

# UNITY

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## A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

### SECURITY COUNCIL URGES FIRMNESS OVER LEBANON

The UN Security Council called for the disarming of Hezbollah and all other militias in Lebanon and greater progress toward a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution to the conflict between Lebanon and Israel, the Jerusalem Post reported (16/4/08).

A statement adopted by consensus on Tuesday by the 15-member council reiterated its commitment "to the full implementation of all provisions of Resolution 1701 which ended the Second Lebanon War.

The statement took note of the progress and concerns expressed by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his latest report on implementation of the resolution "and emphasises the need for greater progress on all the key issues required for a permanent ceasefire and long-term solution."

It also called on all concerned parties, in particular in the region, to intensify their efforts in implementing resolution 1701, including by fully cooperating with the secretary-general.

REPORT: [The Jerusalem Post/Associated Press](#)

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1208246581088&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShawFull>

### UN PEACEKEEPERS HELP AFTER CONGO PLANE CRASH

At least 38 people died and more than 100 people were injured in Tuesday's crash off a runway in the Democratic Republic of Congo. UN peacekeepers helped at the site Wednesday, searching for bodies and dousing flames amid the debris. A UN News Centre [release](#) that says three UN staff members were among survivors. [Google/Associated Press](#) (16/4/08).

### BAN SEES FORCE FOR GOOD IN AU AND UN COOPERATION

Preventing and resolving conflicts peacefully must remain high on the shared agenda of the UN and the African Union, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told a high-level Security Council meeting at UN Headquarters, calling for deeper cooperation between the two institutions (16/4/08).

In a [speech](#) to a [meeting](#) on peace and security in Africa, attended by many heads of state and other high-level figures, he said he would "spare no effort" in making the partnership between the UN and the AU complementary, effective and inclusive.

He said the two bodies had already started taking concrete steps to work more closely together on peace and security issues, from deploying good offices and mediation on border issues to developing early warning strategies and building operational capacity on conflict prevention.

"We have established a dedicated team to help operationalise the concept of an African Stand-by Force, which would build on the valiant and pioneering efforts of the African Union's missions in Burundi, in Somalia, in Sudan," he said.

"Today, the DPKO [Department of Peacekeeping Operations] team develops training, operational capacity and technical advice, in collaboration with the African Union Commission, the sub-regional organisations and donors."

Mr Ban said that given the importance he attached to preventing and resolving conflicts, he welcomed the recent announcement of a new government in Kenya, which had been torn by deadly ethnic violence since disputed elections last year.

"Now that the immediate power-sharing issues have been addressed, I urge all sides to stay committed to resolving the longer-term causes of the recent unrest," he said.

But he voiced deep concern at the uncertainty in Zimbabwe, where the results of the presidential election on March 29 had still not been released.

“Absent a transparent solution to the impasse, the situation could deteriorate further with serious implications for the people of Zimbabwe. The Zimbabwean authorities and the countries of the region have insisted that these matters are for the region to resolve, but the international community continues to watch and wait for decisive action.

“The credibility of the democratic process in Africa could be at stake here. If there is a second round of elections, they must be conducted in a fair and transparent manner, with international observers. I urge the leaders of the Southern African Development Community to continue their efforts.”

He also called for accelerated efforts to achieve “desperately needed progress” to the crises in Sudan’s Darfur region and to Somalia, both beset by deadly violence, massive displacement and humanitarian suffering.

Under-Secretary-General B. Lynn Pascoe also addressed the open council meeting, presenting two reports from Mr Ban regarding UN cooperation with regional organisations and on conflict prevention, especially in Africa.

More than 40 participants were expected to speak during the following debate, presided over by President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa. SEE also Peace and Security page.

#### **SOMALIA APPEALS FOR UN PEACE FORCE**

Somalia’s western-backed transitional government on Tuesday appealed for the UN to dispatch a multinational force to establish peace and security in the lawless east African state while its factions pursued reconciliation after more than a decade of war, the London Financial Times reported (16/4/08). Foreign Minister Ali Ahmed Jama made the call in New York on the eve of the UN-AU summit.

“We call on the Security Council to assume its rightful role and replace AMISOM [the existing small AU force] with a multinational force,” he said. “We have asked the Security Council to take that decision as soon as possible.”

UN troop contributors have been reluctant towards Somalia since US peacekeepers withdrew in 1993 after militias shot down two helicopters and killed 18 US personnel.

REPORT: [Financial Times](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0df70a26-0b40-11dd-8ccf-0000779fd2ac.html) / <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/0df70a26-0b40-11dd-8ccf-0000779fd2ac.html> (16/4/08).

#### **GA PRESIDENT CALLS FOR NATIONS TO RESIST PROTECTIONISM**

Countries should resist the “temptation of protectionism” because free trade and the broader process of globalization have brought people closer together and play an important role in reducing poverty, the General Assembly President has told an international meeting on democracy and development (14/4/08).

Speaking at the opening of the Doha Forum on Democracy, Development and Free Trade, in Qatar’s capital, Srgjan Kerim said that free trade agreements had become “the engine of regional integration,” citing the examples of pacts involving the European Union (EU), the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

“Democracy fosters openness and open societies tend to trade more and freely,” he said, stressing that countries could always achieve more when they worked together rather than when they operated alone.

“Globalisation has further accentuated and strengthened the nexus of relations between democracy, development and free trade, increasing our mutual interdependence, the complexity and density of relationships between our economies, societies, politics and individuals; and, the speed at which we need to face changes and interact with each other.

“This has led to a proliferation of actors in the international arena. Influential individuals, civil society groups, think tanks, corporations and religious institutions operate internationally and have created new social and economic networks.”

Today's biggest global problems, including climate change, terrorism and sustainable development, can only be solved when countries cooperate in “a new kind of internationalism that puts the well-being of the individual and communities at its centre.”

Mr Kerim warned that “the temptation of protectionism remains to this very day. It needs to be resisted, all the more so as free and fair trade also has its immediate benefits. It is essential to reducing poverty.”

ARTICLE: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26321&Cr=kerim&Cr1=>

### **REPAIRING AUSTRALIA'S DAMAGED REPUTATION**

The Rudd Government has not yet shown a full hand on how it wants to balance its three major international relationships - with China, the US, and the UN. But Rudd's visit to China has made things clearer, Tony Kevin writes for On Line Opinion.

A former senior diplomat Tony Kevin (who served in DFAT and the Prime Minister's Department between 1968 and 1998, with his last postings at ambassador level in Poland and Cambodia), is the author of the prizewinning [A Certain Maritime Incident – the Sinking of SIEV X](#) ( Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2004), and of [Walking the Camino](#) ( Scribe, 2006). He is now writing his third book, on the culture of diplomacy.

Regarding Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's visit to the United Nations, Mr Kevin writes “Rudd met the Secretary-General and flagged his determination to make Australia a better international citizen. Good, but I suspect that to announce Australia's interest in a Security Council candidacy for 2012 was to show his hand too soon. I don't think Rudd - immersed in domestic politics these past ten years - understands how much Australia put the UN General Assembly offside under John Howard's rule. DFAT officials won't tell him just how bad it is ...”

“When I was in the Australian UN delegation in 1973-75, we prided ourselves on the fact that, despite our ANZUS security ties, we were not US satellites at the UN. Under both Whitlam and Fraser, we were proudly part of mainstream UN culture. We pitied our forlorn US colleagues for not being so. We would never dream of taking voting instructions from them.

“Rudd needs to know that Australia has a big repair job to do at the UN, and on relevant policies at home, if we want to get onto the UN Security Council.”

REPORT: <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7241>

### **RECOVERING FROM POL POT ERA**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, recognising that Tuesday marked the tenth anniversary of the death of notorious leader Pol Pot, said the people of Cambodia needed closure to the bloody years by seeing justice carried out for Khmer Rouge's surviving senior leaders. So far, five former officers from the brutal regime have been detained and will be tried for war crimes in a UN-backed tribunal in Cambodia. The tribunal is expected to last at least until 2010. [CNN](#) (16/4/08).

### **NEPAL TO RE-POLL AT 98 STATIONS**

Nepal's Election Commission has announced that re-polling following last week's historic Constituent Assembly election will be required in 98 stations out of some 20,000 across the country, a UN spokesperson said (15/4/08). Re-polling in the 98 stations, covering 21 constituencies and 12 districts, would be completed within a week. Meanwhile, ballot counting in

the April 10 polls is under way in 132 constituencies, mostly focusing on the results for the first-past-the-post ballots.

The UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN) is providing technical assistance and advice to Nepal's Election Commission, which is fully responsible for all aspects of the preparation and conduct of the election. UNMIN district electoral advisers remain in the districts throughout the re-polling and counting process. Once elected, the Constituent Assembly will draw up a new constitution. REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26313&Cr=nepal&Cr1=>

#### **PAKISTAN ASKS UN TO PROBE BHUTTO MURDER**

Pakistan's new parliament unanimously agreed Monday to urge its government to allow the United Nations to investigate the December assassination of former Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto. The assembly requested the UN to form a tribunal that aims to identify those who financed, organised and carried out the murder of Bhutto. [The New York Times](#) (15/4/08).

#### **ATE HIS VOTE BUT NOT HIS WORDS**

Ballot stuffing took on a new meaning in Italy's parliamentary election on Sunday when a man ate his ballot paper in protest at the country's politicians, Reuters, reported (14/4/08). Police in Naples said they had charged the 41-year-old businessman with destroying election materials. The man was reported to have said all Italian politicians and politics were "crap" and he was protesting "against the system." REPORT (Laura Viggiano/Phil Stewart): <http://www.reuters.com/article/oddlyEnoughNews/idUSL1313250820080414?feedType=RSS&feedName=oddlyEnoughNews>

### **B. CLIMATE CHANGE & ENVIRONMENT**

#### **ANU POLL FINDS 'IT'S THE ENVIRONMENT, STUPID'**

While Bill Clinton might have reminded people 'it's the economy, stupid' in his 1992 presidential campaign, Australians believe that the environment is the most important issue facing Australia now and in five years time, according to the results of the inaugural ANU Poll.

The poll also found that one in three adults believe that the environment is the most important issue that should be discussed at the Australia 2020 Summit this weekend.

