, Angola's Minister of Urbanism and Environment Diekumpuna Sita Jose and Sri Lanka'S Environment Minister Patali Champika Ranawaka also urged developed countries to take the lead.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), Slovenian Environment Minister Janez Podobnik said the EU continued to work towards building international consensus for strong post-2012 action and was implementing and further developing comprehensive community climate change policies.

The European Commission's climate action and renewable energy legislative package would be instrumental in shaping a response in line with the union's commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 20 percent by 2020, relative to 1990 levels, he said.

DETAILS: [www.chinaview.cn](http://www.chinaview.cn)

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### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY STARTS DISCUSSING GLOBAL WARMING**

The UN General Assembly launched a two-day session on climate change to publicise global warming as countries prepare for a new international treaty. Envoys from almost 100 countries were expected, Google/AP. (11/2/08). DETAILS:

[http://ap.google.com/article/ALegM5iQmBUIYskvnKT0CLHBucXxy5\\_wKADBUO12180](http://ap.google.com/article/ALegM5iQmBUIYskvnKT0CLHBucXxy5_wKADBUO12180)

**INVESTORS TO GATHER AT UN TO TALK CLIMATE AND BUSINESS:** Investors and executives were meeting at the UN headquarters on Thursday to discuss how global warming is affecting the business world. The summit has been organised by the UN Foundation, investors and environmental groups known as Ceres. [The Wall Street Journal](#) (subscription) (9/2/08).

### **TINY NATIONS SEEK CLIMATE HELP AT UN**

Leading off the UN General Assembly's second day of talks on climate change, Tuvalu issued a cry for help on Tuesday for dealing with the impact of global warming on its 10,000 people, who live on nine low-lying coral atolls in the South Pacific being lapped by rising seas, reported AP.

"Adaptation is undoubtedly a crucial issue for an extremely vulnerable small, island nation like Tuvalu," said Tavau Teii, the deputy prime minister and environment chief. "I only need to highlight the fact that our highest point above sea level is only four metres to emphasise our vulnerability to the impacts of climate change, especially sea level rise," he said. "It is very clear that financial resources for adaptation are completely inadequate."

Speaker after speaker from small countries rose to ask the richest nations to help with tens of billions of dollars a year to help tiny nations. DETAILS:

[http://ap.google.com/article/ALegM5iQmBUIYskvnKT0CLHBucXxy5\\_wKAD8UP336O0](http://ap.google.com/article/ALegM5iQmBUIYskvnKT0CLHBucXxy5_wKAD8UP336O0)

### **ECOLOGISTS AND PLANNERS 'SHOULD LOOK TO THE CITIES'**

Cities are responsible for so many of the sustainability challenges faced by an urbanising world, but urban ecologists can help unlock the benefits of city living, say researchers in a current issue of *Science*.

Urban environments act as microcosms of the challenges faced globally, which makes them real world laboratories for understanding and responding to change, a team of ecologists from CSIRO, Arizona State University and the NZ Centre for Ecological Economics agreed.

"As ecologists, the natural environment has traditionally been our main concern, but cities affect and are affected by changes in climate, land use, water and biodiversity," says CSIRO's Xuemei Bai, co-author of the paper.

"Cities are more than just planned spaces. Planners, engineers and architects should be working with urban ecologists to design, develop and redevelop projects suited to these complex, adapting and evolving environments." ARTICLE: <http://www.csiro.au/news/CityEcologists.html>

### **NORWEGIAN WHALING CRITICISED**

The Australian Greens condemned the Norwegian Government's announcement of an unchanged minke whale harvest of 1,052 for 2008 (12/2/08).

"Despite the two-decade-old moratorium by the International Whaling Commission (IWC), Norway continues to hunt whales for commercial purposes," said Greens spokesperson Senator Rachel Siewert.

"The Australian Government needs to work hard with the international community to ensure that the IWC moratorium is maintained. We urge the Australian Government to make plain to the Norwegian Government the feelings of the Australian public who are disgusted by the slaughter of whales" she said. DETAILS: Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025.

