

UNITY

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A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES (UNity, UN AND UNAA Contacts)

IRAQ: UN WEAPONS INSPECTORS SUBMIT FINAL REPORT

UN inspectors monitoring weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq have submitted a final report after the shutdown of their operations last year, nearly two decades after they first started work on the issue.

The UN Monitoring, Verification and Inspection Commission, ([UNMOVIC](#)), which carried out inspections in Iraq until March 2003, shortly before armed action began in the country, said that it had created a unique monitoring mechanism for weapons of mass destruction and long-range delivery systems.

The report, released this week, says that UNMOVIC and its predecessor, the UN Special Commission ([UNSCOM](#)), put into practice many innovative verification and monitoring procedures and said that, through its training program, UNMOVIC had created a roster of 350 experts in biological, chemical and missile areas, drawn from more than 50 countries.

"The international community could benefit if practical ways were found to preserve for appropriate future use the experience and expertise accumulated over the years of the Special Commission and UNMOVIC operations," the report says.

The UN Special Commission (UNSCOM), set up at the end of the war in 1991, destroyed missiles, mobile launchers, fixed launch sites, chemical munitions, a chemical weapons complex and a germ warfare complex as well as tons of missile fuel, chemical warfare agents, precursor chemicals and bacteria growth media.

UNMOVIC inspectors destroyed dozens of Iraqi Al Samoud 2 missiles and warheads, as well as launchers, shells filled with chemical weapons precursors and other arms.

Since the Security Council formally shut down its operations last June, UNMOVIC has placed its archives in a secure storage facility, and disposed of its inspection equipment and non-hazardous materials that it collected during its mandate in Iraq – among them a mobile chemical laboratory from Baghdad that had been transferred to Kuwait.

AUSTRALIA CAN LEAD NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT PUSH: EVANS

The co-chairman of the new nuclear disarmament commission says the spread of nuclear weapons remains one of the world's biggest problems, the ABC reported (10/6/08).

Kevin Rudd has selected former foreign affairs minister Gareth Evans to be Australia's head of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament Commission, which he hopes will coordinate international talks ahead of a review of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010.

The new body will be co-chaired with Japan. Mr Evans has told ABC's Radio National that Australia can take the lead role in the push to reduce the spread of nuclear weapons.

The commission is seen as an attempt to invigorate efforts to curb the growth of nuclear weapons and to push for eventual nuclear disarmament. It will be co-chaired by Japan and Australia. It was in Hiroshima that more than 140,000 people were killed in the world's first atomic bomb attack on August 6 1945.

Gareth Evans, co-chairman of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS), recently has been deeply involved in the North Korea and Iran situations and working with the Director General, Dr Mohamed ElBaradei, of International Atomic Energy Agency, on IAEA proposals. Gareth Evans is expected to become co-chairman of the new commission.

In an interview on the ABC (10/6/08) he said by virtue of its resources Australia had a particular responsibility to make sure its uranium was not used for nuclear weapons. He believed that for so long as any country or anyone had these weapons, others would want them, with the risk they may be used.

He said the commission could be a first step towards a new effort to ultimately outlaw nuclear weapons altogether. Currently there was a new dynamic in US thinking which was reflected by the statements of both US presidential candidate, Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain. Communities in general were anxious about the unresolved issue of nuclear weapons and the commission would be a new approach to reinvigorate the disarmament debate.

"Australia is supremely well equipped to play a role and to do something towards disarmament – and (eventually) outlawing these weapons," he said.

DON'T SELL URANIUM: ACF CALL

The Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) says Mr Rudd should withdraw a proposed agreement to sell uranium to Russia to show he is serious about his push for nuclear disarmament. ACF anti-nuclear campaigner David Noonan has welcomed the commission but says Australia should not be selling uranium to countries that are failing to disarm.

The former Coalition foreign affairs minister, Alexander Downer, was reported as saying the commission was "just more symbolism and stunts" from Mr Rudd and he rubbished his call for the world to disarm. The Peace Organisation of Australia said Mr Rudd's promise was hollow unless Australia stopped selling uranium to nuclear-armed nations.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/rudd-calls-for-nonproliferation/2008/06/09/1212863546334.html>

PM 'CLEARLY MOVED' BY HIROSHIMA MUSEUM VISIT

Kevin Rudd was the first current Australian prime minister this week to visit Hiroshima where more than 140,000 people were killed in the world's first atomic bomb attack on August 6, 1945. Mr Rudd was clearly moved as he was shown through the museum, erected by the city of Hiroshima in memory of the victims of the blast, The Age reported (10/6/08).

"It is a graphic human story of the horrendous impact of nuclear weapons," he said later, according to The Age. There were now 10,000 nuclear warheads in working condition around the world, and another 20,000 in storage. He warned that while the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty had stopped the rush to acquire nuclear weapons in the 1960s, it was now becoming "fragmented", and the world had to choose between strengthening it or letting it erode away.

AUSTRALIA URGED TO RETHINK URANIUM EXPORTS

Greenpeace says Australia needs to examine its stance as a leading uranium exporter if it is to mount an international push to rid the world of nuclear weapons, the ABC reported (9/6/08).

Greenpeace spokesman Steve Campbell said it must discuss Australia's uranium exports. "It's good that there's a country that is sticking its hand up and saying, 'we need to do more about nuclear disarmament,'" he said. "But whether Australia's the right person to do that given that they don't have their own house in order and whether it will have any impact, it remains to be seen. All of the countries who supply nuclear materials like Australia have to look at their own backyard."

'EMERGING CONSENSUS' FOR NUCLEAR FREE WORLD

Replying to a questioner in Japan, Mr Rudd said the question of a nuclear free world was first (raised) between the superpowers (and) discussed between President Reagan and Mikhail Gorbachev in the Reykjavik Summit back in 1985 ... I believe there is an emerging consensus, including in parts of the United States, to move again towards this long term goal ... Our immediate task is to bring back a sense of global commitment and strengthening to the nuclear

non-proliferation regime under the NPT, that's the immediate task we set ourselves for 2010, and the build up processes leading to then. But beyond that, we have also restated the historic position of Australian Governments, but with greater urgency, that we must move towards a non-nuclear weapons world. And that, I believe, is important in the global debate.

REVIEW OF NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee will hear evidence on five treaties tabled on May 14 2008 and June 4 2008. These treaties include an agreement with the Russian Federation on cooperation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This agreement will allow Australian uranium to be used in approved Russian nuclear power plants, subject to strict safeguards conditions. It will also promote cooperation between the two countries for the peaceful use of nuclear technology.

Australian uranium can only be exported to countries with which Australia has a nuclear safeguards agreement. Both countries will be obliged to ensure that no nuclear material transferred under the agreement is ever used for, or diverted to, a military purpose.

DETAILS: The public hearing will be on June 16 at 11.20am; committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/jsct; **BACKGROUND:** James Rees (Committee Secretary) on 02 6277 4642.

STUDYING REPORT BY UN STAFF SECURITY REVIEW PANEL

The report of the independent panel assessing the safety and security of United Nations staff worldwide has been handed to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who stated it would be studied in detail before considering appropriate follow-up action (10/6/08).

Veteran diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi, chairman of the Independent Panel on Safety and Security of UN Personnel and Premises Worldwide, headed a seven member panel which included international experts from outside the UN system. It was set up in the wake of the December 2007 Algiers bombing which claimed the lives of 17 UN staff.

It was asked to provide recommendations on strategic issues vital to the delivery and enhancement of the security of UN personnel and premises and the changing threats and risks faced by it.