"When asked in an open-ended question what are the most important problems facing Australia, 19 per cent of the survey respondents mentioned the environment, including global warming and sustainability. The environment also tops the list when people are asked the most important issue facing Australia in five years' time," said Associate Professor Andrew Leigh, an ANU Poll author.

Other issues rated important were the economy, health care, and water management, he said. "What is really interesting is that Australians seem to have much greater concern for the environment than the US public." DETAILS: [www.anu.edu.au/anupoll](http://www.anu.edu.au/anupoll)

#### **PLANS FOR CHINA AND AUSTRALIA TO COOPERATE ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Australia and China stressed the great importance they attached to the issue of climate change and their willingness to strengthen cooperation to jointly meet the challenge of climate change in a joint statement (10/4/08).

The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol. Both sides reiterated, in accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities and consistent with the Bali Roadmap, the need for developed countries to continue to take the lead in reducing GHG emissions beyond 2012 and the necessity to assist developing countries in enhancing their capability to address climate change.

Australia and China recognised the need for intensified negotiations to meet the timeframes set out in the Bali Roadmap and resolved to work closely together in relevant upcoming bilateral and multilateral forums in support of the UNFCCC negotiations.

The two nations have a lot in common in relation to climate change, the statement said. The partnership and cooperation between the two sides will focus on the relative strengths and common interests for making contribution to global efforts to address the challenge of climate change.

The two sides also agreed to promote closer cooperation in responding to climate change by strengthening policy dialogue at ministerial level and strengthening practically focused cooperation by developing and implementing concrete projects in areas of mutual benefit that will assist both countries in addressing climate change.

As the two countries foster a spirit of closer cooperation on climate change, both sides reiterated their support for the work of the Australia-China Joint Coordination Group on Clean Coal Technology.

Both countries said actions to reduce emissions from deforestation should be one of the aspects of future action on addressing climate change and reaffirmed their support for the China-initiated Asia Pacific Network on Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation, established during APEC in Sydney in September 2007.

Identified Initial Areas for Closer Australia-China Cooperation included:

Closer Policy Dialogue - Australia and China worked together with other parties in COP13 of the UNFCCC to finalise the Bali Roadmap on an international framework for addressing climate change into the future. Both sides will continue to work together to promote the negotiations and relevant international cooperation on climate change, under the guidance of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol.

For this purpose, the two sides agreed to meet at ministerial level on an annual basis and to strengthen their regular policy dialogue, cooperation and coordination on climate change, based on existing mechanisms on climate change. The first ministerial level meeting will be hosted by Australia in the latter half of 2008.

Expanding the Australia-China Climate Change Partnership - Australia and China share a successful bilateral partnership that draws together the resources and expertise of Australian and Chinese industry, science, and government sectors concerned. The two sides reaffirmed their commitment to the agreed joint projects and agreed to further expand practically focused project activity particularly in the areas of capacity building; renewable energy technologies; energy efficiency; capture and use of methane; climate change and agriculture; land use, land use change and forestry; adaptation to climate change; and climate change science.

Developing Clean Energy - Australia and China will cooperate to develop low emission technologies that will assist both countries in economic development in the way of minimising greenhouse gas emissions and underscoring both countries growing need for cleaner forms of power generation.

Both countries welcomed current Australia-China cooperation in these areas occurring through the Asia Pacific Partnership on Clean Development and Climate, the Australia-China Joint Coordination Group on Clean Coal Technology, and the bilateral climate change partnership. China also welcomed Australia's reaffirmation of the commitment to invest AU\$20 million in the Australia –China Joint Coordination Group on Clean Coal Technology.

## **LOOKING AT CLEAN COAL TECHNOLOGY AND CHINA'S WATER PROBLEMS**

The Australian Government will invest \$20 million in an Australia –China Joint Coordination Group on Clean Coal Technology, Penny Wong, Minister for Climate Change and Water, said in a joint statement with the prime minister (11/4/08).

These funds will mean Australia was now investing \$94.6 million in China specific climate change and water programs until 2015. The Clean Coal Technology group will be funded as part of the \$500 million Clean Coal Fund.

The three new funded projects include a feasibility study into the development of the largest solar city in the world at Weihai in the northeast of China; a pilot project applying Australia's National Carbon Accounting System at a provincial level in China and a trial of the Australian river health monitoring systems in the Yellow River, the Pearl River Basin and the Da Ling River.

These efforts also include a new ministerial level dialogue to provide high-level oversight to future collaboration and drive enhanced cooperation in clean energy technologies; climate change science, adaptation, and building the capacity of China to respond to climate change.

These practical climate change and water projects would make a small but significant contribution to the Chinese Government's efforts to combat climate change and if successful, each of them had the potential to be rolled out nationally across China. By relying on Australian technology these practical projects were also helping Australian businesses get a start in the massive Chinese market.

The joint statement was made the announcement at the Gaobeidian power station in Beijing which is the site of a pilot post combustion carbon capture project. This joint initiative of the CSIRO Energy Transformed National Research Flagship, the China Huaneng Group and China's Thermal Power Research Institute is funded with a \$4 million Australian Government grant. The plant is expected to be running by August and if successful will capture around 3000 tonnes of carbon dioxide each year.

DETAILS: [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media\\_release\\_0188.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0188.cfm)

## **'COAL CAT' IS OUT OF THE BAG**

Environment Minister, Peter Garrett, had let the coal cat out of the bag on ABC Radio National when he admitted that the proposed 'clean coal' was "expensive", not the cheap solution that would allow us to continue to use cheap coal, the Australian Greens said (16/4/08).

Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, said, "It makes no sense for the government to throw taxpayers' dollars at an expensive and unproven technology when the renewable energy and energy efficiency alternatives are affordable and ready to be rolled out immediately," she said.

"Before considering for one second lifting fossil fuel subsidies further, Minister Garrett must explain how the government can justify continuing to give one of Australia's most profitable, but most polluting, sectors ten times the funding of the clean, sunrise renewable energy industry.

"So-called 'clean coal' has always been justified by governments and the coal sector based on the claim that renewables are not a cost-effective alternative. With this admission from the minister, agreeing with similar admissions from energy experts around the world, such claims for 'clean coal' are junk economics.

"The dream of cleaning up coal has been slipping away in recent months, with the collapse of the FutureGen project in the USA being the latest example of blown-out budgets and timelines. Industry spokespeople in Australia and around the world are now admitting that their expectations of commercially-viable 'clean coal' by 2020 are looking increasingly unlikely.

"Many gigawatts of baseload-capable renewable energy are being installed around the world today, while the best estimates of the coal sector, that they could have a handful of commercial plants online by 2020, are being revealed as an exercise in wishful thinking. The urgency of dealing with climate change is such that we must put every bit of support we can into the technologies that can reduce emissions now, not pin our hopes on an unproven dream because it could save one industry." DETAILS: Tim Hollo on 02 6277 3063; [www.christinemilne.org.au](http://www.christinemilne.org.au)

### **AUSTRALIANS HUNGRY FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION: REPORT**

A new report on climate change has found that most people want urgent action to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions, the ABC reported (14/4/08).

The Climate Institute has released its second annual report on Australians' attitudes towards climate change. It found that three-quarters of Australians believe that any new electricity generation should come from clean energy.

Climate Institute chief executive John Conner says most Australians expect the government to take strong steps to reduce emissions. "They want those pollution levels to be going down by 2012 and they want new forms [of power generation].

"They want all new electricity to come from clean energy [and] they want their homes to be efficient and their cars to be energy efficient as well. They're hungry for action and they're prepared to take action themselves, but they do expect the government to lead as well.

### **SA MINISTER LEADS CHARGE TO PHASE OUT PLASTIC BAGS**

Environmental groups criticised the Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett for failing to get agreement on a way to phase out free plastic shopping bags, the ABC reported (18/4/08).

Mr Garrett had called for free bags to be banned by the end of the year, but at a meeting of environment ministers yesterday, South Australia was the only state willing to meet the target.

### **PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER ON EMISSIONS TRADING**

An organiser of a forum on emission trading at the ANU on Thursday, Dr Regina Betz, of the UNSW, said one of the crucial issues to be addressed about linking to the international carbon market was the so-called 'hot air' of Russia and other Eastern European countries.

"If companies are allowed to buy those 'hot air' permits, the Australian emissions trading scheme would probably not achieve significant reductions in global greenhouse gas emissions," she said. "The European Union Emissions Trading Scheme has therefore restricted the link to the international carbon market to ensure domestic action is achieved."

DETAILS: Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office, on 02 6125 5575/ 0416 249 245.

### **1000<sup>TH</sup> CLEAN ENERGY PROJECT LISTED**

A mechanism under the United Nations-backed Kyoto Protocol that allows industrialised countries to generate credits through investment in emission reduction projects in developing countries this week reached a milestone, approving its 1000th clean energy project.

The project in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh is expected to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by more than 34,000 tons annually, according to a news release issued by the secretariat of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change ([UNFCCC](http://unfccc.org)), the parent treaty of the [Kyoto Protocol](http://unfccc.org/kyoto_protocol).

To be registered with the Protocol's Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and then earn Certified Emission Reduction (CER) credits, projects must pass a rigorous process of approval and independent third-party monitoring designed to ensure that emission reductions claimed by a project are real, verifiable and additional to what would have taken place without the project.

Rajesh Kumar Sethi, chairman of the CDM Executive Board, who signed off on the project at a joint coordination workshop in Bonn, Germany, noted that with 1,000 projects in 49 countries in just two and a half years, the mechanism has shown its potential.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26320&Cr=kyoto&Cr1=>

### **SCIENTISTS TO MEET IN JUNE**

The twenty-eighth sessions of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) and the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) will be held from June 4/13.

The second session of the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA 2) and the second part of the fifth session of the Ad hoc Working Group on Further Commitments for Annex I Parties under the Kyoto Protocol (AWG-KP 5 ) will be held from June 2/12.

