

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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A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

EIGHT WAYS FOR AUSTRALIA TO BACK THE UN

Eight high priority practical possibilities have been put forward by Professor John Langmore, UNAA National President, to mark Australia's re-engagement with the United Nations following the election of a new government.

He listed his proposed eight high priority practical possibilities at a UNAA Platzer seminar on Friday (6/3/08). They include:

Australia could adopt a more mature strategy for contributing to global security, through reaffirmation of a rules-based international order. Among the principal requirements for ending the scourge of war is for international society to reaffirm preferences for peaceful conflict resolution rather than violence, for diplomatic negotiation rather than confrontation, and for adherence to the rule of law rather than acquiesce to domination by the US.

Second, signing the Kyoto Protocol enabled Australia to be fully engaged in development of global strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions at the Bali conference. As the largest emitter of greenhouse gas per person in the developed world, Australia must accept the necessity for major, swift national reductions so that we negotiate with authority for a strong and comprehensive post-Kyoto agreement

Third, reducing wasteful and provocative military expenditure, such as purchase of tanks or Super Hornets, let alone as many as 100 Joint Strike Fighters and partly replacing them with more active engagement in peacekeeping would signal renewed commitment to peaceful conflict resolution.

Fourth, Australia could resume taking a leading role in advocating disarmament treaties, as Gareth Evans did in relation to chemical weapons. The priority now is advocacy of a nuclear weapons convention ... The Blix Commission on Weapons of Mass Destruction, reporting in mid 2006, recommended abolition of nuclear weapons as a necessary goal for preventing their use.

Fifth, most donor countries have adopted the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as the basis for their aid programs ... In 2005 Australian aid was still only 0.25 per cent of national income compared with the *average* for all donors of 0.47 per cent. The prime minister had undertaken to lift aid to 0.5 per cent of national income by 2015. Even this would still be considerably less than the planned contributions of European Union countries' which are committed to 0.56 per cent by 2010. We need to prepare a new strategy of Australian aid to include our impoverished neighbours across the Indian Ocean in Africa and set targets so that we accept a fair share of developed countries' responsibility for achieving the MDGs.

Sixth, Australia could undertake active study, research and consultation about feasible means for improving UN effectiveness. During the last two or three years the British, Canadian, French, German, Norwegian, Swedish and other governments have all sponsored public discourse on multilateral issues through commissions of inquiry, research projects, international consultation and public information campaigns (including support for national UN associations) leading to articulation of reform proposals and innovative policies for the multilateral system.

Seventh, is the importance of governments demonstrating renewal of Australia's traditional commitment to multilateralism through improved accountability. Australia has always paid its dues to the UN on time ... in addition, the Minister for Foreign Affairs could make regular statements to parliament on Australian action at the UN, and other ministers could report on action at the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organisation, the World Health Organisation, UNESCO and so on ... They could provide much of the material for campaigns to inform the public about the purposes, work, achievements and difficulties of the UN system.

Renewing the practice of inclusion of NGO representatives in Australian delegations would also increase accountability.

Eighth, concerns human rights. Four means of expressing a renewed commitment to human rights would be to: renew committed participation in UN human rights activities, such as by seeking membership of the Human Rights Council; reform of policy relating to asylum seekers so that they are received in ways that apply Australia's international treaty obligations; endorsement of the General Assembly's resolution on the rights of Indigenous peoples; and initiation of moves for the Burmese junta to be removed from that country's national seat at the UN until human rights there are restored there.

"Innumerable issues are waiting to be addressed," he said. "Australia's circumstances lead naturally to rethinking our foreign policy and to strengthening of our multilateral engagement."

UN MEDIATION TEAM FORMED TO BE ON STAND-BY

A mediation team with some of the world's leading experts in ceasefires, transitional justice, power-sharing and constitutional arrangements is now on standby to help resolve crises around the world, the UN top political official announced on Thursday.

The new UN Mediation Standby Team is part of ongoing efforts to strengthen the ability of the UN's Department of Political Affairs to help prevent conflict through assistance to diplomacy, according to B. Lynn Pascoe, the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

"What we are trying to do in this process is to make sure that not only do we carry out the Secretary-General's efforts to be there fast in mediation and to be there very quickly on the ground when we're asked by member states or regional organisations, but also to make sure that we'll be there with the very best expertise that's available anywhere in the world," Mr Pascoe said as he launched the initiative at a [news conference](#).

He said a demand for mediation assistance had grown steadily in recent years, particularly those that set up power-sharing arrangements to end the post-election violence in Kenya and attempts to end the armed activity of the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) in northern Uganda.

"These are not places where you can go out and begin a negotiation by the seat of your pants," he said. Even the most seasoned UN envoys usually needed specialised advice.

The Standby Team had been chosen from hundreds of candidates through a rigorous process. The team's founding members are led by Joyce Neu of the United States, who has mediated in dozens of countries around the world. Others include Jeffery Mapendere of Zimbabwe, an expert in security arrangements; Patrick Gavigan of the US and Ireland, whose field is transitional justice and human rights; John McGarry of Canada, an expert in power-sharing; and Andrew Ladley of New Zealand, who has done extensive work in constitution-making and elections.

It was hoped that these founding members would be the seed of a much larger group, as their services would be much in demand, Mr Pascoe said.

SECURITY COUNCIL IMPOSES ADDITIONAL SANCTIONS ON IRAN

The Security Council imposed additional sanctions against Iran, including the inspection of cargo suspected of carrying prohibited goods, the tighter monitoring of financial institutions and the extension of travel bans and asset freezes, over its nuclear program (3/3/08).

Fourteen Council members [voted](#) in favour of the resolution, which voiced concern at "the proliferation risks presented by the Iranian nuclear program," while Indonesia abstained. The resolution adds to council sanctions imposed in 2006 and another round last year.

Under the resolution, the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) Director General Mohamed ElBaradei has been asked to report within 90 days on whether Iran has fully suspended uranium enrichment activities, in line with a previous council demand.

The council's five permanent members – China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States – and Germany (currently not a council member) also said they were willing to develop “all-round relations and wider cooperation with Iran,” starting with direct talks and negotiations, if it was willing to suspend all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities.

Member States are called on to inspect cargo entering or leaving Iran reasonably suspected of transporting goods prohibited as part of any one of the three council resolutions on this issue, and then to report to the council on the details of those inspections.

In addition, the resolution bans the trade and supply of “dual-use” items, materials and technologies that can be adapted for military as well as civilian purposes. Travel bans have been imposed on an extra five Iranian officials and 12 Iranian companies face having their assets frozen, while all states are asked to step up their monitoring of financial institutions in their territories that have dealings with banks based in Iran, particularly Bank Melli and Bank Saderat.

If Iran does not comply with the resolution, and with the earlier two resolutions imposing sanctions, council members reserved the right to take further steps to pressure Tehran to comply. In a statement of behalf of China, France, Germany, Russia, the UK, the US and the European Union, British Ambassador John Sawers said the text reflected the international community's ongoing serious concerns about the issue.

RESOLUTION AGAINST IRAN 'DROPPED'

Diplomats speaking anonymously said Western states had scrapped plans at the UN's nuclear watchdog for a new resolution against Iran in the face of opposition led by China and Russia, the BBC reported (4/3/08).