## **C. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **EAST TIMOR STATE OF EMERGENCY**

A state of emergency was declared in East Timor on Tuesday following attacks against Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão and the President Jose Ramos-Horta, who was seriously wounded and later transported to a Darwin hospital. Fugitive Alfredo Reinado was reported dead.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon strongly condemned Sunday's attack, calling on the country to remain calm (11/2/08). His Special Representative, Atul Khare, was in the US at the time of the attack but immediately started back for Dili. A UN spokeswoman said there had been ongoing negotiations between East Timor's Government and Reinado and a group of army deserters.

The chief of East Timor's army has lashed out at Australian-led forces for failing to detect Monday's plot to assassinate the country's two top political leaders, as 340 additional Australian personnel arrived late yesterday in the capital, Dili, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (13/2/08). Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said he would shortly visit East Timor.

Taur Matan Ruak said he was "staggered" the international forces had such "lack of capacity" to prevent armed men entering the city and launching attacks against the president and prime minister.

A senior UN envoy said later he was deeply disturbed by the violence, but "very impressed by the calm manner in which the country has reacted to these events." Investigations were underway.

### **SPIELBERG QUILTS OLYMPICS OVER DARFUR**

Beijing faced its most embarrassing Olympic crisis so far, sparked by the US director Steven Spielberg's announcement that he was quitting as an artistic adviser to the 2008 Olympic Games because of China's continued support for its oil-rich trading partner Sudan, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (14/2/08).

Spielberg was reported to have written to the Chinese Ambassador in Washington that his "conscience will not allow me to continue with business as usual" while China failed to use its economic, military and diplomatic ties with Sudan to end the crisis in Darfur. Government-backed violence in the Darfur region of western Sudan has left hundreds of thousands of people dead and millions homeless."

The Chinese Embassy was reported as responding: "As the Darfur issue is neither an internal issue of China nor is it caused by China, it is completely unreasonable, irresponsible and unfair to link the two as one." ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/13/1202760398643.html>

### **CHARGES AGAINST GUANTANAMO SIX**

The Pentagon has announced charges against six Guantanamo Bay prisoners over their alleged involvement in the 11 September 2001 attacks in the US, the BBC reported (11/2/08). Prosecutors will seek the death penalty for the six, who include alleged plot mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed.

The charges, the first for Guantanamo inmates directly related to 9/11, are expected to be heard by a controversial military tribunal system. About 3,000 people died in the hijacked plane attacks.

Brig Gen Thomas Hartmann, a legal adviser to the head of the Pentagon's Office of Military Commissions, said the charges alleged a "long-term, highly sophisticated plan by Al-Qaeda to attack the US". He said there would be "no secret trials" and that they would be "as completely open as possible".

### **PAKISTANI AMBASSADOR 'KIDNAPPED'**

Pakistan's ambassador to Afghanistan had gone missing before he was due to cross into Afghanistan from Pakistan, the BBC reported. (11/2/08). Sources have told the BBC that the ambassador, Tariq Azizuddin, was kidnapped in the Khyber tribal agency close to the Afghan border, an area which serves as strongholds of pro-Taliban militants.

Taliban leaders in Pakistan later said they were prepared to exchange the ambassador for a prominent militant commander captured by Pakistani security forces, the ABC reported (13/2/08).

### **BAN CLUSTER BOMBS TREATY UNDER NEGOTIATION**

A meeting to negotiate a treaty to ban cluster munitions and storage of them will convene in Wellington, New Zealand, this week. A Red Cross spokesman, based in Geneva, told the ABC on Thursday that the war in Lebanon had highlighted the cluster munitions problem. Although the war was short, it left behind about one million cluster bombs. Laos had been affected for 30 years by 27million cluster munitions. He said they were a particular danger on agricultural land and being small and in various shapes, could be found by children. If picked up, they exploded killing and wounding.

### **TWO MILLION NEED HELP IN SOMALIA**

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that there are up to two million vulnerable people in need of humanitarian aid in war-wracked Somalia, which has not had a functioning government since 1991 and where fighting has intensified in recent months, the UN News Centre reported (13/2/08). In the capital Mogadishu, the number of people escaping the city to the poorest areas of the Horn of Africa nation has doubled to 700,000 in the last six months.

UN spokesperson Michele Montas said in New York that the "constrained movement of aid workers" was causing concern. The transport and delivery of things like food is impeded by roadblocks, taxes and banditry.

DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25608&Cr=somali&Cr1=>

## **D. HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **TEARS FLOW AS PM APOLOGISES TO INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

When Prime Minister Kevin Rudd delivered an apology to Australia's Stolen Generations on Wednesday, he said the Parliament apologised for laws and policies which had "inflicted profound grief, suffering and loss on these our fellow Australians. For the pain, suffering and hurt of these Stolen Generations, their descendants and for their families left behind, we say sorry," he said.

"To the mothers and the fathers, the brothers and the sisters, for the breaking up of families and communities, we say sorry. And for the indignity and degradation thus inflicted on a proud people and a proud culture, we say sorry."

Many Indigenous people sat in Parliament's visitors' gallery while hundreds outside Parliament House watched the event on big screens, the ABC reported (13/2/08). Many inside Parliament and outside were moved to tears.

In his speech the prime minister proposed a bipartisan policy commission to tackle disadvantage in Indigenous communities, an invitation which the leader of the Opposition, Dr Brendan Nelson, accepted in his speech of reply.

The ABC reported that Dr Nelson used his speech to warn against judging actions of the past by the standards of the present and said it was correct that no compensation was being offered.

APOLOGY TEXT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/events/apology/text.htm>

### **'WELCOME TO COUNTRY'**

The opening ceremony of the 42nd Parliament in Canberra began with a traditional welcome to country by Indigenous elders, held in Federal Parliament for the first time, the ABC reported (12/2/08). Ngambri elder Matilda House Williams gave the 'Welcome to Country' speech, acknowledging her people and their ancestors. She said this was the best time in the history of the Australian Parliament. "A prime minister has honoured us, the first people of this land, the Ngambri people, by seeking a welcome to country. In doing this, the prime minister shows what we call proper respect."

### **SAYING SORRY 'WILL LET THE HEALING BEGIN'**

"While the government is to be congratulated for moving so quickly to acknowledge the gross violations of fundamental human rights caused to Indigenous Australians by the separation of their children from their families and culture, the apology is only one step in the journey to reconciliation which still has a long way to go," HREOC President John von Doussa said (12/2/08). All governments in Australia must now work to eliminate the gap between the life advantages of non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians, with particular priority given to addressing the pressing issues of health, housing, education and employment, he said. DETAILS: [www.humanrights.gov.au/social\\_justice/bth\\_report/](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/social_justice/bth_report/) and the response by Tom Calma, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, (13/2/08): <http://www.hreoc.gov.au/>

### **FECCA APPLAUDS APOLOGY**

FECCA congratulated Prime Minister Rudd and the new government for making an apology to the 'Stolen Generation' as Parliament's first official business (12/2/08). FECCA (Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils) also welcomed the opposition's acceptance of a bipartisan approach to this issue.

FECCA chairperson Voula Messimeri said an apology was pivotal in building a new and contemporary 21st Century society based on inclusiveness, acceptance and justice for the whole Australian community. "We must end racial discrimination ... A strong social cohesion policy which educates all Australians to stand against racial prejudice is a crucial part of such leadership," she said. DETAILS: Voula Messimeri on: 0414 532 529; or 02 6282 5755.

**OTHER MOVES IN PARLIAMENT:** Democrats' Indigenous Affairs spokesperson Senator Andrew Bartlett reintroduced the *Stolen Generation Compensation Bill* in the Senate on Thursday as a practical step to heal the hurt following the apology. The Bill was first formally introduced in September 2007, following public comment and recommendations from Indigenous groups on its practical workability, he said. DETAILS: Tracee McPate on 0417 607 655.

Greens Leader Bob Brown moved to amend Wednesday's Sorry motion by adding a commitment to offer, "just compensation to all those who suffered loss". The government, opposition, Democrats and Family First voted against it. DETAILS: Ebony Bennett on 0409 164 603.

### **PEARSON CALLS FOR COMPENSATION**

Australia's stolen generations should receive a cut of the Federal Government's \$30-billion tax cuts as compensation, prominent Indigenous leader Noel Pearson said, The Australian reported (12/2/08). Mr Pearson, who is director of the Cape York Institute for Policy and Leadership in Cairns, said the apology would not help most Indigenous Australians move on and sought an "appropriate fraction" of the government's planned \$30 billion in tax cuts to be used to compensate affected Aborigines. He also said those entitled to legal redress should not be expected to chase their claims through the courts.