### **UN CALLS FOR REFORM OF FARMING**

Global farming rules need to be overhauled to boost agriculture production and help battle the growing food crisis, a UN body urged on Tuesday. Governments, the private sector and non-profit organisations needed to cooperate better to promote a more effective and sustainable form of farming, the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development said in its report, which was also backed by the UN Food and Agricultural Organisation, the World Health Organisation and the World Bank, the London Guardian reported (15/4/08).. [The Guardian \(London\)](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/apr/15/food.unitednations1) / <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/apr/15/food.unitednations1>

### **POTATO BACK IN FAVOUR AND FLAVOUR**

The potato is re-emerging as a nutritious staple that can help feed an increasingly hungry world as prices for wheat and rice continue to rise and spark crises across the globe. The potato's advantages include that it can be grown in any climate and that it yields two to four times more food than other staple crops on the same amount of land, reports [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://www.alertnet.org/Reuters) (15/4/08).

### **BANGLADESH FACES 'REFUGEE NIGHTMARE'**

Abdul Majid has been forced to move 22 times in as many years, a victim of the annual floods that ravage Bangladesh, Environmental News Network/ Reuters reported (13/4/08).

There are millions like Majid, 65, in Bangladesh and in the future there could be many millions more if scientists' predictions of rising seas and more intense droughts and storms come true.

"Bangladesh is already facing consequences of a sea level rise, including salinity and unusual height of tidal water," said Mizanur Rahman, a research fellow with the London-based International Institute for Environmental Development. "In the future, millions of people will lose their land and houses. Their survival will be threatened," he told Reuters.

Experts say a third of Bangladesh's coastline could be flooded if the sea rises one meter in the next 50 years, creating an additional 20 million Bangladeshis displaced from their homes and farms. This is about the same as Australia's population.

REPORT: <http://www.enn.com/ecosystems/article/34598>

### **INDIA ACTS TO SAVE ENDANGERED TIGERS**

India's efforts to create safe refuges for endangered tigers - including efforts to drive away loggers and poachers, and resettle hundreds of families - have raised questions over how to best strike a balance between development and preservation efforts, reports [The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) (16/4/08).

### **ARCTIC AIR TO BE STUDIED**

The Arctic may look clean but the region in fact has a smog and soot problem, which US scientists are to study. The central question that scientists from three federal agencies will try to

answer is: To what extent are emissions from other regions of the world contributing to smog and warming in the Arctic? [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (16/4/08).

## C. PEACE & SECURITY

### MIDDLE EAST

#### **SECRET TALKS REPORTED BETWEEN IRAN AND US**

Reports that secret talks between the US and Iran may be a modicum of good news for a region living in deadly nuclear peril, the London Guardian stated (14/4/08).

News [reports](#) about secret "back channel" talks between the US and Iran conducted for the past five years could mean that the world, and the Middle East in particular, will eventually be able to breathe a sigh of enormous relief. It is perhaps a good illustration of how desperately needed just any ray of hope is that Ha'aretz [decided](#) that a report on the grim threat assessment presented by Israel's intelligence agencies a month ago should also include the comparatively optimistic outlook [offered](#) by the eminent Middle East scholar [Bernard Lewis](#) in his meetings with Israeli politicians. ARTICLE:

[http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/petra\\_marquardtbigman/2008/04/a\\_spectre\\_haunts\\_the\\_mid  
dle\\_east.html](http://commentisfree.guardian.co.uk/petra_marquardtbigman/2008/04/a_spectre_haunts_the_middle_east.html)

#### **ISRAELI LEADERS SHUN JIMMY CARTER OVER HAMAS TALKS**

The former US president Jimmy Carter was reportedly shunned by Israeli political leaders but said he would go ahead with plans to meet the leader of Hamas to promote peace in the Middle East, the Sydney Morning herald reported (15/4/08).

Mr Carter was speaking in Jerusalem on Sunday after Israel's four most senior politicians - the Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, Defence Minister, Ehud Barak, Foreign Minister, Tzipi Livni, and Opposition Leader, Benjamin Netanyahu - all declined to meet him. Mr Carter has also been criticised by the US State Department and all three US presidential candidates.

Local media reports said the Israeli establishment was angered by Mr Carter's decision to meet the exiled Hamas leader Khaled Meshal in Damascus this week. Israelis are also offended by Mr Carter's 2006 book, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid*, in which he compares Israel's military occupation and colonisation of seized Arab territories with the former white supremacist regime in South Africa. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/14/1208025090991.html>

Three Israeli soldiers and 17 Palestinians, one a cameraman for an international news agency, were killed as Israeli troops stormed into the Gaza Strip, the ABC reported (17/4/08).  
REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/17/2219118.htm?section=justin>

#### **TURKS BOMB KURDISH GUERRILLAS**

The Turkish military said Tuesday its air force had launched an attack on Kurdish guerrillas who sought to cross the border from Iraq into Turkey, the London Times reported (16/4/08). The guerrillas were "neutralised," the military said, but a spokesman for the Kurdish group PKK said "an hour of bombing by Turkish forces" had not resulted in any casualties. REPORT: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/iraq/article3757222.ece> /[The Times \(London\)](#)

### NORTH ASIA

#### **ATTACKS ON AID WORKERS INCREASE IN AFGHANISTAN**

Attacks on aid workers and non-governmental organisations increased sharply in the first quarter of 2008, leaving nine people dead and nine injured, as well as 12 kidnapped, the Afghanistan NGO Safety Office reported. The violence is increasingly hurting aid agencies' ability to reach populations in need of assistance, the report notes, the IRIN News reported (15/4/08).

REPORT: <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=77770/> [IRINNews.org](http://www.IRINNews.org)

### **CHINA EXPRESSES INDIGNATION OVER US CONGRESSIONAL RESOLUTION ON TIBET**

China expressed indignation over a US Congressional resolution last week calling on Beijing to stop cracking down on Tibetan dissent and talk to the Dalai Lama, the International Herald Tribune/AP reported (11/4/08).

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Jiang Yu labelled the resolution anti-Chinese, saying it "twisted Tibet's history and modern reality ... seriously hurting the feelings of the Chinese people. The Chinese side expresses its strong indignation and resolute opposition toward this," Jiang Yu was quoted as stating on the ministry's website.

The resolution sponsored by House of Congress Speaker Nancy Pelosi called on Beijing to "end its crackdown on non-violent Tibetan protesters," along with cultural, religious and economic linguistic "repression."

Jiang Yu said the resolution failed to condemn the 'Dalai Clique' that China blames for orchestrating the protests that began peacefully on March 10 among Buddhist monks in Lhasa spiraling into violence four days later. The resolution "makes willful accusations against the Tibetan Autonomous Region government's lawful handling of the serious violent criminal incident in Lhasa and crudely interferes in China's internal affairs," Mr Jiang said.

REPORT: <http://www.iht.com/articles/ap/2008/04/11/news/China-Tibet-US.php>

## **AFRICA**

### **ZIMBABWE: 50 OPPOSITION SUPPORTERS ARRESTED**

More than 50 Zimbabwean opposition supporters have been arrested after staging a strike, the party says, the BBC reported (16/4/08).

Police have accused the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) of trying to incite violence with their strike call, in protest at delayed poll results.

But a coalition of Zimbabwean doctors said its members had seen and treated more than 150 people who had been beaten and tortured since the polls. International concern has been raised at a UN Security Council session.

The special meeting, called by South African's leader Thabo Mbeki, was supposed to be about how the UN can work with the African Union to bring peace to the Africa's conflicts, from Somalia to Sudan's Darfur region. But leaders used the opportunity to address the Zimbabwe issue.

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said the absence of a transparent solution to the impasse could mean the "situation could deteriorate further, with the serious implications for the people of Zimbabwe. The international community continued to watch and wait for decisive action," he said.

UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown added: "No one thinks - having seen the results at polling stations - that President Mugabe has won this election. A stolen election would not be a democratic election at all," he said. REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7349955.stm>  
SEE also Peace & Security page.

### **DARFUR: GOVERNMENT AND REBELS SEEM 'DETERMINED' TO FIGHT**

The prospect of negotiating a political solution to the Darfur crisis has become ever more remote as both the Sudanese Government and rebels appear determined to pursue a military solution, according to a United Nations [report](#) released (16/4/08).

At the same time the international community's failure to supply vital helicopters, transport and other logistical support is undermining the work of the seriously under-staffed African Union-

United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur ([UNAMID](#)) to pacify a region where five years of fighting have killed more than 200,000 people and driven nearly 2.5 million others from their homes.

"I am extremely disappointed in the lack of progress on all fronts," UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in the report that covers the UNAMID's operations for the first three months of 2008.

"The parties appear determined to pursue a military solution; the political process stalled; the deployment of UNAMID is progressing very slowly and continues to face many challenges; and the humanitarian situation is not improving."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26349&Cr=darfur&Cr1=>

### **UNICEF TEAMS UP WITH V-DAY CAMPAIGN TO STOP RAPE IN DR CONGO**

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the global movement to end violence against women and girls known as V-Day have launched a new partnership to end rape in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and ensure justice for the victims of this heinous crime (14/4/08).

The new partnership was announced by UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman and playwright and [V-Day](#) founder Eve Ensler on Saturday during V-Day's tenth anniversary celebrations in the US city of New Orleans.

"The goal of the campaign, Stop Raping Our Greatest Resource, Power to The Women and Girls of Democratic Republic of Congo is to stop the rape, empower women and girls and end impunity for these atrocious crimes," [said](#) Ms Veneman. Hundreds of thousands of women and children, aged six months to 80 years of age, have been sexually assaulted in the [DRC](#), where rape has been used as a weapon of war for years.

"It is urgent that we work together to put a stop to these inhumane acts of violence," she stated. The agency, in partnership with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), is assisting thousands of women and girls in the DRC who have been assaulted and raped.

To date, the V-Day movement has raised over \$50 million and educated millions about the issue of violence against women and the efforts to end the scourge. It has reopened shelters and funded over 5,000 community-based anti-violence programs and safe houses.

### **UN ENVOY CONTINUES EFFORTS TO BRING ABOUT PEACE IN UGANDA**

The UN envoy heading efforts to end the conflict that has ravaged northern Uganda for two decades will contact the key parties to assess the way forward after the government and the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) failed last week to sign a permanent peace agreement, a UN spokesperson said (14/4/08).

Joaquim Chissano, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the LRA-Affected Areas, will try to see what can be done now to support the peace process.