"Careful internal deliberations are under way with a view to ensuring the transparency of the process and the efficiency and integrity of any follow-up measures, taking into account the due process rights of individuals," UN spokesperson Marie Okabe said.

RUDD TO PUSHES ASIA-PACIFIC COMMUNITY

During his Japan trip Prime Minister Kevin Rudd discussed his recent proposal to form an Asia-Pacific community, the Japan Times reported (7/6/08). He was to raise the idea of a regional institution with Prime Minister [Yasuo Fukuda](#).

The proposal for an Asia-Pacific community includes India, China and the US to provide a framework for the discussion of economic, political and security matters facing the region. It would not diminish the role of existing regional bodies.

"APEC, the ASEAN Regional Forum, the East Asia Summit, ASEAN Plus Three and ASEAN itself will continue to play important roles and longer term may continue in their own right or embody the building blocks of an Asia-Pacific community," Mr Rudd said.

He confirmed Australia would continue to deal with whaling through diplomatic dialogue with Japan, noting the process had some way to go before reaching a solution.

REPORT: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080607a9.html>

PLAN CRITICISED BY PREVIOUS PRIME MINISTERS

In response to a question about Paul Keating and Bob Hawke, former Labor prime ministers criticising the plan, Mr Rudd said earlier in Australia, "My concern long term is drift. That is, we

don't want to have a drift towards conflict within our region where we still have so many unresolved territorial conflicts.”

He said there was not a single body in our region which did both those things, “and I've set an ambition for 2020 that we as a region should start moving in that direction. I also said explicitly we should not be looking at the European Union as some sort of identikit model, our region is vastly different.”

In a separate interview, Mr Rudd said “APEC is about economic cooperation. What I am talking about is extending that to political and security cooperation and basically having a forum whereby you can bring together the various states of the region who represent different languages, different cultures, different religions, different political systems, different economic systems - which is why it's so vastly different to Europe - but get them to cooperate together on common security projects. For example, how do we work more effectively together on common natural disaster challenges across our region? It's that sort of practical stuff we have in mind.”

The region needed to work towards a body long-term which at least had the states of the region talking together, discussing together, cooperating together, on political, security and economic and trade matters, he said.

AUSTRALIA'S THREE INTERNATIONAL PILLARS: PM IN JAPAN

Speaking at a dinner hosted by the Japan-Australian business Cooperation Committee, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said the comprehensive long-term economic agenda of his new government had two critical elements (11/6/08).

The government was committed to disciplined macroeconomic management to ensure that the economy had a stable foundation and also committed to activist microeconomic policies to boost Australia's lagging productivity performance by investing in human and physical capital.

“Productivity growth is not something you achieve with a single broad sweeping policy. It is the aggregation of efficiency gains industry by industry, market by market, sector by sector. (In the 2008 Budget) We put in place a microeconomic reform agenda to lift Australia's productivity performance.

This meant having the best possible regulatory environment; developing an environment that supports risk taking and innovation; investing in human and physical capital; and investing in Australia's future and addressing our nation's long-term infrastructure bottlenecks. We know this is a big task but we are committed to it.”

The new Australian Government had three pillars to its international engagement: Australia's alliance with the United States; membership of the United Nations; and comprehensive engagement with the Asia-Pacific region.

“For Australia, Japan is a partner in these three pillars,” he said.

SPEECH: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0303.cfm.

UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS

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[United Nations](#).

[Secretary-General](#).

[UN News Centre](#).

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[United Nations Information Centre for Australia,](#)

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

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on 0419 829509

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Daily press briefing by the office of the spokesperson for the UN Secretary General:

(<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2008/db080527.doc.htm>

UN Daily News (Link only)

<http://www.un.org/news/dh/pdf/english/2008/27052008.pdf>

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

CAPTURE POWER STATION CO2 ... OR FACE CATASTROPHE: SCIENTISTS.

The world must have a clear plan to fit power stations with facilities to capture carbon dioxide within a year to prevent "catastrophic" climate change, the world's leading scientific bodies said, according to the TIMESONLINE (11/6/08).

But the warning came as Britain's support for the technology was blasted as "woefully inadequate" by experts. The Royal Society, along with the scientific academies of the eight leading industrial nations and of five other countries including China and India, says that millions will be at risk from food and water shortages if action is not taken.

They are calling on next month's G8 summit to begin action now to halve global emissions by 2050. The scientists say this will not be achieved without the ability to capture to capture and store carbon from coal-fired power stations.

REPORT: <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/environment/article4104767.ece>

DRAFT DOCUMENT HERALDS COOPERATION OVER FINANCE AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The European Union (EU) and the US will enhance cooperation to underpin stability in the international financial system, and join hands on climate change and energy security, according to the final declaration draft after the EU-US summit, China View reported (10/6/08).

According to a copy obtained by Xinhua News, measures would include strengthening prudential oversight, improving risk and liquidity management, enhancing transparency, and fostering international cooperation between supervisors and central banks.

On climate change, the draft said the EU and the US were committed in the context of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to securing agreement by the end of 2009 to enable the full, effective and sustained implementation of UNFCCC through long-term cooperative action, now, up to and beyond 2012.

REPORT: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-06/10/content_8342038.htm

WONG PUTS SEEKS ETS AND CREATION OF NEW INDUSTRIES

The arguments about what climate change will do to our natural environment have been well canvassed but what was much less well understood was the extent to which climate change put our prosperity at risk, Minister for Climate Change and Water Penny Wong told CEDA State of the Nation Conference in Canberra (6/6/08).

“Consider, for a moment, our agricultural industry. Climate change and associated drought put our agricultural exports – worth \$27 billion a year - at great risk. In one recent year alone, the drought caused farm production to fall by \$6.2 billion,” she said. “Consider also that in investing \$12.9 billion in our long term Water for the Future plan, the Rudd Government is actually investing in adaptation to a changing climate with less rainfall. Over \$10 billion of that is being invested in improvements to the health and functioning of our rivers, which is, of course, crucial for agricultural industry.”

Estimates by the Victorian Government suggested that the price of water for homes and businesses in Melbourne would double over the next five years – reflecting the cost of infrastructure to provide new supplies of water.

Senator Wong said the insurance industry, for example, was facing the reality that 85 per cent of the largest 40 catastrophes since 1970 happened between 1988 and 2006, with about 38 per cent just since 2000. According to Allianz, the majority of these large claims had been related to natural catastrophes. “We need to reform the way the market works, so that we can harness all its power in the pursuit of carbon emission reductions,” she said.

“We need a system of capping our emissions, trading emissions within the cap, and reducing the amount of emissions that can be produced over time - a robust, competitive carbon market. That is, we need an Emissions Trading Scheme. This real economic reform will move Australia to a low carbon economy – at the lowest cost to business and families.”

SPEECH: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/sp20080606.pdf>

GARRETT ‘PLANS TO WATCH AS SOLAR SECTOR GOES UNDER’

Peter Garrett had more than enough evidence to reverse his decision to means test the rooftop solar rebate immediately, Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, said (11/6/08).

“Peter Garrett should be congratulated for belatedly recognising that he and the government have made a huge mistake in means testing the rooftop solar rebate,” she said. “But it will be a measure of the government's strength if it is prepared now to acknowledge this mistake and reverse the decision immediately.