Some objectors reportedly felt the move unnecessary after the UN Security Council approved new sanctions over Iran's nuclear program on Monday. Some Western states believe Iran wants nuclear weapons. Tehran denies this. Tehran has refused to comply with demands that it stop enriching uranium. This can be undertaken for power generation, but may also be a precursor to building an atomic bomb.

Last week the chief inspector of the watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), presented intelligence suggesting that Iran had in the past made attempts to weaponise uranium. The agency's director, Mohammed ElBaradei, on Monday urged Iran to help his agency clarify what he called “this matter of serious concern”.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7277384.stm

BAN: US AND UN ARE ESSENTIAL PARTNERS

The UN and the US were essential partners in finding solutions for the Darfur conflict, global warming, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, and a host of other issues, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told former president George Bush and other US officials on his first visit to the state of Texas, The UN News reported (29/2/08).

“The UN has no better friend than America,” he said. “According to opinion polls, three quarters of Americans believe the United Nations should play a larger role in the world,” he said. “Why? Because working together is in the best interest of the United States. It's in the best interest of the UN and the best interest of the world.”

Turning to Darfur, Mr Ban said the US and UN were working together because Americans, including current US President George W. Bush, want action to end a conflict that has claimed more than 200,000 lives and forced 2.2 million from their homes. Darfur was also about climate

change, since drought and other climate effects had boosted tensions there and in many parts of the world, he said.

He said the UN must work on climate change because it is a global problem, and the engagement of the US was crucial because markets, technology and entrepreneurship were a big part of the solution. A recent report by the UN Environment Program ([UNEP](#)) estimates that investments in clean energy technology could reach \$1.9 trillion by 2020.

“As a boy growing up in South Korea, I was inspired by America and its noble ideals,” he said. “American soldiers saved my country from communist aggression ... I'm still grateful for the sacrifice the American people made for my nation,” he said.

AUSTRALIA TO SIGN UN TREATY AGAINST TORTURE

Under the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention against Torture, member countries are subject to international and national visits to places like prisons and immigration detention centres. A spokesman for Attorney-General Robert McClelland has confirmed a commitment to the Optional Protocol on torture. He said there would be consultations with states and territories as to how achieve its ratification (1/3/08).

ALL NATIONS 'EQUALLY ACCOUNTABLE'

Opening the seventh session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on its members to ensure that all nations were held equally accountable for the protection of rights (3/3/08).

“No country, however powerful, should escape scrutiny of its record, commitments and actions on human rights,” Mr Ban [said](#), hailing the start of the Universal Periodic Review, under which all UN member states – at the rate of 48 a year – will be reviewed to assess whether they have fulfilled their human rights obligations.

“The review must reaffirm that just as human rights are universal, so is our collective respect for them and our commitment to them. It must help prevent the distrust that surrounded the work of the Commission on Human Rights in its final years,” he said, recalling the accusations of bias and politicisation that dogged the previous body.

Looking back at progress since the issuance of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which will celebrate its sixtieth anniversary in December, Mr Ban said that it had become clear that commitments and accountability were crucial in the effort to make those rights a reality for all.

He said that the new council had been on the right track over the nearly two years of its existence but questioned whether council members were fully meeting the high expectations of the international community, which included the application of human rights values “without favour, without selectivity, without being impacted by any political machinations around the world.”

AMBASSADOR: WHAT DO PEOPLE REALLY WANT OF UN?

The Australian Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the UN, Robert Hill, will present the United Nations in 2008 lecture at the Centre for International & Public Law, ANU College of Law, Canberra, on March 19 at 6pm.

He will discuss issues facing the UN in 2008: What does the international community really want of the United Nations? Are member states genuinely committed to collective responses to today's global challenges? How can a country such as Australia, through the United Nations, contribute to progress on matters of peace and security, disarmament, non-proliferation, counter-terrorism, humanitarian response, human rights, poverty and development, environmental sustainability, and global health? In an ever more interrelated world, these are questions that warrant urgent and serious debate. FLYER: at <<http://law.anu.edu.au/cipl/events.asp>>.

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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.

The World Federation of United Nations is a global network of people linked through [United Nations Associations](#) in over 100 UN member states. Website available at <http://www.wfuna.org/who/>; newsletter at <http://www.wfuna.org/news/newsletter/index.cfm>.

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

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B. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT

NEAR EAST AGRICULTURE LIKELY TO SUFFER LOSS

Agriculture in the Middle East and North Africa was likely to suffer losses because of high temperature, droughts, floods and soil degradation threatening the food security of many countries, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) reported (3/3/08).

Hunger and malnutrition caused by climate change will most probably affect those who are already poor, malnourished or dependent on local food production, according to a report that will be discussed at the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East March (1-5), held in Cairo.

The Middle East and North Africa are particularly exposed to water shortages. An additional 155 to 600 million people may suffer an increase in water stress in North Africa with a 3° Celsius temperature rise.

Many of the region's irrigation systems are under considerable environmental strain due to salinity, water logging or overexploitation of groundwater. Groundwater, including non-renewable fossil water, is of primary importance in most countries of the region.

Competition for water within the region and across its borders may grow, carrying the risk of

conflict. Some parts of the region, particularly the Nile Delta and the Gulf coast of the Arabian Peninsula, are particularly vulnerable to flooding from rising sea levels.

Crop growing may become unsustainable in some areas. For example, maize yields in North Africa could fall by between 15 and 25 per cent with 3°C rise in temperature.

REPORT: <http://www.fao.org/newsroom/en/news/2008/1000800/index.html>

UN AGENCY CALLS FOR PROGRAMS

The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on Tuesday called for outlining programs and plans to face challenges of climate change, the Egyptian MENA news agency and the China Daily reported (5/3/08).

FAO Director General Jacques Diouf said it was important for the region to deal with climate change for agriculture and food security. The conditions in Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Lebanon, Somalia and the Palestinian territories reflected the situation in the agriculture field at the international level, he said.

During the period from 1990 to 2004, famines affected 15 per cent of the world population and the number of people suffered from a widespread shortage of food grew from 33 million to 104 million during the same period, he said. At the meeting, Mauritania commended a proposal by Saudi Arabia to set up a fund to face climate change on agriculture in the Near East region. The UN food body also called on its members in the region to support the organisation's programs as the security valve of poor countries.

At the high-level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy, scheduled for June 3-5, the UN food agency will further discuss plans to face damage inflicted on the poorest countries, said MENA. Representatives from 32 FAO Near East members attended the conference in Cairo that addresses food security and agricultural development in the region. REPORT: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2008-03/05/content_6507559.htm

EU DIPLOMATS: MAKE CLIMATE CHANGE PART OF SECURITY POLICY

European security may be threatened by climate change-related problems such as natural disasters and water and food shortages in the developing world, European Union diplomats state in a paper prepared for an upcoming summit. Global warming should therefore be made part of the EU's security policy, the paper says. [Financial Times \(free registration\)](#) (3/3/08).

C. PEACE & SECURITY

MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL: PEACE TALKS WILL NOT BE DERAILED

The killing of eight people at a Jewish religious college by a Palestinian gunman would not derail peace talks, the Israeli Government has said, according to the BBC (7/3/08).