### **WA CALL FOR INQUIRY INTO DEATHS IN CUSTODY**

The Deaths in Custody Watch Committee of WA organised a meeting in East Perth on Wednesday (13/2/08) to provide information to the public and organisations concerned about the

death in custody on January 29 2008 of a former Warburton Aboriginal chairman while being transported to Kalgoorlie. The deceased man was described as a father of five who, as one of the last nomads, had been born in the Gibson Desert. The meeting was called to establish an action group to campaign for an independent public inquiry; to send a strong message to the government regarding the prevention of deaths in custody; and to call for the elimination of racism in the justice system. DETAILS: Marc Newhouse on 0415 074 602; newbone@bigpond.com

### **BAN REACTS TO MYANMAR REFERENDUM PLAN**

Reacting to Myanmar's announcement of a constitutional referendum to be held this May, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on authorities to ensure that the process represented the views of all of the South-East Asian nation's people (11/2/08). He also renewed his call to the Myanmar authorities to make the constitution-making process inclusive, participatory and transparent in order to ensure that any draft constitution was broadly representative of the views of all the people of Myanmar. Urging that a "substantive and time-bound" dialogue with detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and other parties was necessary, Mr Ban said it was crucial that his Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari be able to visit Myanmar "without further delay."

### **WATER-BOARDING**

The UN's chief torture investigator criticised the US Government for defending the use of water-boarding, an interrogation method often described as a form of torture, the London Guardian reported (7/2/08). Manfred Nowak, the special rapporteur on torture, said it was absolutely unacceptable under international human rights law and the US Government should it did something wrong and not continue "trying to justify what is unjustifiable."

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/usa/story/0,,2253630,00.html>

### **SOMALIA SEES EXCESS MISERY, INSUFFICIENT ATTENTION**

Somalia's plight appears largely forgotten, the London Independent reports. The country, which saw a UN peacekeeping mission pull out shortly after the infamous "Black Hawk Down" incident in 1993, is short on food, medicine and jobs, and its humanitarian situation has produced more refugees than any other country (9/2/08). ARTICLE: <http://www.independent.co.uk>

### **ISLAMIST-TARGET HIRSI ALI SEEKS FRENCH PROTECTION**

Ayaan Hirsi Ali, 38, the Somali-born former Dutch MP threatened with death for her criticism of Islam, has sought European protection and possible French citizenship, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (12/2/08). French philosopher Bernard-Henri Levy has spearheaded a campaign for Ms Hirsi Ali to receive honorary French citizenship and financial aid to cover her security costs.

She has been living under tight police protection since the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh by an Islamic extremist in 2004. She has been threatened with death for writing the script of his film *Submission*, about the treatment of women under Islam, AFP reported.

She was also in France to receive the Simone de Beauvoir prize for women's freedom, which she shared with Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/11/1202578693971.html>

## **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **HOLLOWS FOUNDATION EYE CENTRE FOR ALICE SPRINGS**

A \$3 million dollar specialist eye care centre for Alice Springs is to be funded by the Fred Hollows Foundation and is expected to make a significant difference to the lives of Indigenous people

"This new specialist eye care centre will go a long way towards redressing the significant and well documented eye diseases disproportionately afflicting Indigenous people in central Australia," said Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma (11/2/08). It was particularly apt that the announcement came on the anniversary of Fred Hollows' death.

### **MSF SAYS WOMEN ARE DYING 'UNNECESSARILY'**

Women were dying unnecessarily, says Médecins Sans Frontières in a statement to mark International Women's Day (March 8).

It said every minute one woman dies during pregnancy or childbirth and that giving birth becomes particularly dangerous during war, famine, natural disasters or poverty, when access to health services is restricted or health facilities lacking.

Global maternal mortality rates, as reported last year by the World Health Organisation and the UN Children's Fund, have declined less than one per cent from 15 years ago. Women were needlessly dying in childbirth, despite the existence of simple drugs and equipment, it said.

"There are 550,000 maternal deaths each year, 99 per cent of which occur in the developing world," said Dr Tonia Marquardt, MSF Women's Health Adviser. "But it is so unnecessary. "If a woman falls pregnant, we must ensure the three essentials: a skilled attendant to manage any complications, the appropriate drugs and the right equipment."