“Promising to review the impact of the decision, when there is evidence aplenty that it is already having a tremendous impact, is an attempt to defuse the situation in the hope that, over time, people will be distracted by other issues and the government can quietly forget about it,” she said. The impact of this means test was obvious from day one, with jobs lost and the viability of businesses threatened. **DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on 02 6277 3063.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

GUANTANAMO SUSPECTS GIVEN RIGHT TO CHALLENGE

Foreign suspects held in Guantanamo Bay have the right to challenge their detention in US civilian courts, the US Supreme Court has ruled, the BBC reported (13/6/08).

In a major legal setback for the Bush administration, the court overturned by five to four a ruling upholding a 2006 law which removed such rights. It is not clear if the ruling will lead to prompt hearings for the detainees.

Some 270 men are held at the US naval base, on suspicion of terrorism or links to al-Qaeda and the Taliban.

US President George W Bush said he would abide by the court's ruling even if he did not agree with it.

MUGABE ORDERS AID GROUPS OUT

The Mugabe Government has ordered all humanitarian aid groups to suspend their operations in the deeply impoverished nation, a prohibition that relief agencies estimate will deprive two million people of food aid and other basic assistance, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (7/6/08).

The government had already barred CARE, one of the world's biggest aid groups, from providing humanitarian aid in the country, accusing it of siding with the political opposition ahead of a presidential run-off this month. The ban came as Zimbabwe's ambassador was summoned to the British Foreign Office in London after a mob loyal to the President, Robert Mugabe, surrounded a group of British and American diplomats, hurling abuse and threatening to set their cars ablaze.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/mugabe-suspends-all-aid-work/2008/06/06/1212259107787.html>

NEW INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION

A wide ranging inquiry into the criteria for immigration detention and alternatives available has been announced by the Federal Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration.

There are currently 461 people in immigration detention across Australia. Some of these are seeking asylum in Australia, others are appealing deportation following criminal offences, and others have breached the conditions of their visa or have entered illegally and are under investigation.

Committee chairperson Michael Danby said "A humanitarian approach that treats all people with dignity needs to be integrated into Australian policy on overseas arrivals ... This inquiry is an important initiative in setting Australia's immigration detention policies and exploring options for the future. I encourage all those who have had experience of immigration detention to contribute to this inquiry and help shape both a fairer and more efficient system".

In April the committee visited the Villawood Detention Centre, Sydney, and spoke to staff, advocacy workers and ex-detainees. Concerns were raised regarding the length of time in detention, the application and appeal processes and the physical environment of the centres. The committee is now setting out to develop a blueprint for Australia's immigration detention policy and centres.

Minister for Immigration Senator Chris Evans has asked the committee to inquire into and report on issues such as:

- the criteria for detention and length of time in detention
- the criteria for release from detention
- accountability and transparency in immigration detention processes
- the infrastructure and physical environments of detention centres

types of detention (including residential housing and community detention) and other alternatives,
and the administration of the services available to those in detention.

DETAILS: <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/index.htm>
or Secretariat on 02 6277 4560; jscm@apf.gov.au.

HOW MANY INQUIRIES DOES IT TAKE TO CHANGE DETENTION?

The ASRC has called on the Joint Standing Committee on Migration in its 'Inquiry into Immigration Detention in Australia' to examine the recommendations of the many inquiries which have preceded this announcement of yet another inquiry into detention (11/6/08).

ASRC points out that the roadmap to refugee reform in Australia was released by no less a body than the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights in Geneva (OHCHR) in May entitled *Committee Against Torture Report on Australia*.

DETAILS: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cat/docs/co/CAT-C-AUS-CO1.pf>

ASRC has also listed some previous inquiries into Australia's refugee policy and mandatory detention for the committee's information:

INQUIRIES/REPORTS

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2007: Oxfam (2007), *A price too high: The cost of Australia's approach to asylum seekers*, August, Oxfam, Melbourne, p. 13

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<http://www.hrlrc.org.au/files/CX9F5DW2WB/Australia%20CAT%20COBs.pdf>

United Nations Committee Against Torture 'Concluding Observations on Australia – Australia's Compliance with the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhumance or Degrading Treatment, 40th Session, Geneva, May 2008; Third and Fourth Periodic Report of Australia to the Committee Against Torture April 2005; <http://www.hrlrc.org.au/files/1TRK0XNOML/G0542075.pdf>

Committee Against Torture List of Issues for Australia, 6th of June 2007;
http://www.hrlrc.org.au/html/s02_article/article_view.asp?id=209&nav_cat_id=135&nav_top_id=57
DETAILS: Pamela Curr, ASRC Campaign Coordinator, on 0417 5170751; www.asrc.org.au

WORLD REFUGEE DAY SCREENING COMMEMORATES SIEV X

To mark Refugee Week and World Refugee Day, screenings of the film, *'Hope'* have been organised at a number of cinemas.

'Hope,' a film by Steve Thomas and producer Sue Brooks, tells the story of 400 asylum seekers who were pitched into the sea when their people-smuggling boat from Indonesia sank on its way to Australia in 2001. Only seven survivors made it to Australia and 350 people were drowned.

Amal Basry, who had fled Iraq, was one of those survivors. She spent 22 hours in the sea hanging on to a floating corpse, convinced that her son was dead and that she was the only person left alive.

A summary of the film records the controversy surrounding the sinking of the boat, which became known as the SIEV X (Suspected Illegal Entry Vessel Unknown). Amal became an advocate for the survivors but in private life she fought to reunite her fragmented family, cope with the personal consequences of the disaster and return to Indonesia to "find what I lost in the ocean".

Amal loved movies and had always dreamed of being in a film of her own. The documentary maker, Steve Thomas, wanted to record her life story, so they made a deal. *'Hope'* is described as an inspiring story which works on many levels and as a universal tale of family, migration and the search for a better life: www.hopedocumentary.com.au:

In Melbourne - the film premiered at last year's Melbourne International Film Festival – it will be hosted by Asylum Seeker Resource Centre at Nova Cinema, Lygon Street, Carlton, on June 22 at 3.30pm for 4pm. **DETAILS:** Pamela Curr on 03 3266066; pamela.c@asrc.org.au

In Brisbane, at the Dendy Cinema, George Street, Brisbane on June 15 at 5pm, the film will follow speakers Senator Andrew Bartlett and Frederika Steen, of the Romero Centre. The Romero Centre is a small ecumenical, community organisation which provides a place of welcome and practical support for refugees, primarily those from Iraq, Iran and Afghanistan. The Romero Centre is auspiced by the Mercy Sisters and operates on a small annual budget and the goodwill of volunteers. **DETAILS:** The Romero Centre on 07 3846 3250.

Details of the national release and cinemas Involved

Melbourne: Nova Carlton <http://www.cinemanova.com.au/>

Sydney: Dendy Newtown http://www.dendy.com.au/locations_newtown.asp

Brisbane: Dendy George http://www.dendy.com.au/locations_brisbane.asp

Hobart: State Theatre <http://www.statecinema.com.au/>

Adelaide: Nova East End <http://www.cinemanova.com.au/SA/default.htm>

Canberra*: Dendy http://www.dendy.com.au/locations_canberra.asp

Perth**: Luna Leederville <http://www.lunapalace.com.au/>

Sydney North: Avoca Beach Theatre
<http://www.avocabeachpicturetheatre.com.au>

Distributor: Gil Scrine Films: 44 Northcote St, East Brisbane Qld 4169, on 07 33910124;
gil@gilscrinefilms.com.au www.gilscrinefilms.com.au

REVISITING CITIZENSHIP IN A GLOBALISED BORDERED WORLD

Citizenship is a theme that has been repeatedly revisited, says Bhaswati Sarkar, of the Centre for European Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. She is currently offering a course on Identity Issues in Europe at the ANU. She says the history of citizenship indicates that

change in social conditions have fundamentally impacted on defining who citizens are, their rights and duties.