"We were obviously expecting a different outcome," a spokesperson said, adding that the UN had yet to make a full assessment of the situation. "In the best of cases, this will be only a temporary setback to the process, but we cannot say at this point."

Ugandan Government forces have been fighting the LRA in the north of the country since the mid-1980s and during the conflict the rebel group has become notorious for its human rights abuses.

A series of accords struck by the two sides earlier this year raised hopes that they could reach a permanent, wide-ranging agreement ending the conflict, and last week LRA leaders were expected to emerge and sign a deal mediated by the Government of Southern Sudan, that did not happen.

## SOUTH AND CENTRAL AMERICA/CARIBBEAN

### **CONDEMNATION OVER MURDER OF UN POLICE OFFICER IN HAITI**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, the Security Council and the UN peacekeeping mission in Haiti have joined together to strongly condemn Saturday's execution-style killing of a Nigerian police officer serving with the operation in the impoverished Caribbean country (14/4/08).

The plainclothes officer, a 36-year-old father, was with three other members of his police unit (FPU) in the Bel-Air district of the capital, Port-au-Prince, when he was dragged from his car and shot dead by unidentified gunmen, according to the mission, known as [MINUSTAH](#).

The murder took place two days after another gun attack on three blue helmets serving with MINUSTAH, and comes amid violent unrest across Haiti following a recent spike in food prices. development, as well as to promote investments and job creation, which, together with the immediate measures announced by the Haitian authorities, constituted the best ways, in the medium-term, to fight against the increase in the cost of living."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26309&Cr=haiti&Cr1=>

### **MEXICAN DRUG TURF WAR CONTINUES**

A drug cartel turf war in Ciudad Juarez, a Mexican city on the US border across from El Paso, Texas, has devolved into what security officials are calling a bloodbath, claiming more than 200 lives so far this year. Mexican federal authorities sent security personnel into the area in March in the hope of stabilising the situation, but the violence continues. [The New York Times](#) (16/4/08).

## AUSTRALIA

### **CONFUSION OVER CHINESE TORCH PRESENCE**

There is more confusion about what role Chinese security officials will play in the Olympic torch relay in Canberra next week, the ABC reported (17/4/08).

ACT police have confirmed three Chinese security officials will run near the torch. Last week Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Chinese officials would play no security role and would stay on a The mission said it has already opened an inquiry into the killing in collaboration with Haitian police officers. [MINUSTAH](#) "will pursue the authors of this abject crime with the strongest determination," it said.

In a statement Mr Ban said he "learned with shock" of the killing of the police officer and offered his condolences to the man's family, his colleagues and the Nigerian Government. He emphasised that peace and stability constituted essential conditions for social and economic bus unless the flame was extinguished.

The ACT police minister Simon Corbell later said the Chinese officials would run outside of a police security cordon and will only have limited access to the torch.

"Policing have made very clear that their only role is to ensure that the flame remains lit and is properly transferred between runners," he said. "They have no security role whatsoever and that will be done entirely by the AFP members of ACT policing."

Australian Olympic organisers remained hopeful on Thursday that there would not be a repeat of European type demonstrations. The chairman of the Torch Relay Organising Committee, Ted Quinlan, says he is aware that a large number of Chinese supporters and pro-Tibetan groups are expected to travel to Canberra.

"On one hand we're happy for positive, peaceful support for the relay, we would like as much support for the relay as can be mustered," he said. "But on the other hand we don't, I think, need to see two groups trying to shout each other down."

## D. HUMAN RIGHTS

### **AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL REPORTS ON DEATH PENALTY TOTALS**

At least 1,200 people were executed in 2007 and many more were killed by the state, in secret, in countries including China, Mongolia and Vietnam, according to Amnesty International (14/4/08).

Amnesty International's yearly statistics, *Death Sentences and Executions in 2007*, was issued on Tuesday and say that at least 1,252 people were executed in 24 countries and at least 3,347 people were sentenced to death in 51 countries. Up to 27,500 people are estimated to be on death row across the world.

The figures also show an increase in executions in a number of countries. Iran executed at least 317 people, Saudi Arabia 143 and Pakistan 135 – in comparison to 177, 39 and 82 executions respectively in 2006.

Eighty-eight per cent of all known executions took place in five countries: China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the US. Saudi Arabia had the highest number of executions per capita, followed by Iran and Libya. Amnesty International has been able to confirm at least 470 executions by China – the highest overall figure. However, the organisation has said that the true figure for China was undoubtedly much higher.

China, which the report refers to as the world's top executioner, classifies the death penalty as a state secret. As the world and Olympic guests are left guessing, only the Chinese authorities know exactly how many people have been killed with state authorisation. REPORT: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/secretcy-surrounds-death-penalty-20080415>

### **US SUPREME COURT UPHOLDS LETHAL INJECTIONS**

The US Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld Kentucky's method of putting criminals to death by lethal injection, not only clearing the way for Kentucky to resume executions but ending an unofficial moratorium in the 35 other states that have the death penalty.

However, Justice [John Paul Stevens](#), while concurring reluctantly with the judgment of the court, wrote that he now believed capital punishment itself was unconstitutional, and that Wednesday's ruling might serve to reignite the debate over whether it should exist in the United States. REPORT: [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/us/16cnd-scotus.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/04/17/us/16cnd-scotus.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)

### **UN FORUM TO FOCUS ON PACIFIC REGION**

Climate change, bio-cultural diversity and livelihoods (stewardship role of indigenous peoples and new challenges) and indigenous languages will be the main themes at the seventh session of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII), at UN Headquarters from April 21 to May 2. Year 2008 was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly as the International Year of Languages (A/RES/61/266). The regional focus this year will be on the Pacific.

There will also be discussion on how the forum will respond to its new mandate under Article 42 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly last September (A/RES/61/295).

The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was established by the UN Economic and Social Council in 2000 to provide expert advice and recommendations on indigenous issues to the UN system through the council; raise awareness and promote integration and coordination of relevant activities within the UN system; and to disseminate information on indigenous issues.

This session the forum will be especially significant since it is the first to take place after the adoption of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which emphasises the rights of indigenous people. DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unpfii/>

## NORTH ASIA

### **SECRET TRIALS FOR AFGHANS ALLEGED**

Dozens of Afghan men held by the United States at Bagram Air Base and Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, were being tried in secretive Afghan criminal proceedings in Kabul, based mainly on allegations forwarded by the US military, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (11/4/08).

"These are no-witness paper trials that deny the defendants a fundamental fair-trial right to challenge the evidence and mount a defence," said Sahr MuhammedAlly, a lawyer for the advocacy group Human Rights First. "So any convictions you get are fundamentally flawed." REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/10/1207420587867.html>

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST PAKISTANI WOMEN**

A Pakistani human rights organisation says violence against women more than doubled to over 4,000 cases last year, the BBC reported (15/4/08). It also says that more suicide attacks took place in the country in 2007 than in all previous years combined.

Conservative social practices and religious extremism are identified as the main cause of gender inequalities. Islamic militants have increasingly resorted to suicide attacks to outgun the government troops they are fighting in the north-west.

The report from the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan (HRCP) says 4,276 cases of women's rights abuses during the year have been recorded. In 2006, the Commission had recorded 1,821 cases of women's rights abuses - itself an increase over 2005.

But the report calls these statistics "a gross understatement", saying "many cases go unreported or are hushed up". It says it is also difficult to gather follow-up information on reported incidents, such as whether the perpetrators of violence were arrested, or how their court trials went.

The report says 636 women became victims of honour killing, 731 were raped and 736 kidnapped. Many more women were killed for reasons other than honour - burnt by their in-laws, sexually harrassed at their homes or work places, or subjected to domestic violence

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7349167.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7349167.stm)

### **PAKISTAN CLOSES REFUGEE CAMP**

Thousands of Afghan refugees who have taken shelter in a United Nations-backed camp in Pakistan ever since the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979 face an uncertain future after Pakistan closed down the settlement this week. Authorities cited concerns about possible extremists, as well as economic factors, as reasons for closing the Jalozai camp in northwestern Pakistan. [The Washington Post](#) (4/16)

## AUSTRALIA

### **HANEEF: POWERFUL 'EVIDENCE OF INNOCENCE' SURFACES**

Powerful evidence of Mohamed Haneef's innocence has emerged at the Old Bailey in London, evidence the Australian Federal Police and the Commonwealth Director of Prosecutions appear to have ignored in holding the Gold Coast doctor for questioning last year and then charging him with a terrorism offence, David Marr claims in the Sydney Morning Herald (14/4/08).

"The case against Dr Haneef always centred on allegations that his second cousin Sabeel Ahmed, a doctor practicing in England, was part of a terrorist organisation. But at the Old Bailey on Friday Mr Justice Calvert-Smith accepted there was "no sign" of Ahmed "being an extremist or party to extremist views," he writes.

"Evidence for this has been in the hands of British police from the early days of their investigation into failed car bombings carried out by Ahmed's brother Kafeel last year. But it only saw the light

of day in the Old Bailey last Friday. Its publication raises difficult questions for Australian police and the Commonwealth DPP," the newspaper reported.

DETAILS: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/13/1208024990541.html>

### **PUSH FOR OVERHAUL OF LAWS ON TERRORISM: REPORT**

The country's intelligence watchdog, Ian Carnell, has called on the Federal Government to make substantial changes to anti-terrorism laws, saying some of them can hinder counter-terrorism efforts by unnecessarily antagonising Muslims.

In an interview with the Sydney Morning *Herald* (12/4/08), Mr Carnell, the Inspector-General of Intelligence and Security, was reported as saying there was a strong case for reviewing the strict rules that keep "national security" information secret in trials.

Mr Carnell has recommended the repeal of the vaguely worded offence of "associating" with a terrorism group, which carries jail terms of up to 10 years.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/11/1207856832385.html>

### **RETHINKING SITUATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**

In response to a question without notice from Senator Kerry Nettle about work rights and Medicare access for asylum seekers, Minister for Immigration and Citizenship Senator Evans replied, "I think there has been concern around the parliament that a number of these people are reliant on charities to live.

"They receive allowances to buy staples to allow them to live, because they are out in the community but they are not allowed to work, so they have no means of supporting themselves. I think everyone around the chamber would accept that is a very unsatisfactory state of affairs."