DETAILS: [http://www.msf.org.au/womens\\_health/index.shtml](http://www.msf.org.au/womens_health/index.shtml) and Sally McMillan on 0447 482 379 or 02 8570 2611.

MSF further reported that from February 8/10, the Sudanese army, assisted by militias, launched a large offensive in north-west Darfur. One of the most violent offensives over past few years, it resulted in people immediately fleeing and medical activities in Seleia had to stop.

The MSF team in neighbouring Chad confirmed that at least 7,000 new refugees, including MSF Sudanese staff, reached the area of Birak after fleeing the towns of Abu Suruj, Sirba and Seleia.

"MSF is extremely worried about the fate of those populations that were left behind," Huub Verhagen, MSF Head of Operations for Chad and Sudan, said. "Many families have been separated during the attack and are without news of those who remain in Darfur."

### **FOR UGANDAN BIRTH ATTENDANTS, TRAINING IS SCARCE BUT CRUCIAL**

The skills of women who work as birth attendants in rural Uganda are extremely important to the well-being of both mothers and babies. Charity groups are trying to train many of these birth attendants as far too many still rely on traditional and outdated approaches, the London Guardian reported (9/2/08). DETAILS: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/katine/2008/feb/09/health.education>

### **COUNTRY IMPROVING SAY MEXICANS**

Despite problems of migration and drug violence, many Mexicans say their country's economy and quality of life have improved over the past few years, according to an article in USA TODAY. (11/2/08). ARTICLE: [http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-02-10-Mexicorising\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2008-02-10-Mexicorising_N.htm)

### **CONTRACEPTION BAN CHALLENGE IN MANILA**

Twenty of Manila's poorest residents have filed a legal challenge against what they say is a ban on contraception, the BBC reported (11/2/08).

The group - 16 women and four of their husbands - are fighting a policy which they say denies them access to condoms, the pill and other effective forms of family planning. This has had a devastating effect on their lives, causing unwanted pregnancies, pushing them further into poverty and harming their health and wellbeing, they argue.

The case has sparked debate in the Philippines where, according to Professor Michael Tan, chairman of the anthropology department at the University of the Philippines, there is no national policy on family planning. More than 80 per cent of Filipinos are Roman Catholic. Abortion is banned and President Gloria Arroyo openly backs the church's anti-contraception stance.

"People recognise that the courts must decide once and for all whether local government officials can unilaterally ban family planning services," the professor said.  
ARTICLE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7234291.stm>

#### **NICOLE KIDMAN SIGNS UP TO SAY 'NO TO VIOLENCE'**

UNIFEM Goodwill Ambassador Nicole Kidman has signed up to the Say NO to Violence against Women campaign and encourages others "to speak out by signing up. Now, the United Nations Foundation is counting too. It has issued a challenge: for each of the first 100,000 signatures to the campaign, the UN Foundation will donate \$1 to the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women. We need everyone's help to get 100,000 people to sign on to the UNIFEM campaign so that \$100,000 will be contributed to the Trust Fund for local initiatives working to prevent human trafficking, assisting survivors of domestic violence or helping implement laws against rape," she said. CAMPAIGN LINK: <http://www.saynotoviolence.org/>

### **F. OTHER NEWS**

#### **AWB: LAW COMMISSION REPORTS ON CLIENT PRIVILEGE**

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) has recommended 45 changes to the handling of claims of client legal privilege over material sought by federal investigatory bodies and royal commissions of inquiry. The ALRC report *Privilege in Perspective: Client Legal Privilege in Federal Investigations*, tabled in Parliament (13/2/08), is the culmination of a year-long public inquiry into this controversial area highlighted in the report of the AWB Royal Commission.

"Our inquiry found general support for maintaining privilege as a fundamental right of clients, which only should be abrogated or modified in exceptional circumstances," said ALRC President, Prof David Weisbrot. However, "privilege must be balanced with the other public interest in ensuring efficient, effective investigations. Unfortunately, there are cases in which it appears claims of privilege have been used primarily to delay or frustrate investigations — with some disputes taking years to resolve. Many of our recommendations focus on streamlining the process for handling claims of privilege, and deterring or punishing abuses."