She says globalisation is an undisputable reality of contemporary world and one increasingly tends to hear about an interlinking world moving towards a global village. "Indeed at one level space and time concepts have been all but redefined in the light of the increased level of quick communication. Does this mean that globalisation will render borders meaningless?"

Addressing a seminar, she argues that the world continues to be a 'bordered world' where globalisation means an increase in interaction between states and movement of goods, services and people, and no state can live in 'splendid isolation'. By focusing on two European countries – UK and Germany, and on Australia, she argues that while globalisation profoundly affects states, admitting new members either on a permanent or temporary basis continues to be essentially guided by the perception of the 'national' and is decided by states.

FOI REVIEW CHANGES CAUTIOUSLY WELCOMED

There was some scepticism over whether the Queensland Government will implement all the recommended changes to freedom of information (FOI) laws, the ABC reported (11/6/08). A Queensland Government-commissioned review released made 140 recommendations on how to improve public access to information. It recommended sweeping changes to FOI laws so more information is made available more quickly and cheaply. It reported that the Australian Press Council (APC) said media freedom in Queensland would only improve if there was a complete change of attitude towards FOI.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/11/2270749.htm>

NOWHERE TO HIDE WHEN SECURITY'S AT STAKE

Alan Ramsay writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (7/6/08): A letter arrived the other day which said: "Recently I was asked to be a referee for a friend seeking security clearance for work as a staffer in the new Labor Government. I agreed. Several days ago I received an email from a Canberra company seeking information from me re my friend. ... Some of the questions appear constructed in the complete absence of guile. Some are not only disturbingly intrusive but are intellectually lethargic and childishly banal. ... I now tremble with anticipation at the unfolding of our national security drama." So should most Australians.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/alan-ramsey/nowhere-to-hide-when-securitys-at-stake/2008/06/06/1212259114363.html>

NEW UNIFEM HEAD: 'GENDER EQUALITY PIVOTAL TO MDGs'

The head of the UN Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)) became the latest recipient of the MDG3 Champion Torch on Thursday, committing the agency to "doing something extra" in support of gender equality and women's empowerment (11/6/08).

Launched in Copenhagen on March 7, the MDG3 Champion Torch campaign symbolises Denmark's global call to action on gender equality – goal number three in the set of anti-poverty targets that world leaders have pledged to try to achieve by 2015, as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

More than 100 MDG3 Torches will travel around the world in the run-up to the high-level meeting on MDGs to be convened at the UN on September 25 Torch bearers will include representatives of governments, the private sector, civil society, the media, individuals from North and South, and international organisations.

Accepting the Torch, UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi told a news conference in New York that "achieving gender equality is indeed pivotal to all other Millennium Development Goals."

Ms Alberdi committed to addressing the feminisation of poverty, particularly in Africa. "UNIFEM will build on initiatives that it is currently undertaking and step up its advocacy and support to enhance African women's economic security and rights," she said.

Noting that women's political participation is a key indicator of gender equality, she said UNIFEM would strengthen its work to support women "to act as an effective constituency, to achieve high-level political positions and to make a difference on issues related to gender equality."

Ms Alberdi, who took up her current post one week ago, called violence against women "the missing MDG target," and said responses to date have missed two critical ingredients – money and men.

As the manager of the UN Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, she pledged that UNIFEM would make every effort to ensure that the fund – which provides urgently needed resources to local organisations, governments and the UN system – will grow from its resource base of \$5 million in grants in 2007 to a \$100 million fund by 2015.

UNIFEM will also "vigorously reach out to men as key partners," she said. "Reaching out to men in all walks of life will be central to our efforts as we ensure that we continue to address violence against women as both a cause and a consequence of HIV/AIDS."

PARLIAMENTARY COMMITTEE CONSIDERS DISABILITY CONVENTION

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee is to consider the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which will promote, protect and ensure the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people with disabilities.

Parties to the convention will be required to eliminate discrimination on the basis of disability and to enhance the inclusion and participation of people with a disability in society. The convention also contains provisions specifically relating to the protection of children, ensuring individuals are recognised before law, and providing equal access to facilities and services open to the community. One in five Australians currently lives with a disability. This convention reflects and affirms existing protections provided to people with disability under Australia's domestic laws.

The public hearing will be at 10am on June 16 in the Committee Room 2R1, 2nd floor, Parliament House, Canberra. The public hearing will be broadcast on the House Monitoring Service, radio and webcast live on the Parliament House website at: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>.
DETAILS: Committee's website: www.aph.gov.au/jsct

JAPAN RECOGNISES INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Japan's parliament has called for the Ainu ethnic group to be identified as an indigenous people in a non-binding resolution that recognises more than a century of discrimination, the Brisbane Times reported (7/6/08).

The Ainu, thought to be descendants of early inhabitants of Japan and possessing a distinct culture and language, were once forced to change their names and banned from traditional hunting as part of an assimilation policy.

The recognition comes ahead of a July 7-9 Group of Eight summit on Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost main island, and an international gathering of indigenous peoples around the same time. Human rights activists say many Ainu still face discrimination.

REPORT: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/world/vote-takes-step-towards-ending-discrimination/2008/06/06/1212259107804.html>

RELIGIOUS ORGANISATIONS PROTEST TO IRAN

The Australian Partnership of Religious Organisations (APRO) has welcomed this week the Australian Government's statement of concern about the recent arrest of Baha'i leaders in Iran and continuing discrimination and harassment of the Iranian Baha'is on grounds of their religion.

APRO's Baha'i community representative, Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, said six of the seven members of the 'Friends in Iran', the national coordinating group for Baha'is in Iran, were arrested in early morning raids on May 14. The seventh member has been in detention since March 5 2008.

"They do not have legal representation, have not been allowed to communicate with their families, and their whereabouts is presently unknown," Dr Mobini-Kesheh said.

APRO Convenor, Professor Abd Malak said APRO shared the government's deep concern for these Baha'i leaders. "Freedom of religion and belief is a right guaranteed to all people under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, to which Iran is a state party," Prof Malak said. "Their detention is in clear breach of the rights to which they are entitled under international law.

"They must be allowed to communicate with their lawyers and their families, and their place of detention and the exact charges brought against them must be made known," he said. "Members of APRO call on the Iranian authorities to release the Baha'i leaders, if they are not to be charged with a recognisable criminal offence and allowed a fair and prompt trial."

The following members and organisations have added support for APRO's statement and call on the Iranian government to respect and protect the right of all Iranians, including Baha'is and other religious minorities, to profess and practice the religion of their choice:

Professor Emeritus Gary Bouma, UNESCO Chairman, Inter-religious and Intercultural Relations - Asia Pacific; Dilip Chirmuley, Hindu Society; Eugenia Tsoulis, National Council of Migrant Resource Centres and Migrant Service Agencies; Abeselom Nega, the Federation of African Communities Council; the Federation of Australian Buddhist Councils, Inc; John Henderson, National Council of Churches in Australia; Jeremy Jones, Executive Council of Australian Jewry; Josey Lacey, the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia interfaith advisor; Kulbir Singh Malhotra, Sikh Association and the Australian Baha'i community.

DETAILS: Abd Malak, APRO Convenor, on 0417 489 066;

Natalie Mobini-Kesheh, Australian Baha'i community, on: 0414 603 145.

GOVERNMENT MOVES ON HOUSING AGENDA

The next step to tackle housing affordability has been outlined in a technical paper for the Housing Affordability Fund which Acting Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Minister for Housing, Tanya Plibersek released this week (11/6/08).