The gunman was shot dead after opening fire with an assault rifle inside a crowded library at the Mercaz Harav seminary in West Jerusalem. An Israeli report said he was a resident of East Jerusalem.

The foreign ministry said talks with Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas, who condemned the attack, would continue. Earlier Mahmoud Abbas had suspended talks, demanding Israel end the Gaza offensive, but later agreed to their continuation.

WORLD URGES END TO GAZA VIOLENCE

During the week, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice had arrived in Israel to resurrect the peace process .

"We do need the violence to come down, but we also need very much to have everyone focused on the process of bringing peace. That is the real threat to the extremists who do not want a process of peace, who do not want the establishment of a Palestinian state, and we cannot let them win," she said, according to the Euro News (6/3/08).

The White House earlier led calls for an end to violence in Gaza after the Israeli assault which killed 70 Palestinians, raising fears about the future of Middle East peace talks, The Age reported (3/3/08).

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned Israel's "disproportionate and excessive use of force" in a bloody raid into a crowded Gaza neighbourhood. Those killed include numerous militants from Hamas and other groups, but up to half of them are reported to be civilians. The European Union criticised Israel's "disproportionate use of force", while the UN security council, meeting in an emergency session, urged all sides to "immediately cease all acts of violence".
ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/news/world/world-leaders-call-for-end-to-gaza-violence/2008/03/02/1204402271710.html>

HAMAS IN PEACE TALKS

Delegations from the Palestinian militant groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have begun talks in Egypt about a possible ceasefire with Israel, the BBC reported (6/3/08).

Egyptian officials hope to broker an agreement that would end rocket attacks on Israel from the Gaza Strip. The groups have indicated that, in return, Israel would have to stop all attacks on Gaza and lift its blockade.

The US has sent top state department official David Welch to Cairo to support Egypt's mediation efforts. Aides of Egyptian intelligence chief Omar Suleiman met officials from the two groups in the city of al-Arish, security officials said.

Hamas officials said one of the group's senior leaders, Mahmoud al-Zahhar, was heading its delegation. REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7282043.stm

CHILDREN 'CAUGHT UP IN VIOLENCE'

The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) voiced its deep concern at the escalating conflict in the Gaza Strip, warning both Israel and the Palestinians to "take all feasible measures" to ensure the protection and care of children caught up in the violence (2/3/08).

Since the current upsurge in fighting began on Wednesday, at least 17 children from Gaza have been killed and more than 200 others injured, UNICEF said in a statement, quoting figures from the Palestinian Health Ministry.

"The Convention on the Rights of the Child puts an emphasis on the need to take all feasible measures to ensure protection and care of children who are affected by an armed conflict," the UNICEF statement said. "In addition to being its direct casualties, the terrifying impact of this conflict affects all children.

"Children constitute more than half the population of Gaza and are bearing the brunt of the crisis. They are already suffering severely from a series of restrictions, including the blockade on most goods imposed since June 2007."

One border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip was opened for fuel today, allowing 400,000 litres to enter Gaza, but the three crossings for humanitarian and commercial goods remain closed, the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) reported (29/2/08).

GAZA HOSPITALS STRUGGLE TO HELP MANY WOUNDED

Over the past few days, escalating violence has continued to affect the inhabitants of the Gaza Strip and of nearby Israeli towns, the International Committee of Red Cross reported (5/3/08).

Military operations had taken a heavy toll among civilians. Uninterrupted clashes and shelling made it very difficult to evacuate the wounded and sick from areas of the Gaza Strip affected by the Israeli incursion. The fighting had decreased since Monday, but the atmosphere in the Gaza Strip remained tense, it reported.

At the same time, hospitals in Gaza were struggling to cope with the influx of wounded and intensive care units and operating theatres had been working round the clock.

"The main surgical hospitals, particularly in the north of Gaza, are still under immense strain, as staff try to treat the injured, especially those needing emergency surgery," said Eileen Daly, ICRC health coordinator for Israel and the occupied territories.

"The ICRC's priority is to ensure that the wounded are evacuated to hospitals that have the necessary resources and the supplies to treat them, and to facilitate, where needed, the transfer of patients to hospitals outside of Gaza."

Over the past two days, the ICRC had provided urgently needed dressings, sutures, anaesthetics and painkillers, plasma, bed linen, splints and surgical instruments to the Kamal Edwan and Al Awda hospitals in the Gaza Strip. The ICRC has also offered to deliver supplies of blood, collected by the Palestinian Ministry of Health in the West Bank, to Gaza. "The warehouses of the ICRC have enough medical stocks to deal with the current emergency, but this could change very quickly," she said.

The supply of fuel to Gaza hospitals had been unreliable for the past few weeks and remained so. The area continued to suffer blackouts for several hours a day, when hospitals had to switch on generators.

The ICRC reiterated that, under international humanitarian law, attacks must not be directed against civilians or carried out indiscriminately. Constant care must be taken to spare the civilian population, and all concerned parties must respect and ensure respect for the rules of international humanitarian law at all times. DETAILS:

ICRC www.icrc.org; Dorothea Krimitsas, ICRC Geneva on +41 22 730 25 90 or +41 79 251 93 18.

THOUSANDS MARCH IN JORDAN

Crying for revenge with suicide attacks, thousands of Jordanians marched in Amman, the capital of the pro-US kingdom, on Sunday to protest against Israel's Gaza offensive, Reuters reported (2/3/08). About 10,000 protesters, mainly from Jordan's mainstream Muslim Brotherhood and smaller opposition groups, took to the streets in one of the country's most vocal and largest anti-Israeli demonstrations in recent years.

IRAQ

SHOCK AS SHIITE OFFICIALS GO FREE

Two former senior Shiite government officials charged with kidnapping and killing scores of Sunnis have been unexpectedly ordered released after prosecutors dropped the case against them. The collapse of the trial has stunned American and Iraqi officials who had spent more than a year assembling the case, reported the Sydney Morning Herald (5/3/08).

It has renewed concerns about the willingness of Iraq's leaders to act against sectarianism and casts doubt on US efforts to build an independent judiciary.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/03/04/1204402456744.html>

OLD FOES IRAN, IRAQ WAX AMICABLE IN TALKS

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad paid an historic visit to Iraq this week - the first by an Iranian president - hoping to boost ties with Baghdad, with which Tehran fought a bitter eight-year war, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (3/3/08).

One of the issues on the table is a 1975 border treaty which Tehran said would not be renegotiated. A row over the border and control of the Shatt al-Arab waterway, known as Arvand Rud in Iran, was a factor leading to the 1980-88 war that left about a million dead.

"We had good and constructive talks within the framework of the 1975 treaty about some issues, including border disputes and other issues regarding the river," an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Mohammad Ali Hosseini, said.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/03/02/1204402273518.html>

'CHEMICAL ALI' EXECUTION APPROVED

The execution of Saddam Hussein's cousin and henchman 'Chemical Ali' has been approved by Iraq's presidency, reports BBC (29/2/08). He was condemned to death on genocide charges for killing 100,000 people during the 1988 Anfal campaign against the Kurds in northern Iraq.

The execution of Chemical Ali - whose real name is Hassan al-Majid - was approved two days ago, to be carried out within 30 days. The presidency, made up of President Jalal Talabani and two vice-presidents, has not yet approved the hanging of Tikriti and Hashim, reported the BBC.