ALRC REPORT: [www.alrc.gov.au](http://www.alrc.gov.au)

#### **AGENCIES COMBINE TO REV UP EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS**

A global partnership to increase the effectiveness of information and communications technology (ICT) responses during major emergencies and disasters around the world has been formed by the UN World Food Program (WFP), the Vodafone Group Foundation and the UN Foundation have announced. The partnership will develop the first ICT training program open to the global community of humanitarian relief organisations. It involves a \$4.3 million commitment from the Vodafone Group Foundation-UN Foundation Technology Partnership, as well as a further \$1.8m contribution from WFP. Better telecommunications meant organisations could respond faster and more efficiently, said Josette Sheeran, WFP executive director.  
DETAILS: [www.unfoundation.org/vodafone](http://www.unfoundation.org/vodafone)

#### **... AND SPACE TECHNOLOGY**

Satellite technologies are a natural ally in public health emergencies for tracking the extent of disease outbreaks and natural disasters. This article in the *Bulletin* of the World Health Organisation explains why they have only become really useful over the past 10 years (5/2/08).  
ARTICLE: <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/2/08-020208/en/index.html>

**HIGH FOOD PRICES A WORLD CONCERN:** High food prices around the world have prompted some countries to cut import tariffs on such staples as wheat and rice, and stalled global trade talks could be starting up again, according to a report in the *Wall Street Journal* (12/2/08):  
ARTICLE; [http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120279263138961649.html?md=dist\\_smartbrief](http://online.wsj.com/article/SB120279263138961649.html?md=dist_smartbrief)

#### **REFUGEES IN ZAMBIA LEARN SELF-SUFFICIENCY**

Three days each week a group of refugees, including men, women and older children, gather in a classroom in Meheba, in Zambia, to learn ways to improve their agriculture and small businesses, UNHCR reports (13/2/08). With most refugees repatriated back to Angola, UNHCR and the Zambian Government are working to ensure remaining refugees are gaining the knowledge and skills to become self-sufficient. Programs include the formation of agricultural cooperatives and a micro-credit scheme. The refugee population in Meheba, in north-west Zambia, has declined from about 40,000 in 2002 to the current 14,000, mainly Angolans.

### **FRESH LOOK AT MULTICULTURALISM**

The Federal Government is examining how best to foster and promote the benefits of cultural diversity in the Australian community. Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, said he had asked for a review of the community relations program, *Living in Harmony*, which has operated since 1998 (8/2/08).

Mr Ferguson acknowledged the commitment and hard work of many individuals and organisations in combating racism and promoting the benefits of cultural diversity through the program and on Harmony Day each year. However, he said it was time to take a fresh look at strategies to bring Australians from all backgrounds together in a positive, productive way. Mr Ferguson said the review also included Harmony Day, which has been held on March 21. DETAILS: Khaldoun Hajaj on 0404 078 692.

### **FIVE WOMEN WHO CAMPAIGN FOR WOMEN**

UNIFEM Australia is to host five speakers who have worked for women in Asia, East Timor, the Middle East and the Pacific Islands on March 6. They are Dr Noeleen Heyzer, Romy Shapira, Wafa Abel, Milena Pires and Linda Petersen.

Dr Heyzer is the only woman appointed to head one of the UN Regional Commissions and the most senior UN officer in the Asia Pacific Region, as executive secretary of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok. Wafa Abel and Romy Shapira come from the unrest of the Middle East from their respective countries Palestine and Israel. Milena Pires, has completed nearly two decades of work in humanitarian rights for the East Timorese. Fijian born Linda Petersen works for social improvements in the Pacific Islands, including for UN Millenium Development Goals. She has had a long UN involvement. DETAILS: [www.unifem.org.au](http://www.unifem.org.au);

### **DIPLOMATIC TURNSTYLE**

#### **REPRESENTATIVE AT THE HAGUE**

Lydia Morton has been appointed Australia's new Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Australian Permanent Representative to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), based in The Hague. She is expected to take up her appointment in March. As a state party to the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC), Australia supports the efforts of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) to ensure the verifiable destruction of existing chemical weapons and to prevent dual-use and other toxic chemicals from being used to make new chemical weapons. The Australian Embassy plays an active role in international organisations in the Hague, including the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Ms Morton is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and has served in Beijing, Paris, Seoul and Brussels. She speaks French, German and Chinese.