The \$512 million Housing Affordability Fund aims to lower the cost of building new homes by tackling the critical supply side issues of the length of time taken to bring new houses to sale and the impact of infrastructure charges.

Through the HAF, the Federal Government wants to create an incentive for projects that will make housing more affordable, the media release stated. The fund aims to make housing more affordable by addressing two significant supply-side barriers to housing development: holding costs incurred by developers as a result of long planning and approval waiting times; and infrastructure costs, such as water, sewerage, transport, and open space.

The fund will be distributed by direct grants, primarily to local governments, local government associations and state or territory governments, through a competitive selection process.

TECHNICAL PAPER: www.fahcsia.gov.au

SUBMISSIONS to haf@fahcsia.gov.au

GET MARRIED OR GET THE SACK, WORKERS TOLD

Press reports say a major Iranian state-owned company has told its single employees to get married by September or face losing their jobs, the ABC reported (11/6/08).

"One of the economic entities in the south of the country has asked its single employees to start creating a family," the hardline Kayhan daily reported. In the reformist Etemad newspaper a company directive was quoted as "Unfortunately some of our colleagues did not fulfill their commitments and are still single ... As being married is one of the criteria of employment, we are announcing for the last time that all the female and male colleagues have until September 21 to go ahead with this important and moral religious duty," the AFP reported.

D. PEACE & SECURITY

MIDDLE EAST

PALESTINE LEADER PUSHES FOR UNITY

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has surprised political observers in Israel by calling for direct talks with the radical Islamic movement Hamas to resume, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (6/6/08).

Israel has threatened to call off negotiations for its withdrawal from the West Bank and the establishment of a Palestinian state if Mr Abbas joins forces with Hamas. In a short speech broadcast on local television late on Wednesday, Mr Abbas said he wanted to restore unity among Palestinians. His Fatah party controls the West Bank, while Gaza is controlled by Hamas. Fighting between the two factions broke out after Hamas won a surprise victory in the Palestinian parliamentary elections in January 2006.

Mr Abbas said that if talks with Hamas succeeded, he would call for legislative and presidential elections. His term is supposed to end in January. **REPORT:**

<http://news.smh.com.au/world/abbas-calls-for-dialogue-with-hamas-20080605-2m0r.html>

SENEGALESE PRESIDENT INVITES ABBAS AND MASHAAL TO DAKAR

Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade is contacting Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Hamas' politburo chief Khaled Mashaal to arrange a meeting between them in Senegal, a Hamas spokesman said on Tuesday, according to the China View (10/6/08).

"We hope the meeting will be imminent," said Ayman Taha, a spokesman for Hamas in Gaza. Last week, delegates of the two rival movements, Hamas and Fatah, held talks in the Senegalese capital Dakar in a bid to overcome differences, it was reported. They also met the Senegalese President Abdoulaye Wade, who on Monday called on Israel and the Palestinians to start a ceasefire. The divisions between Hamas and Fatah widened in June last year after Hamas routed pro-Abbas forces and took over the Gaza Strip. Abbas fired the Hamas government and formed a new administration without any Hamas member. Hamas had won the parliamentary elections.

REPORT: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-06/10/content_8341101.htm

IRAQ 'WILL NOT ALLOW ITS TERRITORY TO BE USED TO ATTACK IRAN'

Iraq will not allow its territory to be used to attack Iran, Iraqi Prime Minister Nouri Maliki has said during a visit to Tehran, the BBC reported (8/6/08).

Mr Maliki met the foreign minister and President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, who pledged to help with Iraq's security. The role of the US in Iraq was high on the agenda, with Tehran concerned about a treaty under discussion on the terms of the US military's future in Iraq. Iran's alleged backing for militants in Iraq was also expected to be discussed.

"We will not allow Iraq to become a platform for harming the security of Iran and neighbours," Iranian state-run media quoted Mr Maliki as saying after late-night talks with Foreign Minister Manouchehr Mottaki. The Iraqi prime minister was also expected to raise allegations of Iranian support for Shia militants in Iraq. **REPORT:** http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7441329.stm

ASIA

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON AFGHANISTAN

An Afghanistan Support Conference was scheduled for June 12 in Paris to launch the Afghanistan National Development Strategy. Foreign Minister Stephen Smith attended to re-affirm Australia's long-term commitment to Afghanistan and to pledge more support for reconstruction and development

Australia has more than 1000 troops working on counter-insurgency operations and reconstruction in southern Afghanistan and is the largest non-NATO contributor to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

The minister said military gains made in Afghanistan must be complemented by development. The National Development Strategy follows on from the plan agreed to at Bucharest in January as the international community works to consolidate peace and security, while building the capacity of the Afghan Government to manage its own affairs and improve living standards.

DETAILS: Mr Smith's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

RUDD 'SHOULD MAKE TIME TO MEET WITH DALAI LAMA'

Urging him to meet with the Dalai Lama, Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown said "Prime Minister Rudd should find time on Sunday night or Monday morning to meet with the Dalai Lama before he leaves Australia (11/6/08). He should refuse to attend the Beijing Olympic Games unless China enters into meaningful dialogue with the Dalai Lama or his representatives."

DETAILS: Ebony Bennett on 0409 164 603.

AFRICA

TOP UN OFFICIAL DISPATCHED TO ZIMBABWE

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is dispatching a top UN official to Zimbabwe, beset recently by deadly political violence, to try to resolve tensions ahead of the run-off round of the presidential election set for later this month (11/6/08).

Haile Menkerios, Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs, is expected to visit Zimbabwe from next Monday until June 20. He will discuss the political situation and the upcoming presidential election, which is scheduled to take place on June 27. Mr Ban met last week with Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in Rome, at the global food crisis summit.

Mr Mugabe will face Morgan Tsvangirai, a candidate from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), in the run-off round this month after the two men scored the highest number of votes in the opening round on March 29.

Late last month UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour voiced shock at reports that many MDC activists had been killed in recent weeks and that human rights defenders and staff with non-governmental organisations (NGOs) had also been harassed. UN humanitarian officials have also called on the Zimbabwean authorities to rescind their decision to suspend all field operations by NGO aid groups.

BAN WELCOMES PEACE DEAL IN SOMALIA

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has welcomed the peace deal between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the opposition Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, reached yesterday in neighbouring Djibouti following 10 days of United Nations-facilitated talks (10/6/08). Mr Ban commended "the leadership of both parties for taking this important step towards a durable political settlement for Somalia, and hopes that other Somali groups and individuals will soon adhere to this agreement," his spokesperson said in a [statement](#).

Under the agreement, the government and the opposition have agreed to end “all acts of armed confrontation” within 30 days. The initial period of cessation of hostilities is 90 days, and can be renewed.

Both sides are also required to take all necessary steps to ensure unhindered humanitarian access and assistance to affected populations in the country, which has not had a functioning government since 1991 and where deadly fighting in recent months has displaced hundreds of thousands of civilians, as well as set up a joint security committee.

The agreement, signed in the presence of representatives of the international community, including the Secretary-General’s Special Representative Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, also asks the UN to deploy “an international stabilisation force” to the East African nation.

Mr Ban called on the international community to provide “strong diplomatic and financial support for the effective implementation of this agreement.” He also thanked the Government of Djibouti and the relevant regional organisations for their contributions to this “positive outcome.”