He said a review had canvassed those issues and that situation remained. "Protection **visa** applicants who hold a bridging **visa** may be eligible to work and access Medicare if they applied for a protection **visa** within 45 days of arriving in Australia - the 45-day rule. As I understand it, about 34 per cent of protection **visa** applicants in the community hold a bridging **visa** without work rights ... I do think it is an unsatisfactory state of affairs. I am trying to find a solution to this issue."

Asked whether the government was considering committing to a more substantial review of the bridging **visa** system so that work rights and access to Medicare were automatically granted to allow people to support themselves while waiting for their **visa** status to be resolved, Senator Evans said, "We do need to have a situation that is much more coherent and caring than one which does plan for people to be destitute out in the community without the capacity to work and earn a living or be in receipt of benefits. The solution to this issue is very much, I think, focussed around people's work rights and access to benefits. I do not know about a broader review. I am very focused on trying to fix this issue. It is something that I regard as a priority and hope to have resolved, at least in part, fairly quickly."

DETAILS: Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre ASRC, on 03 93266066; F 03 93265199; [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au).

### **MIND THE GAP: INDIGENOUS LIVES IMPROVING, 'BUT TOO SLOWLY'**

Ahead of this weekend's 2020 Summit ANU academics are warning that research shows significant changes need to be made to Indigenous affairs policy to 'close the gaps' but that the "narrative of failure" that dominates discussion on the area was unfounded (17/4/08).

The research was undertaken by ANU academics Professor Jon Altman, Director of the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, 2020 Summit delegate, Fellow Dr Boyd Hunter and Research Fellow Nicholas Biddle. They used, for the first time, available census data to chart likely timeframes for 'closing the gaps' between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Professor Altman said that the findings show that the picture on the successes and failures of Indigenous affairs policy was much more complex than widely thought.

"Using key indicators to measure employment status, income status, household size and home ownership, education and health status, we found that most socioeconomic outcomes are better now than 35 years ago. These results are at odds with the narrative of failure around Indigenous policy," he said. "For other variables, including labour force participation, median income and home ownership our estimates indicate that closing the gaps will take much longer. For a number there is a divergence in outcomes, suggesting that the gaps will never close without significant policy changes."

Professor Altman said that some big questions needed to be addressed at this weekend's summit to put the country on the right road to closing the gaps. "The summit needs to address questions such as is there a need to confer commercially-valuable property rights alongside land and native title customary rights? And how do we learn from the successes of the past 35 years that have delivered much progress, but too slowly to meet national expectations?" he said.

PAPER: <http://www.anu.edu.au/caepr/ClosingTheGaps.pdf>

DETAILS: Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office on 02 6125 5575/0416 249 245.

## AFRICA

### **CALL FOR MBEKI TO STAND DOWN ON ZIMBABWE**

Zimbabwe's Opposition leader has called for South African President Thabo Mbeki to be "relieved of his duties" as mediator in Zimbabwe after last month's elections, the ABC reported (18/4/08).

"We want to thank President Mbeki for all of his efforts, but President Mbeki needs to be relieved of his duties," Morgan Tsvangirai said.

Mr Tsvangirai said he had asked Zambian President Levy Mwanawasa, the current chairman of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), to begin a new mediation effort. Mr Tsvangirai's comments came after Mr Mbeki said he saw "no crisis" in Zimbabwe where there have still been no results from presidential elections held on March 29.

REPORT: <http://abc.com.au/news/stories/2008/04/18/2220406.htm?section=justin>

### **CONGO: ICRC STEPS UP EFFORTS TO HELP PEOPLE IN NORTH AND SOUTH KIVU**

The ICRC has been stepping up its humanitarian activities in response to escalation of the conflict in eastern parts of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) during the latter part of last year (11/4/08). It reports that despite hopes generated by the Goma Peace Conference in January, the lack of security has continued to have a devastating impact on civilians in many parts of North and South Kivu.

To finance the increase in activities, the ICRC is asking donors for an additional eight million Swiss francs, bringing its total 2008 budget for the DRC to 45 million francs (more than 46 million US dollars).

"The current insecurity is mainly due to skirmishes between armed groups and attacks on the civilian population, marked by a high number of violations of international humanitarian law," says Max Hadorn, head of the ICRC delegation in Kinshasa. "Without improved security, people displaced by the fighting and the violence will not be able to return home."

The ICRC plans to work with the Red Cross Society of the DRC to provide more than 37,000 displaced people with food for three months and to distribute essential household items to 115,000 displaced people. It also aims at distributing seed and agricultural tools to 30,000 civilians returning home and 10,000 households hosting displaced families, to allow them to grow sufficient food.

The organisation will also continue to provide surgical expertise and additional medical supplies to hospitals treating the wounded, and to expand its support to victims of sexual violence. It will also dedicate additional resources to providing clean water in areas that have received a large influx of displaced people.

The ICRC continues to document allegations of violations of international humanitarian law and visit detainees, helping those, including children and ex-child soldiers, separated by the conflict. DETAILS: Pierre Emmanuel Ducruet, ICRC Kinshasa, on + 243 81 700 60 60; [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org); Sydney Support Office on 02 9388 9039 F 61 2 9388 9042; [sydney.syd@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.syd@icrc.org)

### **SIX CHILDREN REUNITED WITH FAMILIES IN SUDAN**

Six children, out of the 103 caught up in the Arche de Zoe affair, rejoined their families in Sudan this week, under the auspices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

An ICRC aircraft took the children from Abeche, in Chad, to Al Junainah, the capital of West Darfur, near the Sudanese-Chadian border, where they were handed to waiting parents.

The reunion took place at the request of the children's families, and with the formal consent of the Sudanese and Chadian authorities. In accordance with ICRC standard working procedures, the identities of the children and their parents were verified, and the best interests of the children taken into account. The ICRC's sub-delegation in Al Junainah was in regular contact with the children's families for several months.

The ICRC registers unaccompanied children in camps for refugees and internally displaced persons in Sudan, Chad and other countries; whenever possible, reuniting them with their families. The ICRC's tracing department also restores links between family members who have lost contact with one another as a result of the conflict and of other situations of violence.

## **MIDDLE EAST**

### **SAUDI WOMEN'S BASKETBALL PLAYERS SCORE POINTS FOR RIGHTS**

In the Saudi Arabian city of Jiddah, hundreds of women are playing basketball in local leagues, but some say they are disappointed the regime blocks them and all other Saudi female athletes from competing internationally, including in the Olympics. The Saudi Government's adherence to a strict version of Islam prevents women from enjoy many everyday rights. Women's and girls' participation in sports is one key aspect of a brewing rights debate in the country. [The Washington Post](#) (15/4/08).

## **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **FOOD**

#### **BAN WARNS FOOD CRISIS COULD AFFECT SECURITY**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for both immediate and long-term measures to tackle the growing global food crisis, warning that it could not only push millions of people deeper into poverty but also have larger political and security implications (14/4/08).

"The rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the world has reached emergency proportions," he [told](#) a joint meeting in New York of the UN Economic and Social Council ([ECOSOC](#)), the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)).

"We need not only short-term emergency measures to meet urgent critical needs and avert starvation in many regions across the world, but also a significant increase in long-term productivity in food grain production, he said, citing the recent steep rise in prices and [World Bank](#) warnings that the crisis could mean "seven lost years" in the fight against global poverty.

"The international community will also need to take urgent and concerted action in order to avert the larger political and security implications of this growing crisis. The UN needs to examine ways to lead a process for the immediate and longer-term responses to this global problem," he said.

Turning to the meeting's five key themes, Mr Ban called for building consensus around measures on development financing that would lead to more stable and predictable long-term resource flows to developing countries.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26310&Cr=food&Cr1=prices>

### **BANDITRY PROMPTS UN TO CUT FOOD RATIONS FOR DARFUR**

The World Food Program (WFP) says attacks by armed bandits on humanitarian convoys in Darfur are forcing the United Nations to sharply reduce monthly food rations to almost 3 million people in western Sudan, the ABC reported (18/4/08).

The constant threat of attack by armed men has led some agencies to withdraw and others to work under security conditions they say would not normally be tolerated. WFP has had 60 trucks attacked since the beginning of the year with 26 drivers still missing and one killed last month.

### **ECOSOC TO DEVISE PLAN TO MEET FOOD CRISIS**

The president of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has announced plans to hold a meeting of the council early next month to discuss how to respond to the growing food crisis around the world (16/4/08). Protests and tensions have already broken out in many countries, including Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Egypt, Senegal, Morocco and Haiti, because of the surging cost of living.

Ambassador Léo Mérorès of Haiti, the current [ECOSOC](#) president, made the decision after consultations with the Bureau of the Council and with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Earlier this week, Mr Ban told a joint meeting of ECOSOC, the Bretton Woods financial institutions, the World Trade Organisation ([WTO](#)) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development ([UNCTAD](#)) that it was time for both short- and long-term measures to deal with the rising cost of basic foods.

"The rapidly escalating crisis of food availability around the world has reached emergency proportions," he said.

### **BUSH ORDERS \$200M RELEASE FOR EMERGENCY FOOD AID**

US President Bush has ordered the release of \$200 million in emergency aid to help countries where the soaring cost of basic food has spurred riots and instability. The announcement follows an appeal to the international community by World Bank President Robert Zoellick.

"The international community must fill the at least a \$500 million food gap identified by the UN's World Food Program to meet emergency needs," he said. "Governments should be able to come up with this assistance and come up with it now."

The US is the world's largest provider of food aid, delivering more than \$2.1 billion in food aid to 78 countries last year, the White House said in a statement. Riots from Haiti to Bangladesh to Egypt over surging food prices have brought the issue into sharp focus.

"This is the world's big story," said Jeffrey Sachs, director of Columbia University's Earth Institute. "The finance ministers were in shock, almost in panic this weekend," he told CNN, in a reference to top economic officials who gathered in Washington. "There are riots all over the world in the poor countries ... and of course our own poor are feeling it in the United States." Mr Zoellick said the rising costs could mean "seven lost years" in the fight against worldwide poverty.

In an opening speech to finance ministers, Mr Zoellick said in just two months "rice prices have skyrocketed to near historical levels, rising by around 75 per cent globally and more in some markets, with more likely to come. In Bangladesh, a 2kg bag of rice now consumed about half of the daily income of a poor family and the price of wheat had jumped 120 per cent in the past year.