LEBANON

BAN KEEPS EYE ON POLITICAL CRISIS

Although southern Lebanon was relatively stable at present, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed deep concern over the effects of the ongoing political crisis, arms smuggling and Israeli overflights there in a new report on compliance with the Security Council decision that helped end fighting between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 (4/3/08).

"I am pleased to report that both the governments of Lebanon and Israel express continued commitment to the implementation of [resolution 1701](#)," Mr Ban says in the [report](#) on the decision, which called for renewed respect for the Blue Line separating Israeli and Lebanese forces, the disarming of militias and an end to arms smuggling, among other measures.

"Only the enduring commitment of the parties to all the provisions of the resolution, without selectivity, will create the required basis for a permanent ceasefire and a long-term solution," he says in the report, which covers the period since the end of October last year.

He states that the expanded activities of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon ([UNIFIL](#)) in cooperation with the Lebanese Armed Forces have contributed a new strategic environment, acknowledged by Israel, in the area south of the Litani River.

At the same time, however, Lebanon has remained in the grip of an intense political crisis which has shut down the work of key state institutions, he says, with continuing assassinations heightening tensions throughout the country.

Though Mr. Ban affirms that UNIFIL has found no evidence of new military infrastructure in its area of operations, rocket firings against Israel and attacks against the mission "indicate that there are still hostile elements and unauthorised arms."

In addition, Hezbollah has admitted, on several occasions, replenishing its military capacity since the 2006 war, indicating that the Syrian border remained vulnerable to arms smuggling. For that reason, he intends to dispatch a team to Lebanon to look at the implementation of the recommendations of the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team: "It is clear that significant challenges remain to be addressed in effective border management."

The report also highlights the Secretary-General's concern at Israel's continuing air violations, and the limited data it has provided for cluster bomb clearance.

He also expresses great concern at the threats of open war against Israel, made by the Secretary-General of Hezbollah on both February 14 and 22. "This goes against the spirit and intentions of resolution 1701 (2006), which aims to achieve a permanent ceasefire," he says.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25845&Cr=leban&Cr1=>

NORTH ASIA

AFGHANISTAN 'MUST DO MORE' OVER DRUGS

The United Nations anti-drugs agency has called on the Afghan Government to do more to dismantle major trafficking and criminal networks in the strife-torn nation which remains the world's largest producer of opium and heroin (5/3/08).

"The networks are very powerful because the drug traders are linked to corrupt officials and to criminal networks outside Afghanistan," Christina Gynna Oguz, the Representative of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Afghanistan, [told](#) reporters in Kabul. Echoing the just-released [report](#) of the International Narcotics Control Board (INCB), she noted that Afghanistan remains the world's largest producer of opium and heroin.

"The government must therefore widen its efforts to include the fight against drug traders, who profit the most from the illicit opium industry and who collectively earn more than \$3 billion." She called on the Afghan Government to do more to ensure that the drug laws are applied to all who are involved - directly or indirectly - in the industry.

"Everybody who is involved in the drugs industry and in corruption must be investigated, prosecuted and - if found guilty - punished to the full extent of the law," she said. "Without this happening the drugs problem will not be solved and criminality, corruption and insecurity will prevail in the country."

UNODC is assisting the government in several ways to tackle the drug problem, including by training intelligence officers within the Afghan Police and providing legislative assistance on issues such as extradition.

DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25856&Cr=afghan&Cr1=drug>

AFRICA

REPORTS ALLEGE VIOLENCE ORGANISED IN KENYA

As Kenya tries to rebuild itself after two months of post-election clashes, the BBC has learnt of serious allegations of state-sanctioned violence. East Africa correspondent Karen Allen reports on sources that allege meetings were hosted at State House - the official residence of the president - between the banned Kikuyu militia, known as the Munguki, and senior government figures.

It is claimed that the meetings were both before and immediately after the elections, with the aim of hiring the gang as a defence force in the Rift Valley, to protect the Kikuyu - the president's fellow tribesmen.

Sources in the Mungiki indicate it was a renegade branch of the group who were responsible for the post-election clashes, not them, but the allegations add to the growing mass of evidence that violence was organised on all sides.

A government spokesman in Nairobi has described the BBC story as "preposterous, baseless and defamatory." The spokesman declared that no such meetings had taken place, and urged Kenyans instead to nurture the peace agreement that has just been reached between the government and the opposition. [Listen to Karen Allen's report](#)

AUSTRALIA PROVIDES \$1.6M TO HELP KENYA

Australia is to provide \$1.6 million in further humanitarian assistance to help Kenya, Foreign minister Stephen Smith said, welcoming the power-sharing agreement signed between Kenya's political leaders. He commended the unstinting efforts of African mediators, led by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, to bring about the agreement.

Up to 500,000 people still require humanitarian assistance and Australia's contributions would help protect vulnerable women and children through UNICEF, replenish emergency relief supplies through the Red Cross and promote peace-building activities through Caritas Australia, he said. DETAILS: Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

VIOLENCE IN DARFUR FLARES AGAIN

Sudanese armed forces and janjaweed militias have returned to the offensive against Darfur villages, burning homes, pillaging and sending thousands of civilians fleeing for their lives, the New York Times reported (3/3/08). REPORT:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/world/africa/02darfur.html?_r=2&ref=world&oref=slogin&oref=slogin

SOUTH AMERICA

CHAVEZ 'SPONSORED GENOCIDE': COLOMBIA

Colombian President Alvaro Uribe said he would denounce Venezuela's Hugo Chavez to the International Criminal Court for sponsoring and financing genocide, after Venezuela and Ecuador cut diplomatic ties with Bogota and ordered troops to Colombia's frontier (5/3/08).

Colombia has accused Mr Chavez and Ecuador's President Rafael Correa of links to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, or FARC, guerrillas and the crisis was triggered by a raid by Colombian troops inside Ecuador to kill a top guerrilla boss, the ABC reported. The Organisation of the American States (OAS), the region's top diplomatic body, hastened to meet in Washington to press for a peaceful solution.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/03/05/2180010.htm>

D. HUMAN RIGHTS & MEANS

WOMEN WANT A SEAT AT PALESTINIAN-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS

Palestinian and Israeli women were represented on the same platform on Thursday as two speakers addressed 1260 women celebrating International Women's Day in Brisbane. They also addressed an IWD event in Canberra.

Wafa Abel Rahman is executive director of Filastiniyat, an organisation committed to ensuring the equitable participation of Palestinian women and youth in public discourse, and Romy Shapira is a peace and human rights activist, former Israeli coordinator of the IWC, a group facilitator and a board member of Bat Shalom of the Jerusalem Link. They stood side-by-side to address the UNIFEM International Women's Day breakfast as members of the International Commission of Women.

The commission was set up in 2005 by Palestinian, Israeli and International Women, under the auspices of UNIFEM. The members work for a genuine negotiation towards a just and sustainable peace based on a two-state solution. Members include 20 Palestinians, 20 Israelis and 20 international women leaders and activists. The commission aims to ensure the implementation of the groundbreaking UN Security Council Resolution 1325 (October, 2000) that calls upon all state parties to ensure increased representation of women at all decision-making levels.