BAN: GRAVE VIOLATIONS AGAINST CHILDREN IN SOMALIA

The number of grave human rights violations against children in Somalia, from acts of murder and rape to the recruitment of child soldiers to the denial of humanitarian access to those in need, have all increased in the past year, Mr Ban said in a new [report](#) to the Security Council (11/6/08).

Mr Ban accused both the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and anti-government groups of committing serious violations against children, and said that children were being killed and maimed as a result of military actions by Ethiopian troops in confrontations with the anti-government forces as well as with civilian demonstrators.

“The widespread use of children in almost all fighting forces in the country was noted, particularly in Mogadishu,” Mr Ban reported, adding that the recruitment of child soldiers was increasing. He called on the TFG and opposition groups to renounce the recruitment and use of children in their armed forces, and urged such forces in Somalia “to make all efforts to minimise civilian casualties during fighting.”

Somalia has recently seen fighting between the TFG, which is backed by Ethiopian forces, against various anti-government groups, including remnants of the Union of Islamic Courts, Al-Shabaab insurgents and Hawiye clan militias. Since February 2007, 340,000 have fled fighting in Mogadishu, while 1.9 million Somalis – about 20 per cent of the population – have been in need of humanitarian assistance. Reported cases of rape and other sexual assaults against children rose from 115 last year to 128 this year.

Mr Ban called for investigations into all incidents of grave child rights violations and also urged the TFG to end the detention of children and to control the proliferation of small arms.

AUSTRALIA CONTRIBUTES TO UN DARFUR MISSION

Australia will join an international force under the UN Assistance Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) to help implement a plan to restore peace and stability to the strife torn region of Sudan. Nine ADF officers would be employed within the UNAMID Headquarters in logistics, movement and operational areas.

ADF participation in UNAMID is subject to final agreement by the Government of Sudan. These appointments will provide ADF officers with an opportunity to serve within the UNAMID Headquarters. When fully deployed, UNAMID will become the UN's largest peacekeeping operation with an estimated 20,000 troops and 6,000 police and civilian personnel.

An estimated 200,000 people have died from the combined effects of war, famine and diseases since 2003 and an estimated two million people have been displaced. Australia has also pledged five million dollars in humanitarian assistance.

DETAILS: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/release/2008/media_release_0291.cfm

INTERIM AGREEMENT REACHED ON ABYEI

Sudan's President Omar al-Bashir and the southern leader Salva Kiir are to use international arbiters in a dispute over the contested town of Abyei, the BBC reported (8/6/08). An estimated 50,000 people fled from the oil-rich area during violent clashes last month which many feared could reignite a bloody civil war.

After intense negotiations the two sides have now agreed on an interim administration for Abyei. The region's border will be considered by international arbitration. Abyei has been at the heart of a long-standing dispute that threatens a 2005 peace deal which ended years of war. At stake is control of a large part of the country's oil wealth. The 20-year north-south civil war, separate from the Darfur conflict, was said to have cost 1.5 million lives.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7442872.stm>

E. HEALTH & MEANS

HEALTH

VITAL PROGRESS MADE ON WORLD ACCESS TO HIV TREATMENT: BAN

The world has made "important achievements" in its quest for universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010, demonstrating what can be done where there was sufficient political will, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the General Assembly (10/6/08).

Women and children were benefiting especially, he said in an [address](#) to the start of the assembly's high-level meeting on HIV/AIDS, where he presented his latest report on the progress made towards the goal of universal access since it was set two years ago.

More mothers now had access to interventions that prevent transmission to their infants and more HIV-infected children were receiving treatment and care programs. At least 3 million people now have access to anti-retroviral treatment in poor or middle-income countries.

But Mr. Ban warned that too many people are becoming newly infected, dying from the disease or not receiving anti-retroviral treatment despite being in urgent need. Last year, for example, "there were twice as many people in need of anti-retroviral treatment and going without, as there were receiving it," he said. "This situation is unacceptable."

DETAILS: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26959&Cr=hiv&Cr1=aids>

HIV RENDERS PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO TB

For the first time, heads of government, public health and business leaders, heads of UN agencies and activists came together at UN Headquarters IN New York to confront a threat to global health that could undermine investments in life-saving drug treatment for people living with HIV, WHO reported (9/6/08).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said tuberculosis (TB) was taking the lives of nearly a quarter of million people living with HIV each year. TB is the number one cause of death among people with HIV in Africa. Worldwide it is a leading cause of death.

WHO, the Joint UN Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) recently announced that some three million people were now receiving life-saving anti-retroviral treatment, but TB, especially drug-resistant forms of the disease, threatened to hinder this progress. Because HIV weakens the immune system people living with HIV are up to 50 times more likely to develop TB disease than people who are HIV negative. Without proper treatment

with anti-TB drugs, the majority of people living with HIV die within two to three months of becoming sick with TB.

The leaders spelt out specific measures, recommended by WHO, needed to avert deaths from HIV/TB. People living with HIV must be screened regularly for TB. Those who are sick with TB need effective TB treatment and those without TB disease should receive preventive therapy with the drug isoniazid. These treatments are not expensive. A six-month course of TB treatment costs \$US20, and a course of preventive drug therapy costs \$US2. Simple measures to prevent the spread of TB among HIV-infected people, especially in health care settings, also needed to be put in place.

DETAILS: Judith Mandelbaum-Schmid, Stop TB Partnership, mobile +41 79 254 6835', email schmidj@who.int; http://www.who.int/tb/publications/tbhiv_interim_policy/en/ and http://www.who.int/hiv/pub/meetingreports/art_hivtb_meeting_april2008/en/index.html.

FOOD

WORLD VISION AUSTRALIA APPEALS TO PM

The food crisis has emerged suddenly but the factors behind it have been developing for some time, says World Vision Australia. Lack of investment in increasing agricultural production, the use of wheat and corn for ethanol production rather than food, rising energy prices and poor harvests have all contributed to the problem.

Because the crisis of rising food costs in developing countries is threatening the lives of millions of people, World Vision Australia is asking people to help them by [sending an email to our Prime Minister](#) asking him to act to end the crisis.

WVA says in some areas of Somalia, food prices have risen by a staggering 300 per cent. Some 200,000 people in World Vision communities are affected. They are already suffering the first signs of malnutrition. Malnutrition in children below the age of two leads to long-term health problems and related development issues. As families divert their resources to pay for food, children may be withdrawn from school and others forced to work to contribute to family income.

The G8 – the group of the eight most powerful economies – is meeting this July in Japan. Wva says together these countries represent about 65 per cent of the gross world product. The Japanese Prime Minister has agreed to put the food crisis at the top of the agenda. The G8 needs to act decisively and quickly to provide the political will and leadership to help end this crisis, says WVA. While Australia is not a member of the G8, Prime Minister Rudd will attend and could play a crucial role in influencing other world leaders to act.

Specifically, World Vision Australia wants the G8 to:

Prioritise the prevention of child hunger and malnutrition in their response to the crisis;

Immediately fulfill pledges made to the World Food Program and establish a disaster prevention fund to protect vulnerable communities;

Ensure health systems are strengthened by appropriate nutrition monitoring and staff training;

Call for an immediate process of monitoring the impact on commodity prices, hunger and the environment of diverting crops away from food towards bio-fuels;

Agree to convene an Emergency Summit on the food crisis involving G8 leaders, affected developing countries and multilateral institutions to find a common approach to ending this crisis;

Support the World Bank's 'New Deal for Global Food Policy', which balances emergency measures with strategies to increase agricultural production. **DETAILS:**

http://www.worldvision.com.au/news/newsonline/viewArticle_enh.asp?aID=1&eID=78&environmentID=3

JAPANESE CONCERN OVER FOOD SUPPLIES

In reply to a question concerning Japanese over energy supply and food supply security, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said Australia had been a long term reliable supplier of food, energy and raw

materials for more than half a century and had no intention as a nation to change that for the next half century.