### **BANGLADESH FACES 'REFUGEE NIGHTMARE'**

Abdul Majid has been forced to move 22 times in as many years, a victim of the annual floods that ravage Bangladesh, Environmental News Network/ Reuters reported (13/4/08).

There are millions like Majid, 65, in Bangladesh and in the future there could be many millions more if scientists' predictions of rising seas and more intense droughts and storms come true.

"Bangladesh is already facing consequences of a sea level rise, including salinity and unusual height of tidal water," said Mizanur Rahman, a research fellow with the London-based International Institute for Environmental Development. "In the future, millions of people will lose their land and houses. Their survival will be threatened," he told Reuters.

Experts say a third of Bangladesh's coastline could be flooded if the sea rises one meter in the next 50 years, creating an additional 20 million Bangladeshis displaced from their homes and farms. This is about the same as Australia's population.

REPORT: <http://www.enn.com/ecosystems/article/34598>

### **LACK OF FUNDING COULD PUT HALF A MILLION IN CHAD AT RISK: UN**

UN humanitarian officials have repeated their appeal for funds to support nearly half a million refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Chad, noting that less than 20 per cent of the \$290 million requested last December has been provided (14/4/08).

Only \$51m has been received so far for the 2008 Humanitarian Appeal for Chad, which covers 70 projects proposed by eight UN agencies and 14 non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes said he was still hopeful that donors would respond generously to the appeal. "But if funding trends do not significantly improve in the coming months, this could have devastating consequences for nearly half a million people who heavily rely on humanitarian assistance for their survival," he said. In addition to the more than 180,000 IDPs who have fled internal conflict in the east of the country, Chad also hosts over a quarter of a million refugees from the Sudan, and more than 57,000 refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR).

Solofo Ramarason, head of the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) field office in Chad's eastern town of Abéché, cautioned that if UN life-saving operations were ever interrupted, whether due to lack of funding or to insecurity, the current crisis would soon deteriorate seriously.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26325&Cr=chad&Cr1=>

### **NORTH KOREA AGAIN FACES FOOD SHORTAGES**

North Korea is facing severe food and humanitarian crises as a result of poor crop yields that have driven up food prices, the World Food Program said Wednesday. WFP officials said significant external food assistance will be needed, Reuters reported. (16/4/08).

REPORT: <http://www.reuters.com/article/worldNews/idUSSEO21096520080416> [Reuters](#)

### **HUNGER NIBBLES PROTECTIONISM**

The surge in world food prices is accomplishing what seven years of trade talks haven't: knocking down import barriers, trade expert Arvind Subramanian, said this week.

The Doha Round of global trade negotiations had stalled since 2001 because developing nations refused to lower import tariffs that protect their farmers, and rich countries would not give up farm price supports. Now import duties were being slashed from Brazil to Burkina Faso in response to prices that the World Bank says have risen by 83 per cent the past three years while subsidies in the US and Europe are falling.

"Food prices have done for import liberalisation what Doha wouldn't have been able to achieve for a very long time," said Arvind Subramanian, a trade expert at the Peterson Institute for International Economics in Washington.

Since early 2007, when cereal prices began rising, developing nations have taken measures to increase imports. India removed a 36 per cent import tariff on wheat flour; Indonesia eliminated duties on wheat and soybeans; Peru jettisoned tariffs on wheat and corn; Turkey cut import taxes on wheat from 130 per cent to 8 per cent and on barley from 100 per cent to zero, and Mongolia scrapped its value-added tax on imported wheat and flour.

REPORT: <http://business.smh.com.au/hunger-nibbles-protectionism/20080414-2641.html>

### **INFLATION IN ZIMBABWE SOARS TO 164,900 PER CENT**

Inflation in Zimbabwe, already the world's highest, soared to 164,900 per cent year-on-year in February, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) said, according to Reuters (17/4/08).

"The year-on-year inflation rate (annual percentage change) for the month of February 2008 ... stood at 164,900.3 per cent, gaining 64,320.1 percentage points on the January rate of 100,580.2 per cent," the CSO said. Zimbabwe's economy was near collapse, with chronic food shortages and 80 per cent unemployment.

### **PROTESTS AGAINST FOOD AND FUEL PRICES**

The UN Security Council on Monday strongly condemned the killing of a Nigerian police officer of the UN mission in Haiti and urged Haitian authorities to take all necessary steps to bring those responsible to justice, the Caribbean Net News reported this week..

In a statement read by South Africa's UN ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, the council chair this month, the 15-member body "condemned in the strongest terms the murder" of the 36-year-old Nigerian peacekeeper.

UN chief Ban Ki-moon appealed for calm and urges all demonstrators to refrain from any further acts of violence. Thousands had taken to the streets this week to protest food and fuel prices.

REPORT: <http://www.caribbeannetnews.com/news-7201--2-2--.html>

### **UN DISTRIBUTES 14 TONS OF FOOD FROM BRAZIL**

The Brazilian contingent of the United Nations mission in Haiti is distributing 14 tons of food to more than 3,000 families in Port-au-Prince, the capital, following widespread protests over rising food prices in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere.

A gift from the Brazilian Government, rice, beans, sugar and oil are being distributed, especially to children, and will continue until the weekend in the city's poorest quarters, such as Cité Soleil, Bel-Air and Cité Militaire.

The officer in charge, Colonel Paolo Cruz, acknowledged that the resources were limited but said he hoped the gesture would help to bring peace to Cité Soleil and other areas of the capital.

"Even a drop of water can make a difference here," said a nun, Maria Aparecida, who has spent 10 years running a Cité Soleil health centre, where 60 children are recovering from malnutrition.

The UN Stabilisation Mission in Haiti ([MINUSTAH](#)), set up in 2004 to help re-establish peace after an insurgency forced then president Jean-Bertrand Aristide into exile, has also focused on a host of humanitarian issues.

## HEALTH

### **YEMEN CONCERN OVER NEONATAL TETANUS DEATHS**

Health authorities in Yemen have launched a new national campaign to immunize nearly 1 million women against neonatal tetanus in the hopes of cutting maternal and newborn mortality rates.

[IRINNews.org](http://IRINNews.org) (14/4/08).

### **BRAZIL GRAPPLES WITH DENGUE OUTBREAK**

Heavy rainfall in Brazil has created ample breeding ground for mosquitoes carrying dengue fever, resulting in over 75,000 infections and dozens of deaths since January. Authorities have begun to identify and destroy breeding locations after months of delay over whether the scourge came under city, state or federal jurisdiction. [The New York Times](http://The New York Times) (15/4/08).

## G. MEDIA MATTERS

### **PUBLISHER SHOT DEAD BUT PHILIPPINES MEDIA 'WILL NOT BE COWED'**

Newspaper publisher and columnist Benefredo Acabal, who was shot dead by an unidentified gunman in Pasig, is the first Filipino journalist killed in 2008 and the 56th killed under the Arroyo administration, the IFJ reported (7/4/08). He published the tabloid *Pilipin Newsmen* and wrote under the pen name of Freddie Yanco. He had four young children, the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) reported.

In a tribute to Mr Acabal, the NUJP said that the manner of his killing, in the heart of metropolitan Manila, highlighted the extent of the culture of impunity against journalists and activists in the Philippines. The NUJP expressed its dismay that the death toll of journalists under the Arroyo administration has surpassed the toll under 14 years of the Marcos dictatorship, and continued to rise. Fears about the lack of official action on the killings of journalists and the government's repeated attempts to muzzle the press had scared journalists into ultimate censorship, according to the NUJP.

"For so long as this administration fails to arrest, prosecute and convict the murderers, for so long as it persists to threaten us with laws designed to curtail the exercise of our calling, the blood of our colleagues will stain this government as much as it does the actual killers and masterminds," the NUJP said.

"We call on the public, our audiences and readers, to stand up with us to demand respect and protection for press freedom and the people's right to know. Whatever the imperfections of the Philippine press are, it continues to serve as a crucial vehicle for the people to get the information they need to make informed decisions about their individual and collective lives.

"As we prepare to commemorate World Press Freedom Day next month – commemorate, not celebrate – we once again declare, we will not be cowed."

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

### **REUTERS CAMERAMAN DIES IN GAZA ATTACK**

Three Israeli soldiers and 17 Palestinians, one a cameraman for an international news agency, were killed as Israeli troops, backed by helicopters, stormed into the Gaza Strip, the ABC reported (17/4/08). Fadel Shana, 23, a Reuters cameraman, was critically wounded when a missile hit his vehicle in the central Gaza Strip. He died after being taken to hospital, the head of Gaza emergency services Dr Muawiya Hassanein said.

An AFP photographer driving behind the Reuters jeep, which had TV and press stickers plastered across its doors and roof, said the vehicle burst into flames after a missile slammed into it. When a group of photographers rushed to try to rescue their colleague a second missile struck the area, he said.

## **PAKISTAN DROPS MEDIA RESTRICTIONS**

Pakistan's new government has moved to withdraw restrictions on the media that were imposed by President Pervez Musharraf last year, the BBC reported (11/4/08). Minister Sherry Rahman has introduced a parliamentary Bill proposing to end the ban on live broadcasts. It also proposes to scrap punishments for journalists who "defame" the president, the government or the army. Radio and TV news, and any criticism of the government, were banned when emergency rule was imposed in November. Journalists have protested against the media restrictions. "The amendments will remove the entire apparatus of restrictions imposed on the press," Information Minister Sherry Rahman said. REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7342199.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7342199.stm)

Attacks against journalists in Karachi were reported (11/4/08). The Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) said the situation for Karachi-based journalists was dangerous after three journalists were injured while covering confrontations between rival political groups on April 9. Three journalists were injured, including a camera-woman from GEO television whose arm was broken. Four cameras were snatched and two media vehicles were torched by protesters as clashes between two groups of lawyers turned into a riot.

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

**IRAQ:** A British journalist kidnapped in Basra more than two months ago was freed yesterday when, by chance, Iraqi troops searched the house where he was being held, the London Guardian reported (15/4/08). Richard Butler, a freelance photographer working for CBS News, was found with a sack over his head and his hands tied. He and his interpreter were abducted by gunmen from the Sultan Palace Hotel in the centre of Basra on February 10, while working for the US television network. The Iraqi interpreter was freed three days later.

REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/apr/15/iraq.iraqandthedia>

**AFGHANISTAN:** A second attack on the home of a female radio journalist in Herat province, Afghanistan, was reported this week (15/4/08). The Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) said unidentified gunmen threw a grenade inside radio producer Khadija Ahadi's home. No one was hurt. Ms Khadija is the deputy editor-in-chief of Radio Faryad and a producer of a talk show addressing political and social issues in Afghanistan. She also runs two programs called *Oaqaikay be Sernawisht* (Yacht Without Destiny) and *Masoulin Kuja Tashrif Darand* (Where are the Officials?) in which authority figures are expected to address complaints from the public. She has received anonymous calls over the past two months warning her to leave her job. On April 6, part of her home was destroyed in a similar attack. Radio Faryad, an independent radio station in Herat City was established a year ago by Herat University journalism student graduates. Broadcasting 12 hours a day on FM 88.4, the station is known for its critical commentary of the government. Khalil Amiri, the station's owner and chief editor, told the AIJA that he had been questioned by the National Security Directorate on several occasions about the content of interviews and information in the station's programs.

The Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA), with the IFJ, reported growing concern about the bowing to pressure of the Afghan Government to hardliners seeking to obstruct Afghan journalists' hard-won right to freedom of expression and an independent media (11/4/08). AIJA has called for public discussion about freedom of expression and the media following a Ministry of Information and Culture warning to four private television stations this week to stop broadcasting five Indian soap operas by April 15. AIJA is concerned about journalists being targeted by groups opposed to discussion about the role of Islam and women in Afghan society.

A death sentence has been imposed on Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh, 23, a journalism student and reporter for the *Jahan-e Naw*. Parvez, who is accused of blasphemy for allegedly downloading and disseminating materials about the role of women in Islam. He has been transferred to a Kabul prison while his sentence is appealed. The role and portrayal of women in the media is a component of AIJA's training program under the IFJ-AIJA Media for Democracy project. Twenty-eight journalists, including 12 women, attended the fourth and final workshop in the series in

Asadabad, the capital of Kunar province over April 2/3. It was the first time that a large group of women journalists have attended such training in a remote provincial area, the AIJA said. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**INDONESIA:** The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AIJ), with the IFJ, expressed concern over the Indonesian Government's censorship of the video-sharing website YouTube (11/4/08). According to AJI, the Ministry for Communication and Information Technology instructed all Internet Service Providers (ISPs) and Network Access Providers (NAPs) in the country to block access to YouTube after a ministry directive to remove an anti-Islamic film, *Fitna*, by Danish politician Geert Wilders, from its site. The company has not complied with the request. Indonesia's secular government is reportedly worried that access to the video in Muslim majority Indonesia could threaten the country's inter-faith harmony. Several ISPs in Indonesia, including XL, BigNet, D-Net, FastNet IndoNet and Speedy Telkom, complied with the government's request by blocking access to the site and blogs that show the film, AJI reported on April 7. With AJI, the IFJ called on the Indonesian Government to recognise the request to block material infringed the rights of internet users and was in conflict with the principles of freedom of expression and the right to information. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**CANTONESE BROADCASTING:** The IFJ is urging the US Congress to maintain funding for Cantonese broadcasting by Voice of America (VOA) and Radio Free Asia (RFA) in the coming financial year. The Cantonese services by VOA and RFA broadcast to more than 130 million people in Guangdong, Guangxi and Hainan provinces in mainland China. The IFJ said most Cantonese speakers in mainland China relied heavily on their access to foreign media to obtain accurate and fair news coverage. IFJ believed about 20 staff at VOA and RFA could be affected by the proposed cuts. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**CHINA:** The IFJ has condemned actions by officials of the Beijing Municipal Detention Centre in denying human rights activist Hu Jia the right to lodge an appeal against his jail sentence (16/4/08). Mr Hu was sentenced on April 3 to three-and-a-half years' jail and one year's denial of political rights for making comments to foreign media and publishing articles on *Boxun*, a banned Chinese-language website based in the US, critical of China's record on democracy and human rights. According to Section 180, Chapter 3, Part 3, of the Criminal Procedure of the Chinese Constitution, all defendants have the right to appeal. Mr Hu's lawyer, Li Fangping, told the IFJ that he was not allowed to see Mr Hu on April 13, the last possible day to lodge an appeal. Mr Li had planned to meet Mr Hu to seek his approval to lodge an appeal. He said he would apply by mail for medical parole for Mr Hu, whose wife, Zeng Jinyan, was not permitted to visit Mr Hu and was extremely worried about his health as he has suffered liver cirrhosis for two years. DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

## H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### **NATIONS SPLIT ON WAYS TO TACKLE HUNGER ALERT**

Sixty countries, backed by the World Bank and most UN bodies, have called for changes in world farming to avert increasing regional food shortages, escalating prices and growing environmental problems, John Vidal from London, writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (17/4/08). But in a move that has led to Australia, Canada, the US and Britain not yet endorsing the report, the authors say GM (genetically modified) technology is not a quick fix to feed the world's poor and growing bio-fuel crops for automobiles threatens to increase worldwide malnutrition. REPORT <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/16/1208025280917.html>

### **RISING PRICES HURT THE POOREST OF THE POOR**

A comment piece in the London Daily Telegraph (15/4/08) states that from the villages of Bangladesh to the slums of Haiti, millions of the world's poorest people have been cast into even greater penury by sharply rising food prices. At a stroke, this swift and devastating change in the

global economy - which has gone almost unnoticed in the rich world - has inflicted immense suffering ... The only answer is for the rich world to subsidise their food supplies.  
Telegraph, London/ <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/14/1208025091003.html>

### **BUSH'S THIRD CLIMATE CHANGE FAKE-OUT**

Taking a brief break from all the papal pomp, President Bush today rolls out yet another wave of climate-change flim-flam, Dan Froomkin in the Washington Post (16/4/08) writes. "It took so long for Bush to even acknowledge the human role in global warming that whenever he even mentions the topic, some people act like it's big news ... Bush's trick on climate change is to wait until others are about to embrace mandatory limits on greenhouse gases, then make a major speech about goals and process, without any specifics on measures or penalties. His planned speech this afternoon recalls his two earlier attempts to muddy the debate and buy time."

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/04/16/BL2008041601732.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpi src=newsletter>

### **DEBT TO JIMMY CARTER - a Haaretz editorial**

The government of Israel is boycotting Jimmy Carter, the 39th president of the United States, during his visit here this week. Ehud Olmert, who has not managed to achieve any peace agreement during his public life, and who even tried to undermine negotiations in the past, "could not find the time" to meet the American president who is a signatory to the peace agreement with Egypt . President Shimon Peres agreed to meet Carter, but made sure that he let it be known that he reprimanded his guest for wishing to meet with Khaled Meshal, as if the achievements of the Carter Centre fall short of those of the Peres Centre for Peace. Carter, who himself said he set out to achieve peace between Israel and Egypt from the day he assumed office, worked incessantly toward that goal and two years after becoming president succeeded - was declared persona non grata by Israel. Haaretz.com, the online edition of Haaretz Newspaper in Israel  
EDITORIAL: <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/974893.html>

### **JOE STIGLITZ ON HOW THE IRAQ WAR IS WRECKING THE ECONOMY**

Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz spoke to Foreign Policy Magazine (April) about Wall Street bailouts, America's mountain of debt, and what US taxpayers will end up paying for Iraq. What does \$3 trillion mean for the average U.S. taxpayer? Joseph Stiglitz says "If you divide it by the [number of] US households, it comes out to around \$25,000 [per household]. It's a lot of money. But we actually talk about a range of total costs, between \$3 trillion and \$5 trillion.

INTERVIEW: <http://www.foreignpolicy.com?email=judycnn@yahoo.com.au>

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **STRONG UN LINK OF AUSTRALIA'S FIRST WOMAN GOVERNOR GENERAL**

The present Governor of Queensland, Quentin Bryce, will succeed Major General Michael Jeffery as the next governor-general of Australia.

In a statement this week, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Ms Bryce had an outstanding record of service to the entire Australian community, having enjoyed a rich and dynamic career as a lawyer, academic and senior public office holder.

A former member of Australian Delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Commission, her other roles have included Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner, inaugural director of the Queensland Women's Information Service and founding chairperson and CEO of the National Childcare Accreditation Council. Ms Bryce will be Australia's first female governor-general.

In a vote of thanks to speakers Palestinian Wafa Abdel Rahman and Israeli Romy Shapira, at the March UNIFEM Breakfast, in Brisbane, held to mark International Women's Day, Ms Bryce said that 'peace' was a word that resonated in our collective consciousness.

But the truth was that “peace in itself will not deliver a new world, fresh and crisp, into our hands. Beyond the ceasefire, peace is simply the space in which we draw breath and begin again,” she said.

Peace required “women like Wafa Abdel Rahman and Romy Shapira. Bright, ambitious, assiduous and brave, you embody the spirit of women’s activism, capacity and creativity. You know firsthand the appalling cost to women of war. You’ve seen their victimhood; their lives ravaged and mutilated; their voices silenced. You understand the vitality and vast potential of women’s participation in peace; largely untapped, yet steadily flowing, gathering momentum at the grassroots.”

“Standing with them, you rise above entrenched injustice and the blindness of revenge to shine in dark places. In the midst of bloodshed upon bloodshed; outrage upon outrage, you stake your lives on peace.” SPEECH: [http://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/the\\_governor/unifem.htm](http://www.govhouse.qld.gov.au/the_governor/unifem.htm)

### **PACIFIC SPECIALISTS GATHER AT AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL UNIVERSITY**

The Australian National University is hosting a large gathering of Pacific specialists starting Friday (18/21) at an international conference to foster connections between Pacific Studies research, education and outreach activities.

Oceanic Connections is the second conference of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies, a national organisation founded at the ANU in 2004.