Wafa Abel Rahman appealed to the audience on Thursday to express Australian responses on human rights, to be active and not just leave the current situation to the Americans. She said Palestinians were both victims of the occupation and victims of a silent international community.

She said the main root of the problem was the occupation, which was the antithesis of security and human rights. The 'Wall' in her country was not separating Israelis and Palestinians, as it seemed, but separating Palestinians from Palestinians.

Romy Shapiro said women's perceptions were able to contribute to negotiations and said commission members continue to tell leaders that women want a seat at the negotiating table. She said women talk together, work together "and women never give up."

"We are different women, we have different experiences, but we give the same message," she said. The commission worked at three levels – international, regional and local. Members listened to peoples' stories and could work from the grassroots level up, she said.

Other speakers included the Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh and Justice Margaret McMurdo, president of the Court of Appeal.

Ipswich Girls' Grammar student Joyrah Sebasio, 16, gave one of the welcoming speeches. She said Indigenous students desired to improve their own lives and they had a better chance through education. She asked people to remember that some students had nowhere to do their homework and some did not have enough to eat. While they recognised the opportunities of attending school, they could become very homesick for their family and their country. Some, as she had done, struggled to speak English in the same way as others. "I struggled in my first years at school but now I'm getting on," she said. She hoped what she said had provided listeners with some understanding.

WOMEN'S EQUALITY 'STAGNATED'

Efforts to create equality between women and men in Australia have stagnated and may even be going backwards, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick said (5/3/08).

In a speech for International Women's Day, Ms Broderick says despite the fact that few laws actively discriminate against women, real equality did not exist for many women in their daily lives.

"Eighty years ago when the first International Women's Day rally was held in Sydney, women called for equal pay for equal work. Not only do we still not have this but the gap has widened over the last few years," she said. "We still see few women in decision-making roles. We are moving at a glacial pace. In the case of boardrooms, women's participation has only increased from 8.4 percent in 2003 to 8.7 percent in 2006.

"True equality does not seem like a radical demand, but even today there are many women who struggle to balance work and family. Sexual harassment is still alive and well," she said. "Make no mistake, we are no where near the so-called 'tipping point' on gender equality," she said.

Commissioner Broderick said looking from the outside you could be forgiven for thinking that Australia was still a 'man's country': where women have only one third the retirement savings

of men; where paid maternity leave was still not a reality; and where women were questioning whether they could pursue opportunities available to other women in the western world. .

Ms Broderick, who has just returned from the 52nd Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, in New York, said there was a general view that Australia in recent times had moved away from its ground-breaking role it had previously played advocating for the rights of women, for example, through supporting the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

"From my informal discussions with women in the corridors of the UN building, it is clear to me that the international community is waiting and watching. Will Australia resume its leadership role in the journey towards gender equality?" she said.

TELL THEM I ONLY WANT PEACE, BEGS GRIEVING DAD

Muslim tradition requires that the dead be buried before sunset on the evening of their death, so 12-year-old Safa abu Seif was buried on Sunday, with only her father to mourn her, Reuters reported (4/3/08). The rest of her family, including her mother, were still pinned down by the Israeli tanks and snipers occupying the north Gaza neighbourhood where the child's family had watched her slowly die, for three hours, from a bullet through the stomach, writes Ed O'Loughlin.

His daughter was bleeding but an ambulance was stopped, he said. "So I started carrying her towards where the ambulances were. I held her in my arms while my wife waved a white flag. We walked close to the ambulances and then the Israelis began to fire over our heads. We couldn't go on, so we had to go home. We tried to save her but we couldn't do much. In the end she said, 'Let me die, there's nothing you can do.'" The grade six pupil was shot at 4pm on Saturday and died at 7pm."

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/03/03/1204402365549.html>

BAN URGES UN RIGHTS BODY TO BE VIGILANT OVER ABUSES

The United Nations' Human Rights Council must "fulfill its true promise" to take on rights abuses everywhere around the world, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told members of the body in Geneva on Monday. "Your power must be exercised at all times, in the face of all threats to human rights, wherever they occur," Ban said. (3/3/08). SEE: UN & Agencies.

ARTICLE: <http://africa.reuters.com/top/news/usnBAN342836.htm>

INDIA TO PAY FAMILIES TO PROMOTE GIRLS' WELFARE

In an attempt to battle gender-based abortion that has seen an estimated 10 million baby girls aborted over the last two decades, Indian authorities have announced plans to pay families who raise girls. Under the plan, the government will pay families incremental sums, with the largest payout occurring when a girl child reaches 18, is in good health and has received basic education. AlertNet.org/Reuters (3/3/08).

MALAYSIA ANSWERS CRITICS

Malaysia's deputy prime minister hit out at critics who said the country was not truly democratic, ahead of Saturday's general election, the BBC reported (4/3/08).

Najib Razak's opponents point out that the National Front coalition and its forerunner have won all general elections since British rule ended. However, he insisted that elections were free and fair and that democratic systems did not require regular changes of government. Analysts expect the coalition to win easily in Saturday's polls.

In an interview with the BBC's Robin Brant, Mr Razak also addressed the issue of ethnic tension in Malaysia. A series of demonstrations by Hindu activists in recent months had highlighted the grievances felt by ethnic Indians who argue that ethnic Malays are given preferential treatment when it comes to jobs and access to services. Race relations has been a prominent issue in the election. The deputy prime minister said there had been progress.

HREOC URGES GOVERNMENT OVER GAY AND LESBIAN DISCRIMINATION

Australian Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes has written to Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland encouraging the government to change more federal laws that discriminate against gay, lesbian and transgender people and to take strong steps to change associated discriminatory behaviour in society (5/3/08).

“The focus of our Same Sex: Same Entitlements report last year was on financial and work-related legislation that discriminates against same-sex couples and their children,” he said. “We identified 58 discriminatory laws in the report, but as the attorney-general is reported to have said, there are many other pieces of federal legislation covering other areas of life in Australia that also discriminate against people who are gay, lesbian and transgender.” Commissioner Innes urged the government to change all such laws. REPORT: Same Sex: Same Entitlements www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/samesex/report/index.html

E. HEALTH & MEANS

HEALTH-CARE WORKERS ‘THE TRUE LIFESAVERS’

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Global Forum for Human Resources in Health, convened in Kampala, Uganda, that health care workers – who were “true lifesavers” – must be supported (3/3/08).

“Almost 60 countries – most of them in Africa – face such critical shortages of health workers that they cannot provide basic health care to all their people,” he said. Health care played a crucial part in economic development and in reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which aim to reduce extreme poverty and other global ills by 2015.

DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=25839&Cr=WHO&Cr1=>

AUSTRALIAN DOCTOR HONOURED

When Dr Catherine Hamlin re-visits Australia this month the Hamlin Fistula Relief and Aid Fund will hold a reception to honour her in the Great Hall, Sydney University, on March 15. The Governor of New South Wales, Professor Marie Bashir, will attend.

Catherine Hamlin was born in Sydney and graduated from the University of Sydney in 1946. She married Reginald Hamlin when they were both senior medical administrators at Crown Street Women's Hospital, Sydney. In 1958 they answered an advertisement in a medical journal for an obstetrician and gynaecologist to establish a midwifery school in the General Hospital in Addis Ababa and went to Addis Ababa in 1959 on a three-year contract with the Ethiopian Government.