"We see ourselves as long term secure suppliers, always within the discipline of the market ... What I've been at pains to point out is that the emergence of droughted circumstances in Australia has occurred over time. And what has happened with our farmers, our food technologists, and our agricultural scientists and those who have expertise in irrigation technologies is that we are great adaptors, we've been adapting over a long period of time, and that we'll continue to do so. And still see ourselves as a long term reliable supplier of food to the rest of the world, including Japan.

UN: GLOBAL FOOD AID DELIVERIES REACH LOWEST LEVEL IN 50 YEARS

Global food aid deliveries have sunk to their lowest levels in nearly five decades, with deliveries of wheat and maize facing the sharpest drops due to the impact of food price rises around the world, according to the UN World Food Program (WFP) (10/6/08).

The WFP's *Food Aid Flows* report, released this week, shows that food aid deliveries declined by 15 per cent in 2007, dropping to 5.9 million tons – the lowest level since records began in 1961. Wheat prices increased by 122 per cent and maize prices by 86 per cent between the years 2000 and 2007, meaning that aid agencies had to reduce purchases of these commodities.

The [WFP](#) said there was an urgent need to reverse this trend and that immediate action was needed to tackle the word negative effects of higher food prices on hunger and malnutrition.

"As a result of higher food prices, vulnerable populations, including children and women in rural and urban areas, are eating less, and eating less well," the report says. "They are also reducing expenditures on education and health, and possibly selling productive assets to cope with the higher food prices. These consequences are long lasting, sometimes covering a life time."

The report – which covers the flow of all international food aid, not just that moved by WFP – also found that as food prices increased on international markets, donor governments sought to purchase more food in developing countries.

The amount of food purchased in the developing world grew to 39 per cent of the overall total in 2007 – a record high that provided an important stimulus to agricultural markets in the developing world, and in an increase in incomes for small scale farmers.

Earlier this year, WFP faced a shortfall in its budget of \$755 million caused by food price rises. The funding gap was only covered after extra donations from more than 30 countries, including one of \$500 million from Saudi Arabia.

STEPHEN SMITH: NEED FOR COORDINATION AND COOPERATION

The overwhelming view coming out of the FAO Food Security Conference in Rome this week was the need for international coordination and cooperation in the long term approach to food security Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith stated in a media release (6/6/08).

This action needs to include a balance between immediate humanitarian assistance and a range of longer-term actions to address the underlying causes of food insecurity in developing countries, particularly the low-income food-deficit countries.

He said the Australian Government was developing a comprehensive long-term action plan for food security which will draw on our expertise in semi-arid agriculture research, production and adaptation.

Australia had provided over \$1 billion to the WFP since it was established in 1963. Australia was making a \$30 million contribution to the emergency appeal of the WFP towards critical gaps as a

result of rising food and fuel prices. This funding for the emergency appeal was in addition to ongoing substantial contributions to the WFP in 2007-08.

DETAILS: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s089_08.html

THE FOOD CHAIN

Last winter, as the full scope of the global food crisis became clear, commodity prices doubled or tripled, provoking grumbling in America, riots in two dozen countries and the spectre of greatly increased malnutrition, Peter Newcomb writes in a New York Times Food Chain series.

As the world clamours for more corn, wheat, soybeans and rice, farmers are trying to meet the challenge. Millions of acres are coming back into production in Europe. In Asia, planting two or three crops in a single year is becoming more common ... US soybean plantings are running 16 percent behind last year. Rice is tardy in Arkansas, which produces nearly half the country's crop. "We're certainly not going to have as good a crop as we had hoped," said Harvey Howington of the Arkansas Rice Growers Association. "I don't think this is good news for anybody."

ARTICLE: http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/business/series/the_food_chain/index.html

F. MEDIA MATTERS

MEDIA 'HAS NOT DONE ENOUGH TO EXPOSE IRAQ WAR BACKGROUND'

Former prime minister Malcolm Fraser has criticised the world's media for not having done enough to expose the background of the decisions of George W. Bush and Tony Blair to go to war in Iraq, the Australian reported (6/6/08).

Mr Fraser said there should be more scrutiny of the lead-up to the Iraq war, which he described as a "disastrous venture". He was in Canberra where he joined Kevin Rudd to officiate at the presentation of the Wallace Brown Award for up-and-coming political reporters, which was won by The Australian's Patricia Karvelas.

Citing media investigations such as those which revealed the Watergate scandal in the 1970s that brought down Richard Nixon and the campaign that helped end McCarthyism, Mr Fraser said there were times in history when journalists could change the course of world events by revealing wrongdoing or evil.

But in the lead-up to the Iraq war there was a story waiting to be told, but "I don't think journalism has pursued what happened there - how the war was begun - as vigorously and fearlessly as it should have," Mr Fraser said. "I don't believe that the fabrication of evidence and the false intelligence that was used to justify the war has been adequately exposed for what it, in fact, is.

"And I don't think that the leaders of Britain and the United States have really had put on their shoulders fairly and squarely the responsibility for what I believe was a most disastrous venture."

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23818706-7582,00.html>

MEDIA PROPRIETOR RECEIVES HIGHEST HONOUR

Seven Network executive chairman Kerry Stokes claims he hates to tell the extraordinary story of his own transformation from dyslexic teenage runaway to billionaire tycoon, The Australian reported (9/6/08).

"That 'from nothing to something' stuff ... it makes me very uncomfortable," he once said. But the move to award Mr Stokes Australia's highest civilian honour, the Companion of the Order of Australia (AC), caps one of the country's great rags-to-riches stories.

Mr Stokes's profile is personified by his position as one of the country's most prominent media proprietors. But although he was granted the AC partly for services to commerce, much of the honour can be attributed to services to the arts through his executive roles and philanthropy, and to the community, particularly through contributions to "organisations supporting youth".

ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23832763-7582,00.html>

CONRAD BLACK FIGHTS FROM PRISON

Conrad Black is still fighting the law from behind bars, Maurna Desmond writes in Forbes Magazine (6/7/08). On Friday, lawyers for Conrad Black, Baron Black of Crossharbour, told a US federal appeals court that the prosecution failed to prove that the 63-year old former newspaper tycoon had attempted to hide incriminating evidence. The defence also said that US District Judge Amy J. St. Eve did not give fair instructions to the jury.

Conrad Black was convicted of obstruction of justice after jurors watched video footage of him lugging boxes of documents out of his Toronto office and stuffing them into his vehicle. Prosecutors claimed the documents were proof of his financial shenanigans and that he was trying to keep them from the prying eyes of Securities and Exchange Commission investigators. [REPORT: http://www.forbes.com/2008/06/07/conrad-black-trial-markets-face-cx_md_0606autofacescan02.html?partner=media_newsletter](http://www.forbes.com/2008/06/07/conrad-black-trial-markets-face-cx_md_0606autofacescan02.html?partner=media_newsletter)

AFGHANISTAN: JOURNALIST SHOT DEAD

An Afghan journalist working for the BBC in the country's southern Helmand province has been found shot dead, the BBC reported (8/6/08).

Abdul Samad Rohani was abducted on Saturday and his body found on Sunday in Lashkar Gah. The BBC paid tribute to Mr Rohani, saying his "courage and dedication have been a key part of the BBC's reporting from Afghanistan in recent years". He worked with the BBC Kabul bureau and was the Pashto service reporter for the BBC World Service in Helmand. The province has seen some of the worst recent violence of the Taliban-led insurgency.