DETAILS: Foreign Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

#### **AMBASSADOR TO GREECE**

Jeremy Newman is to be Australia's new Ambassador to the Hellenic Republic, with non-resident accreditation to the republics of Albania and Bulgaria. He is expected to take up his appointment in March 2008. Mr Newman is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Canberra. He has served as ambassador to Iran and has also served in Washington, Dublin and Belgrade. Previously an Assistant Secretary, Defence, Intelligence and Security and

chairman of the Commonwealth Counter Disaster Task Force with the PM&C Department, he also served as head of the Current Intelligence and Intelligence Community Branch of the Office of National Assessments (1986-94).

DETAILS: Foreign Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

### **OFF TO HONG KONG**

Les Luck will be the new Australian Consul-General in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) of the People's Republic of China. Mr Luck will also serve as Australia's representative to the Macau SAR. He takes up the appointment in April. Mr Luck is a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. He was Ambassador for Disarmament and Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva (1999-2002) and has also served in Singapore, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Vienna and Bangkok. In Canberra, he was Ambassador for Counter-Terrorism and First Assistant Secretary, International Security Division. DETAILS: Foreign Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

## **G. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **AFGHAN MP CONDEMNS ACTION AGAINST JOURNALIST**

"I utterly condemn this undemocratic act of those in power against Sayed Pervez Kambaksh," Afghan MP Malalai Joya said this week. She was calling for the journalist's release after he had been given a death sentence for writing about rights for Afghan women.

After six years in control, the government had proved itself to be as bad as the Taliban – in fact, it was little more than a photocopy of the Taliban, she said. The situation in Afghanistan was getting progressively worse – and not just for women, but for all Afghans, she told the London Independent (31/1/08).

"This situation has exposed the corruption of the government, which is inherently undemocratic, which does not believe in women's rights and which is willing to go to extreme lengths to prevent freedom of speech. Mr Kambaksh has not broken any law, but he is a 'real' journalist, one who is not afraid to write articles exposing the corruption of the fundamentalists in power.

"This has been a bloody year for journalists in Afghanistan, and they are now in a lot of danger ... The situation that the press is faced with gives you a clear indication of the level of freedom and democracy in the country as a whole."

ARTICLE: <http://www.sawa-australia.org/news.htm>

**CHINA:** A senior journalist in China, Yu Huafeng, 39, who had served four years of an eight-year sentence for corruption, was released on February 8. The former deputy editor and general manager of the *Southern Metropolis Daily*, which is owned by the Guangdong provincial government, was arrested in 2004. Two of Yu's colleagues - Li Minying and Cheng Yizhong - were also arrested in 2004 on similar allegations. Cheng was freed in August 2004 and Li was freed in early 2007. Last week freelance writer and democracy activist Lu Gengsong was jailed in Hangzhou for four years accused of "inciting subversion of state power".

DETAILS: FJ Asia-Pacific on + 61 2 9333 0919.

**INDIA:** The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has asked authorities in Assam to urgently investigate a possible attempt on the life of Manoranjana Sinh, chairman and managing director of NETV (12/2/08). The Indian Journalists' Union reported that while Ms Sinh was driving to the office in the early hours her car was fired upon from a passing vehicle.

Her network had been reporting on matters of public interest in Assam and neighbouring states.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**PAKISTAN:** The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has urged the government and the President of Pakistan to step up security measures immediately after six journalists were critically

injured in a bomb blast in Khuzdar on February 12. The blast occurred near the office of independent electoral candidate Aslam Bizenjo, in Balochistan Province, in the lead-up to national elections on February 18. The Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA), has claimed responsibility for murdering senior journalist Chishti Mujahid in Quetta on February 9.

Chisti Mujahid, a senior journalist with the weekly *Akbar-e-Jehan*, in Quetta, was shot dead by a gunman on Saturday (9/2/08), the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) reported (11/2/09). The union and the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called on authorities to investigate the crime immediately and to ensure the culprit or culprits are brought to justice. The union said it was a targeted killing. Six journalists and media workers were killed in Pakistan in 2007. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919; [www.ifj-asia.org](http://www.ifj-asia.org); [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org).