The Hamlins soon became aware of the plight of hundreds of outcast ‘Fistula women’. They decided to stay in Addis Ababa to help them. They worked on a procedure pioneered by an American surgeon in the 1850s and were able to develop this delicate surgical technique to successfully repair fistulae caused by obstructed childbirth in 93 per cent of cases. They also looked for a hospital for these outcast women to provide a sanctuary where they would be welcomed and restored.

A fistula clinic was built in the grounds of the Princess Tsehai Hospital to treat patients. In the first year, fistula repairs were carried out on 32 women. By the third year 300 women had been healed. They perfected their surgical procedure and as word spread, more and more patients arrived for surgery. Over the years the work has continued to escalate, leading to the establishment of Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital and regional centres. When Dr Reg Hamlin died in Ethiopia in 1993, Dr Catherine Hamlin pledged herself to continue the work, in which she, now in her eighties, is still involved. DETAILS: www.fistulatrust.org and fistula@ozemail.com.au

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES HOSTS FORUM

The international medical-humanitarian organisation, Médecins Sans Frontières was scheduled to host a Women's Health Forum for International Women's Day, moderated by ABC journalist,

Jennifer Byrne, on March 8 in Sydney. A group of MSF experts planned to discuss women's health issues in the developing world such as emergency obstetrics, safe abortion, sexual violence, female genital mutilation and obstetric fistula.

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

PAKISTAN HOPES BETTER SANITATION WILL TACKLE DISEASE

Pakistani provincial authorities are championing new programs to build toilets and faucets, and increase public awareness, in the country's rural areas in an attempt to reduce the spread of preventable diseases. Across South Asia sanitation has improved since the 1990s but is still lacking for most people, according to UNICEF and the World Health Organisation. [IRINNews.org](http://www.irinnews.org) (3/3/08).

CHINA SPENDS ON HEALTH AND EDUCATION

China's leaders are starting to back their egalitarian rhetoric with tens of billions of yuan in health, education and social policy spending, thanks to a one-third increase in tax revenue, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (6/3/08).

In his state-of-the-nation address the Premier Wen Jiabao criticised officials who "try to shirk their responsibilities" and conceded the government's achievements "still fall somewhat short of what circumstances require and the people expect".

He told the National People's Congress that "we need to work harder" to resolve problems with employment, the safety net, education, health care, income distribution, the environment and work and product safety.

Mr Wen's speech presents the most detailed outline of how his government might achieve the requirements of a "harmonious society", as set out by the President, Hu Jintao, at the Communist Party Congress last October.

Mr Wen revealed the central Government had quadrupled health spending in 2007 from a year earlier and boosted education spending by 76 per cent.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/china-pours-billions-into-social-policy/2008/03/05/1204402555954.html>

F. OTHER NEWS

FIRE LEAVES 8000 BHUTANESE REFUGEES HOMELESS

United Nations agencies, the Nepalese Government and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are sending emergency aid to about 8,000 Bhutanese refugees left homeless after a fire swept through a camp in eastern Nepal at the weekend (3/3/08).

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](http://www.unhcr.org)) reports that though few were injured, Saturday's fire destroyed almost 90 per cent of the buildings in the Goldhap camp. The agency distributed plastic sheeting and bamboo for building new huts, while the UN World Food Program ([WFP](http://www.wfp.org)) provided emergency food aid for the refugees. The Nepalese army built 200 emergency shelters in the camp, which is one of seven in the eastern part of the country housing some 108,000 refugees who left Bhutan in the early 1990s.

FILIPINOS MARCH AGAINST PRESIDENT

Thousands of people protested in the Philippines capital, Manila, to demand the resignation of President Gloria Arroyo, following corruption claims surrounding her husband and an ally's

involvement in a government deal with a Chinese firm, the BBC reported (29/2/08). Both men denied the allegations and the deal has been cancelled.

Former presidents Joseph Estrada and Corazon Aquino joined the demonstration. Ms Aquino, 75, once a staunch ally of President Arroyo, addressed the crowd, estimated as at least 15,000. Mr Estrada, pardoned by President Arroyo last year after being sentenced to life in prison for corruption, joined his former rival on stage. It was reported the corruption claims related to a multi-million dollar deal for a government broadband network.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7271079.stm>

AGONISING WAIT FOR WOMEN

For hundreds of thousands of women one of the worst consequences of armed conflict is the long and agonising wait for news about their missing relatives. Since the vast majority of those who are killed or disappear are men, the burden of trying to find out what happened to them usually falls to the women in the family. On International Women's Day the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has focussed on its commitment to ease the plight of women with missing relatives.

The Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific cites cases such as Ashwak. She is an Iraqi refugee, now living in Jordan, who has lost track of her husband. She and others have searched all the prisons and related institutions for more than four months but have found no trace of him.

"On International Women's Day this year we want to draw attention to the particular plight of women whose male relatives have gone missing", says Florence Tercier, who heads the ICRC's program to help women in war. "Everything possible must be done to prevent disappearances and to provide the women left behind with the support they need.

"In many countries, the mothers, wives, grandmothers, sisters and daughters of the disappeared continue to exert pressure on the authorities long after a conflict has ended. For example, the Mothers of the Plaza de Mayo in Argentina organised demonstrations for many years to demand answers from the government about the fate of their missing children."

DETAILS: Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific
Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, on 61 (0)2 9388 9039/ (61 2) 418 485 120;
ICRC website www.icrc.org; email: sydney.syd@icrc.org;
Anna Schaaf, ICRC Geneva on +41 22 730 2271 or +41 79 217 3217

INDIA CANCELS SMALL FARMERS' DEBT

The Indian government is to cancel the entire debt of the country's small farmers in a giant scheme that will cost 600bn rupees (\$15bn), the BBC reported (29/2/08). The move is a centrepiece of India's latest budget, with the government also increasing education spending by 20 per cent and health funding by 15 per cent.

Widely seen as a populist budget ahead of elections due by May 2009, Delhi has also pledged to control food prices. The farm loan cancellations will be offered to all farmers with less than two hectares of land. Reaction from farmers groups has so far been mixed, with some complaining that the land-size criteria was too strict, and that those with larger fields would unfairly miss out.

PM OFF TO PNG AND THE SOLOMONS

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd is visiting Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands from March 6-8. He is accompanied by Duncan Kerr, Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Island Affairs, and Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance. In PNG Mr Rudd will meet Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare and other senior ministers in Port Moresby and visit Australian-funded aid projects in Goroka. On March 8 he will meet Solomon Islands Prime Minister Derek Sikua and other senior ministers in Honiara.

VIEW ON CHAVÉZ AND LATIN AMERICA

Dr Peter Ross from the University of New South Wales, an expert on development issues in Latin America, was scheduled to address the Australian National University on Wednesday to contrast popular Western views about the controversial Venezuelan President, Hugo Chávez and local reactions. He says Western media reports about President Chávez have emphasised his extreme language directed at the US government, his links with Cuba, battles with the Venezuelan press and his nationalisation of foreign oil interests.

Dr Ross claims that the popularity of Chávez at home is based on his strategy of development from within in place of the top-down strategies of agencies, like the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.

"In Venezuela there has been a huge growth in this type of local development with the formation of thousands of cooperatives, the use of participatory budgeting of local councils and the development of communal councils," says Dr Ross.