The conference brings together members of Pacific communities, scholars and teachers, librarians, museum experts and performers from all over Australia as well as from Denmark , Fiji , Hawai’i , New Caledonia , New Zealand , Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu . Discussions and papers are considering such themes as the changing trade scene in the South Pacific, the Fiji coup and constitutional changes in Tonga . Keynote speakers include Dame Carol Kidu, PNG Member of Parliament, and Ralph Regenvanu, Director of the Vanuatu Cultural Council.

DETAILS: <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/tpc/oceanicconnections/>

### **TO LOOK AT COASTAL SHIPPING**

The House of Representatives Infrastructure and Transport Committee is holding a series of public hearings on coastal shipping policy and regulation, beginning on April 17 in the Jubilee Room, NSW Parliament, Macquarie Street, Sydney. The committee will continue hearings on April 21 at Room G3, Parliament Committee Offices, 55 St Andrew’s Place, Melbourne.

DETAILS: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/itrdlg>; Webcast live (audio only)

on: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>; <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/itrdlg>

BACKGROUND: Secretariat on 02 6277 2352 and [itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:itrdlg.reps@aph.gov.au).

### **FORCE NEEDED IN CASE OF COLLAPSE OF INTERNATIONAL ORDER**

Australia should build a defence force equipped to handle a conventional war in case there was a collapse of the international order in Asia, it was reported in the Sydney Morning Herald (14/4/08).

Australia should also urgently bolster the study of regional languages, establish a foreign policy more independent of the US, and invest more resources in its diplomatic corps, given problems such as climate change require collective, not bilateral, solutions.

These ideas were published by the Australian National University's Department of International Relations before next weekend's 2020 Summit. In a series of keynote papers, nine ANU scholars suggest how the Australian Government could best conduct the activist middle-power diplomacy the prime minister has said he wants to utilise, while maximising close ties with the US and a place in the region. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/13/1208024990574.html>

#### **FOUR MAJOR DEFENCE PROJECTS UNDER SCRUTINY**

The Federal parliament's Public Works Committee is conducting inquiries into the following works proposed by the Department of Defence in the Northern Territory: Robertson Barracks Redevelopment, Darwin (\$72.1m); RAAF Base Darwin Redevelopment, Darwin (\$49.8m); Airborne Early Warning and Control Facilities, RAAF Base Tindal (\$64.2m); and RAAF Base Tindal Redevelopment, Tindal (\$58.7m).

Committee chairman Mark Butler MP said the combined value of these four projects was estimated at \$244.8 million and had implications for both the local community and Australia's future defence capability. The committee will travel to Darwin on April 16 and Katherine on April 17 to inspect the proposed works and conduct public hearings.

DETAILS: <http://www.aph.gov.au/pwc> and secretariat on 02 6277 4636/ 0434 567 521.

#### **CHINA CALLS FOR A PEOPLE'S ARMY TO MARCH ON CANBERRA TO DEFEND TORCH**

Thousands of Chinese Australians are being asked to rally and defend the Olympic torch from Tibetan "splittists", "scum" and "running dogs" when it arrives in Canberra next week, THE Sydney Morning Herald reported (16/4/08).

The mass campaign is being organised by community leaders in Sydney, Melbourne and Canberra, while the Chinese Embassy is also said to be actively supporting a peaceful show of strength.

One Canberra-based student organiser, Zhang Rongan, said he expected more than 10,000 patriotic Chinese to go to the capital when the torch arrives on April 24. He was arranging "strong men" to protect other torch defenders against violent attacks from pro-Tibet or Falun Gong forces, adding there would be one nurse or doctor on site for every 100 protesters.

Chinese nationals and many ethnic Chinese worldwide have been angered by television news footage of pro-Tibetan protesters in London and Paris "attacking" the Olympic torch, which they see as the ultimate symbol of China's re-emergence in the world.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/04/15/1208025190049.html>

#### **TORCH RELAY BRINGS BURNING LEGAL QUESTIONS**

Two ANU academics have warned that legal clarification might be needed to establish the precise role Chinese Olympic officials play when they accompany the Olympic torch as it makes its way around Canberra (16/4/08).

ANU College of Law scholars Professor Don Rothwell and Dr Gregor Urbas argue that following comments yesterday by Australian IOC member Kevan Gosper, various legal issues around the Olympic torch relay need to be clarified.

"No role can be taken in law enforcement or the provision of protection or security for the Olympic torch unless expressly provided for under Australian law," said Professor Rothwell. "While exceptions are made from time to time for visiting foreign military forces or dedicated security personnel protecting visiting foreign government leaders, it would be extraordinary if Chinese Olympic officials were given exemptions under the International Organisations (Privileges and Immunities) Act of the Commonwealth in this instance."

DETAILS: Martyn Pearce, Media Office on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245; Professor Don Rothwell on 02 6125 8948 / 0414 546 830.

#### **BALI AND BEYOND**

The Australian Institute of International Affairs has published policy commentary titled, *Bali and Beyond: Planning for a post-Kyoto world*, which includes the official output of last year's climate change conference; the Bali Action Plan; and contrasting commentaries by Professor Robyn Eckersley, of Melbourne University and Dr Michael Heazle, of Griffith University.

The media release accompanying the booklet says Professor Eckersley questions whether the geopolitical realignment in the politics of climate change at Bali will prove to be a subtle or seismic shift. She asks whether Australia's poor record on emission reduction and the new governments delay in setting national targets will blunt Mr Rudd's chances of brokering a deal between the US and China. Dr Heazle suggests replacing the focus on cutting emissions with a focus on eliminating fossil fuel, replacing them with alternative energy sources.  
DETAILS: [www.aiaa.asn.au](http://www.aiaa.asn.au) or 02 6282 2133.

#### **AUSTRALIA AIDS MINE CLEARANCE**

Australia is providing funds through AusAID to the United Nations Mine Action program to clear mines and other explosives, give assistance to survivors, deliver mine risk education and a range of disability support services.

The latest funding is to Afghanistan \$10 million; Cambodia \$6.4 million; Iraq \$2 million; Lebanon \$2 million, Sri Lanka \$220,000. Additional aid is going to the International Red Cross Special Fund for the Disabled in Vietnam (\$500,000); and to the Foundation Suisse du Deminage (\$1.5) out of \$2.9 million for de-mining in Laos.

#### **HELP FOR EAST TIMOR AND CAMBODIA**

East Timor will receive an additional \$3 million for peace-building efforts and improvements to disaster management to be channeled through the UN Development Program and the Organisation for Migration. Since mid-2006 Australia has given \$17 million in humanitarian assistance to East Timor.

Cambodia's courts dealing with crimes against humanity during the Khmer Rouge period will receive an additional \$500,000 for their prosecution case load. Australia has contributed \$3.8 million to the trials since 2003.

Australia will contribute \$570,000 through the UN Development Program for voter education in Cambodia in the lead up to national general assembly elections later this year.

#### **ALOLA FOUNDATION - MOTHERS DAY GIFT CERTIFICATE**

The vision of the Alola Foundation is: Strong Women, Strong Nation. The Alola Foundation emails to say it is committed to giving women in Timor-Leste the opportunity to participate in the economic and social development of their country, to providing access to health care and education and to protecting fundamental human rights. It asks people to celebrate Mothers Day with donations. Those over \$20 will attract a card to give as a gift for Mother's Day.

Money raised will be used to improve maternal and child health, create employment, promote human rights. strengthen community development and improve the status of women.

DETAILS: [www.alolafoundation.org](http://www.alolafoundation.org); <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/alolamothersday> or email [vic@alolafoundation.org](mailto:vic@alolafoundation.org). Website: <http://www.alolafoundation.org/>

#### **BUSINESS FOR MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT**

Business For Millennium Development, a group of Australian companies plus World Vision, will receive \$400,000 to further its aims of encouraging business to address poverty in developing countries in the Asia Pacific region.

Australia will provide grants totaling \$1.1 million to grass-roots community groups, NGOs and national human rights organisations and institutions in developing countries to help promote and protect human rights. They include Bangladesh, Cambodia, East Timor, Egypt, Fiji, Indonesia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam. Programs include reducing trafficking in women and children; training media personnel in human rights issues; educating businesses sexually exploiting children; upholding ILO conventions; mediation; women's legal rights; citizens' legal rights.

## **IDEAS FOR 2020 SUMMIT**

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd wants a plan to create universal parent and child care centres across Australia debated at this weekend's 2020 summit in Canberra, the ABC reported (17/4/08).

The child care centres would provide day care, preschool learning and health services for all children up to the age of five, along with support programs for parents.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/04/16/2219087.htm>

Only 1000 people will be deliberating Australia's future at the 2020 Summit but other voices can be heard, according to Get Up. "Incredibly, 118 of the chosen delegates are GetUp members, including our executive director Brett Solomon," it says.

IDEAS FOR GET UP DELEGATES TO: [www.getup.org.au/2020](http://www.getup.org.au/2020)

## **END SECRET DONATIONS NOW, SAYS GREENS MLA**

When the ACT Government Electoral Legislation Amendment Bill is debated in May, Greens MLA Deb Foskey will seek support from Labor and Liberal MLAs to ensure voters know who is giving money to political parties before, rather than after, the election.

"I have amendments drafted to introduce the weekly reporting of donations received during an election period," Dr Foskey said (14/4/08). "And to bring the timeframe for annual reports forward from February to September so that the information in those reports is published by Elections ACT before the October election.

"There's been a lot of talk across Australia about putting a cap on donations, or even getting rid of them altogether. The Greens are keen to look at those ideas, but a reshape of electoral funding - if it's really to strengthen democracy - will take a few years and quite a lot of research.

"In the meantime we face an ACT election on October 18. My amendments would ensure that ACT voters would know who has made donations to political candidates and their parties in the lead up to this election," she said. DETAILS: 02 62050551/0412241379.

## **CIVIL SERVANTS MUST BE CIVIL**

Serbia's civil servants must get over their grumpiness, answer queries with a smile and stop wearing shorts to work, according to a new code of conduct, Reuters reported (14/4/08). The code says civil servants "must act professionally and kindly," "provide true and timely information" and "respect citizens' personality and dignity." They must keep citizens' business confidential and behave with dignity in public. REPORT:

<http://www.reuters.com/article/oddlyEnoughNews/idUSL1463350620080414?feedType=RSS&feedName=oddlyEnoughNews>

## **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.

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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