## H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

**Note: Links may need to be copied and pasted into address box.**

### **SIX AT GUANTÁNAMO TO FACE TRIAL IN 9/11 CASE**

Military prosecutors are said to be in final phases of preparing for a case against six suspected conspirators in the plot that led to the Sept. 11 2001 New York attack (9/2/08). The charges, expected to be filed in the military commission system at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, are expected to involve Khalid Mohammed, former senior aide to Osama bin Laden. ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/09/us/09gitmo.html?th&emc=th>

### **CHAVEZ FACES CRITICISM**

These should be the best of times for Venezuela, blessed with the largest conventional oil reserves outside the Middle East and oil prices near record highs (9/2/08). But this country's economic and social problems have become so acute lately that President Hugo Chavez is facing an unusual onslaught of criticism, even from his own supporters, about his management of the country. ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/02/09/world/americas/09venez.html?th&emc=th>

### **BURMESE JUNTA SETS DATE FOR ELECTION**

Burma's military regime has said it will ask voters to approve a new constitution in a referendum in May to make way for democratic elections in 2010, a move that drew scorn from opponents, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (11/2/08). The elections would be the first in Burma since 1990, when Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy won a multi-party poll that was later rejected by the military, which has ruled in various guises since 1962. ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com/article/2008/02/10/1202578601074.html>

### **BEDTIME READING FOR POLLIES**

As if new and old senators and members of parliament didn't have enough to absorb on their first day back to school, the Parliamentary Library has listed for them 100 recent articles and reviews to read to round out their education. We publish only a selection that has either direct or indirect relation to Australia's obligations and responsibilities as a member of the UN. Copies can be obtained through your senators' or member's electorate office – **Ian Mathews**.

### **BILL OF RIGHTS**

**Brandis, (Senator) George.** *Bill of Rights could just mean a big bill.* ***Australian Financial Review*, 1 February 2008: 74.**

**Hull, Crispin.** *Overweening executive proves the case for a Bill of Rights.* ***Canberra Times*, 29 December 2007: 5.**

**Patel, Nilay B.** *Strengthening section 7 of the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act.* ***Australasian Parliamentary Review*, vol. 22, no.2, Spring 2007: 59-71.**

**South, Jim.** *The campaign for a national Bill of Rights: would 'declarations of incompatibility' be compatible with the Constitution?* ***Constitutional Law and Policy Review*, vol.10, no.1, November 2007: 2-7.**

## BOOK REVIEWS

**Buti, Antonio.** *Sir Ronald Wilson: a matter of conscience.* Crawley, S.A.: University of Western Australia, 2007 – reviewed by Tony Blackshield. *Australian Book Review*, December 2007- January 2008: 41-2.

*Making books: contemporary Australian publishing* edited by David Carter and Anne Galligan. St. Lucia, Qld: University of Queensland Press, 2007 – reviewed by Richard Walsh.

*Australian Book Review*, December 2007 – January 2008: 6-7.

*The Oxford Companion to Australian Politics* edited by Brian Galligan and Winsome Roberts. South Melbourne, Vic.: Oxford University Press, 2007 – reviewed by Neal Blewett.

*Australian Book Review*, December 2007 – January 2008: 10-12.

**Ham, Paul** *Vietnam: the Australian war.* Pymble, NSW: HarperCollins, 2007 – reviewed by Bob Catley. *Quadrant*, January-February 2008: 116-7.

## I. UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS

To access major United Nations websites, go to:

[United Nations.](#)

[Secretary-General.](#)

[UN News Centre.](#)

[Key UN Bodies, Agencies, Funds and Programs.](#)

United Nations Information Centre for Australia,

New Zealand and the Pacific, Level 1, 7 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600, Canberra or PO Box 5366, Kingston ACT 2604, and on 61 (2) 6273 8200.

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UNAA ACT [unaaact@cyberone.com.au](mailto:unaaact@cyberone.com.au) on 02 6247 4499.

UNAA NSW [office@unaansw.org.au](mailto:office@unaansw.org.au) 02 9212 0998; f 02 9280 0137.

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UNAA Vic [info@unaavictoria.org.au](mailto:info@unaavictoria.org.au) on (03) 9670 7878 Website: <http://www.unaavictoria.org.au/>.

UNAA WA [unaawa@tpg.com.au](mailto:unaawa@tpg.com.au) on 08 9221 9455 <http://www.unaa-wa.org.au/>.

UNAA NT (Darwin) <http://au.f313.mail.yahoo.com/ym/Compose?To=fletch44@bigpond.net.au> or on 0419 829509.

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