"Participatory democracy has extended beyond the narrowly political and into the realm of economic planning and the execution of locally devised economic strategies." Dr Ross believes that the success of this economic strategy explains Chavez's popularity.

This is the first of a series of public lectures organised by the ANU Centre for Latin American Development (ANCLAS). DETAILS: Martyn Pearce on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

FORMER IRANIAN PRESIDENT WILL BE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

President of Iran from 1997 to 2005, Seyyed Mohammad Khatami, will be the keynote speaker at Melbourne University's Globalisation for the common good: an interfaith perspective, 'From the Middle East to Asia Pacific: Arc of Conflict or Dialogue of Cultures and Religions?' being held from June 30 to July 4 at Trinity College. DETAILS: www.gcgmelbourne2008.info

According to the Iran Chamber Society, Seyed Mohammad Khatami, the fifth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran, finished his early school years in his homeland. He attended Qom Theology School and obtained a BA in philosophy from Isfahan University. In 1970 he entered the University of Tehran and graduated with an MA, he returned to Qom later to follow up his philosophical studies at Qom Seminary. He was involved in an anti-Shah campaign and began his political activities at the Association of Muslim Students of Isfahan University, working closely with Ayatollah Khomeini's late son, Hojjatoleslam Ahmad Khomeini, and Martyr Mohammad Montazeri. After the revolution in 1979 he replaced Ayatollah Dr Beheshti as head of Hamburg Islamic Centre, Germany. He married in 1974 and has two daughters and a son.

FUNDS SOUGHT FOR FRAGILE RECORDS

An appeal for increased funding to save the world's fragile and endangered documentary heritage was made at the recent UNESCO Third International Memory of the World (MoW) Conference, in Canberra.

The MoW conference, held at the National Library, Canberra, was attended by more than 150 delegates from over 30 countries, including heritage specialists from China, the United States, Britain, the Middle East, Scandinavia, South-East Asia, the South Pacific, the Caribbean and India.

The appeal to UNESCO came as part of the conference's closing proclamation, which laid out future directions and strategies for safeguarding the world's documentary heritage.

Four inaugural inscriptions on the Asia-Pacific UNESCO regional register were announced, including an archive of photographs from Cambodia's notorious Tuol Sleng prison where thousands of prisoners were summarily executed under the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-79). Tuol

Sleng is now the Genocide Museum in Phnom Penh, maintained as a memorial to the victims of the Khmer Rouge.

The conference heard that 11 new inscriptions on the Australian Register had been added, such as the landing at Gallipoli in 1915, the genesis of the Australian Labor Party in Queensland in 1892 and the achievement of women's suffrage in 1894.

Inscription on the International Memory of the World Register is the documentary equivalent of an entry on UNESCO's World Heritage List. New items on the Australian Register will join those already inscribed, including 461 Sorry Books containing the people's apology to the Stolen Generations, the convict records of Australia, and the world's first feature film, *The Story of the Kelly Gang* (made in 1906). All these documentary heritage collections and items are held in libraries, archives and museums around Australia.

It was recommended that Australia should assist Pacific Island countries to safeguard their documentary heritage and it was further unanimously recommended that there should be immediate action to improve the effectiveness of the UNESCO Memory of the World Program across the globe.

G. MEDIA MATTERS

FOREIGN JOURNALIST DETAINED IN BEIJING

Mark Magnier, Beijing bureau chief of the Los Angeles Times, accompanied by a translator and a lawyer, visited citizens of a so-called 'grievance village' in Beijing on February 27, but were subsequently taken to a police station and questioned for an hour, according to the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), (3/3/08).

Mr Magnier later said this was not the first time he had been detained by the police but he was surprised that the officials did not seem familiar with new regulations allowing foreign journalists to interview anyone in China provided the interviewees consented. This and other rules were introduced by the Central authorities in the run-up to the 2008 Olympic Games. A report released by the Foreign Correspondents Club of China said there had been more than 180 violations of this new rule over the past year. These included violence, destruction of journalists' materials, detention, harassment of sources and staff, interception of communications, denial of access to public areas, being questioned in an intimidating manner by authorities and being followed.

PAKISTAN: JOURNALIST KILLED

A correspondent for the English-language daily newspaper *The Nation* was killed and another local journalist injured in a suicide bomb blast in Mingora on February 29, the IFJ reported (4/3/08). Mr Sirajuddin was one of 40 people killed as he reported on the funeral of a police officer in Mingora in the Swat Valley, close to Pakistan's North-Western Frontier Province. Mr Hazrat Bilal, from the local *Shawal* newspaper, was also seriously hurt, among 81 others injured.

On March 6 it was reported that the IFJ and the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) would observe a 'Black Day' on March 10 to stand up against anti-media laws in Pakistan and because of the recent blockage of live transmission of a Supreme Court speech. The broadcast by private television channels of a speech by the President of the Supreme Court Bar Association, Aitzad Ahsan, to lawyers in the Sindh High Court was blocked in Karachi on March 3. It was reported that journalists from television channels were asked to remove their equipment and stop live coverage of Ahsan's speech under the directive of a Sindh High Court official.

NEPAL: The chief editor of *Nayen* weekly, Nawaraj Pathik, was reported to have been threatened by Maoist cadres on March 4 for an editorial about the relationship between crime and politics, according to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ). Assailants questioned the accuracy of an editorial published on March 2 and threatened physical violence if he did not prove allegations against Maoist cadres within two days.

SRI LANKA: THREATS AGAINST JOURNALISTS

Attempts to intimidate journalists working for the state-owned television broadcaster Sri Lanka Rupavahini Corporation (SLRC) have followed a violent altercation at the SLRC offices in December. According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), an IFJ affiliate, the assistant director of news camera at SLRC, Priyal Ranjith Perera, was recently threatened when four men attempted to attack him with a knife. In December Mr Perera was involved in videotaping an incident in which a minister entered SLRC's offices and an assault took place. Five journalists have reported a threat or attack in relation to coverage of the December 27 incident. Twenty-one SLRC journalists have been questioned by police (3/3/08).

The federation received a report this week that a SLRC librarian had been cut with a razor knife while travelling on public transport on March 5. Ranjani Aluthge was stabbed in her back and shoulder twice on a bus. This is the fourth violent incident recorded against SLRC journalists and media workers since the beginning of 2008.

PHILIPPINES: Tabloid newspaper reporter Jet Sinacruz, a reporter for *Abante*, reported death threats sent to his mobile phone via a text message on his birthday, warning him to enjoy his birthday celebrations as they would be his last. A formal report has been filed at the Quezon City Police Districts' Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit (5/3/08). The IFJ is concerned he may be targeted for a series of articles he wrote about alleged corruption by city councillors and the rising incidence of car theft in 2007.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The IFJ has launched a letter-writing campaign protesting the closure of *Zanan* one of Iran's leading women's and pro-reform magazines, to coincide with International Women's Day on March 8. Despite being an important voice on gender-related issues and achievements of women in Iran, *Zanan* was ordered to close on January 28 by Iran's Press Supervisory Board.

DETAILS: <http://www.ifj.org/default.asp?Index=5886&Language=EN> and ifj@ifj-asia.org

PRESS FREEDOM CAMPAIGN FOR CHINA

In the lead-up to the Beijing Olympic Games in August, the IFJ has launched a new campaign, Open and Free – Towards a Democratic Media Culture in China.

DETAILS: Email ifj@ifj-asia.org.

LATEST IFJ ASIA PACIFIC PROTESTS

[India: IFJ Worried Over the Harassment of Journalists in India's North-East - 27/02/2008](#)

[East Timor: Government Regrets Attack on Journalist in East Timor - 27/02/2008](#)

[Fiji: IFJ Denounces Fiji's Deportation of Newspaper Publisher - 27/02/2008](#)

[Nepal: Concerns as Newspapers Close in Nepal's Troubled Terai Region - 26/02/2008](#)

[Afghanistan: Call to Australian Government to Seek Release of Afghan Journalist 26/02/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: IFJ Condemns Police Inspector for Attack on Journalists in Sri Lanka - 25/02/2008](#)

[Pakistan: Pakistan Coalition Pledges to Restore Media Freedoms - 22/02/2008](#)

[Afghanistan: Journalists Under Constant Threat in Afghanistan - 22/02/2008](#)

[Nepal: Newspaper Vehicle Torched as Anti-Media Violence continues in Nepal 22/02/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: IFJ Condemns Unsubstantiated Accusation Against Murdered Journalist - 21/22/08](#)

[Philippines: IFJ Welcomes Judicial Intervention in Murder of Journalist - 21/02/08](#)

[Pakistan: PFUJ Campaign Crucial To Media Coverage to Pakistan Elections-20/02/08](#)

[Sri Lanka: IFJ Calls on Sri Lanka Police to End Harassment of Journalists - 20/02/08](#)

[Cambodia: Journalist Victim of Hit and Run for Investigating Gambling Venue 19/02/2008](#)

[Nepal: Fear Grows for Journalists Under Siege in Nepal - 18/02/2008](#)

[Sri Lanka: Suspicious Watch On TV News Director in Sri Lanka - 18/02/2008](#)

[Pakistan: Pakistan Media Urged to Stand Strong and Unified For Elections - 15/02/2008](#)

[Pakistan: Bomb Blast Injures Five Journalists As Tensions Rise In Pakistan - 13/02/2008](#)

[China: Jailing of Journalists Is Not the Olympic Spirit - 12/02/2008](#)

[Pakistan: Targeted Killing Highlights Rising Trend of Violence Against Pakistan Journalists - 12/02/2008](#)

[India: IFJ Calls for Investigation Into Attack on TV Chanel Chief in India's Guwahati - 12/02/2008](#)

DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific at www.ifj-asia.org; ifj@ifj-asia.org; on +612 9333 0919.

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

IN THE OUTBACK, A THIRD WORLD UTOPIA

At a remote NT outstation, Russell Skelton reports on the desperate plight of an Indigenous community in the Sydney Morning Herald (1/3/08): "Blanche Ross ... is 80 and her home is a galvanised iron shed. It has a concrete floor, no heating and the only visible sign of her living there is a rumpled blanket coloured by the red dirt. There is no toilet, no running water and no power. She has no personal possessions to speak of, not even a mattress, let alone a bed ... In winter the desert temperatures fall below zero and this week they climbed to a sweltering 45 degrees. At the Apungalindum outstation, one of 16 in Utopia, Ross relies on the kindness of her daughter and other relatives for her meals.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/29/1204226991317.html>

CORRUPT DEPOSERS COULD NOT MAINTAIN DISGUISE

Fiji Sun publisher Russell Hunter, deported from Suva over the newspaper's corruption coverage, writes of a lawless regime racked by double standards and cronyism. "When the Fiji army commander Commodore Voreqe Bainimarama deposed the elected government in his coup on December 5, 2006, topping his list of reasons was a need to stamp out corruption. This came as a relief to many, concerned as they were about the increasing fear of corruption - not so much within the regime as under it ... Corruption, meanwhile, has become if anything worse than it was under Qarase." Sydney Morning Herald (1/3/08). ARTICLE:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/02/29/1204226991667.html>

CRACKS APPEAR IN THE MONOLITH

Some of the key characteristics of contemporary Islamic consciousness - Salafism - are: an intense belief in the self-sufficiency of Islamic texts; literalist interpretations; a supremacist and arrogant mindset; pervasive misogynist attitudes; and hostility towards the indeterminacy of the modern world, writes Riaz Hassan, in The Australian (1-2/3/08). Salafism is a product of the historical experience of most Muslims during the past three centuries. In particular, it can be traced to the challenges posed by colonialism, modernity, globalisation and a generalised failure of national development in the Islamic world. It compensates for feelings of alienation and powerlessness arising from economic, social, military and technological backwardness. ARTICLE:

http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,23297829-12332,00.html%3Ffrom%3Dpublic_rss

WE DIDN'T MEAN TO KILL SO MANY: BALI BOMBER

Michael Sheridan went to the maximum-security prison with the families and friends of the three prisoners awaiting execution over the Bali bombings: "Imam Samudra, 38, was the planner who chose the targets in Bali and organised two suicide bombers to carry out the attacks ... Ali Ghufron, 48, better known as Mukhlas, was the financier who once met Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan ... Amrozi bin Nurhasyim, 46, dubbed 'the Smiling Bomber', was the village mechanic who bought the explosives and the Mitsubishi van used as a car bomb. He rose from the floor, kissed me on both cheeks and said, "Salaam aleikum (peace be upon you)," with a cheery grin ... There were 202 people - including 88 Australians - killed on the night of Saturday, October 12, 2002," Michael Sheridan writes in The Australian (3/3/08). ARTICLE:

<http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23308437-601,00.html>

GANG RAPE USED AS WEAPON OF WAR IN CONGO

It took five operations to repair Lumo's internal injuries after she was gang-raped and left for dead by Hutu militia in eastern Congo, in what women's rights activists call a new form of terrorism, the use of rape as a weapon of war, Connie Levitt writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (3/3/08).

Lumo's story, told in an award-winning documentary about survivors of sexual violence in Congo,

highlights the women's continuing plight. "The main issue is terrorism. Rape is used as terrorism, as an instrument of war, to empty whole communities of people, to destroy the economies," said Lyn Lusi, program manager for Heal Africa, whose organisation works with the affected women in the Democratic Republic of Congo's eastern region. Mrs Lusi, who is in Australia to promote grassroots advocacy for Congo, welcomed last week's UN announcement of a global campaign to combat violence against women and girls. ARTICLE:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/03/02/1204402273542.html>

RIGHTS, POVERTY & TIMOR SEA OIL

In 2000 one of the poorest nations on earth began negotiations with Australia over rights to the lucrative oil and gas resources of the Timor Sea. With the revenue from the oil and gas fields, the young democracy of East Timor would have a chance to secure its economic future - if Australia would allow it. In an ironic twist of fate, East Timor found that Australia, the country which had delivered freedom to the Timorese by intervening against Indonesia's bloody attacks in 1999, was now trying to deny it a fair share of the profits. Paul Cleary spoke this week at the ANU about his recent book, *Shakedown: Australia's Grab for Timor Oil*:

AUDIO FILE WEBSITE: <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/rmap/seminars.php>

RESEARCH SEMINAR - RIGHTS, POVERTY AND TIMOR SEA OIL.

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