A BBC statement said Mr Rohani's "bravery - and that of his colleagues - have allowed us to tell a key story for audiences in the UK, in Afghanistan and around the world".

There have been a number of attacks on journalists in Afghanistan this year and the Kabul-based South Asia Media Commission says five Afghan journalists were killed in 2007. It was the second death of a BBC journalist over the weekend. Gunmen in Kismayo, southern Somalia, killed Nasteh Dahir, from the BBC and Associated Press news agency, on Saturday. [REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7442772.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7442772.stm)

PHILIPPINES: GRAVE CONCERN FOR MISSING CREW

Grave concerns for the safety of broadcast journalist Ces Drilon and her media crew were expressed after they were reported missing on Jolo island, Sulu archipelago, in the Philippines, on June 8. Local authorities informed the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP) that a militant organisation was suspected to have abducted Ms Drilon and fellow ABS-CBN news journalists Jimmy Encarnacion and Angelo Valderama. Well-known peace activist, Professor Octavio Dinampo, of Mindanao State University, is also reportedly missing.

[DETAILS: IFJ Asia-Pacific](http://www.ifj.org/asia-pacific) on +612 9333 0919.

FIJI: DEPORTED FIJI PUBLISHER TAKES UP NT POST

The publisher of The Fiji Times, who was deported by the military government after being declared a threat to national security, has been named as the general manager of the Northern Territory News, the Australian reported (6/6/08). Evan Hannah was expelled from Fiji in late April in defiance of a High Court ruling after being bundled into a government vehicle, driven to the airport and placed on a Korean Air flight, leaving his family behind. The move came after The Fiji Times, published by News Limited, had run a series of editorials questioning the legitimacy of the leadership and calling for a return to democracy.

[REPORT: http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23818685-7582,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23818685-7582,00.html)

INDIA: ATTACK AT HOME OF JOURNALIST

Political activists attacked the home of Kumar Ketkar, editor of the Marathi language daily Loksatta, in the western Indian state of Maharashtra on June 5, the International Federation of

Journalists (IFJ) reported (6/6/08). The All-India Newspaper Employees' Federation (AINEF) called for action. Police have detained seven people. It was claimed the attackers were responding to an article in Loksatta that criticised - as a cheap way of gaining political mileage - a decision by the Maharashtra state government to install a 94-metre-high statue of Chhatrapati Shivaji, ruler of a medieval kingdom in the Marathi cultural region, off the coast from Mumbai. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

SRI LANKA: DETENTION OF JOURNALIST EXTENDED

A new 90-day extension of a detention order against journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, who has been held without charge in Sri Lanka since his arrest on March 8, 2008, was reported by the IFJ (11/6/08). Mr Tissainayagam is being detained under the Emergency Regulations (2005) Act. TID has refused to provide details of Mr Tissainayagam's arrest except to say, initially, that he was being held under emergency regulations for 30 days. The Free Media Movement (FMM) is demanding that the authorities account for the continuing detention or release him immediately. A Tamil, he is editor of outreachsl.com website, and was arrested following the similar detention of E-Kwality Printers owner N. Jesiheran and his wife, Valarmathy, who share the same office building. TID officials are reported to have repeatedly ignored Mr Tissainayagam's scheduled appointments to appear before a Magistrate's Court to finalise a charge against him, as stipulated by the Emergency Regulations (2005) Act. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

INDONESIA: CALL FOR DEFAMATION LAW REFORM IN INDONESIA

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) called for legal reform in Indonesia as journalist Risang Bima Wijaya was due to be released after serving a six-month jail sentence for criminal defamation (7/6/08). Mr Risang, a former general manager and editor-in-chief of Radar Jogja and journalist with Jawa Pos newspaper, was sentenced to six months in prison by the Indonesian Supreme Court in January. The IJF reported that the case highlighted the use of criminal defamation laws to target journalists and that the IFJ and the Aliansi Jurnalis Independen (AJI) had fought consistently against criminal defamation laws in Indonesia. So far 41 cases of criminal defamation proceedings against journalists in Indonesia from 2003 to 2007 have been recorded. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

CHINA: RESTRICTIONS CONTINUE IN SICHUAN

China continued to restrict journalists reporting on the aftermath of the devastating earthquake in Sichuan province in May, the IFJ reported (10/6/08). Police had become especially vigilant in controlling reporting to do with the deaths of students at Juyuan Middle School, Dujiangyan city. The Central Propaganda Department issued a directive to all media not to carry reports about the collapsed school buildings. On June 3 police prevented journalists and photographers from Kyodo News Agency and Associated Press from reporting on a lawsuit filed by parents of students killed at the school. Around 280 students and teachers died when the school building collapsed. The lawsuit cites the local government in Dujiangyan, alleging poor building standards. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

IFJ PRESS FREEDOM IN CHINA CAMPAIGN

June 8 Bulletin:

1. Mixed signs of progress after earthquake
2. IFJ and HKJA take new steps for journalists' safety
3. Jailing of journalists continues
4. Attacks on journalists' employment undermine media freedom
5. IFJ and HKJA press for Hu Jia's release
6. Sing Pao wobbles as staff concerns grow
7. Hong Kong judge delivers victory for RTHK
8. *Hong Kong Lawyer* spikes article on Tibet
9. Second Chinese journalist wins Golden Pen
10. New Olympic guidelines raise fears of journalists being barred

DETAILS: www.ifj.org and ifjchina@ifj-asia.org.

G. OTHER NEWS

WFP ASKS NAVIES TO PROTECT FOOD FROM PIATES

The UN World Food Program (WFP) appealed to naval powers to help protect its ships carrying life-saving assistance from pirate attacks, saying that as many as two million Somalis could go hungry without this essential help (12/6/08). A Dutch frigate is scheduled to finish escort services for WFP on June 25.

Since the escort system started in November, no WFP ships have been targeted by pirates, despite an upsurge of piracy in Somali waters – there have been 31 attacks so far this year, according to the International Maritime Bureau.

“Without escorts, our whole maritime supply route will be threatened,” said WFP Country, Director Peter Goossens. “Shipping companies are reluctant to sail unescorted to Somalia and we have no offers to take over from the Royal Netherlands Navy.”

“Millions of Somalis are suffering from a combination of insecurity, drought and high food and fuel prices. If relief shipments slow down, we could face a major catastrophe,” said Mr Goossens, adding that WFP was trying to scale up relief food distributions to avoid a disaster.

Some 80 percent of WFP food for Somalia arrives by sea. From mid-November to June 25, a succession of French, Danish and Dutch frigates will have escorted 27 ships loaded with 112,500 metric tons of WFP food – enough to feed nearly one million people for six months.

Relief food deliveries by sea are essential. High commodity prices in East Africa have prompted WFP to purchase food in South Africa. Experts fear that the number of people requiring food assistance later this year could reach 3.5 million people – nearly half the population.

DETAILS: <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>; Peter Smerdon, WFP/Nairobi on +254-20-7622179. Bettina Luescher, WFP/New York on +1-212-9635196/m +1-646-8241112; luescher@un.org

ZIMBABWE: OPPOSITION MP ARRESTED TWICE IN ONE WEEK

Zimbabwe's High Court ordered police to release an opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) member of parliament after he was arrested for the second time in a week, The Australian reported (9/6/08).

Eric Matinenga was initially arrested on June 1 on charges of inciting public violence in his constituency, but was later released after a magistrate dropped the charges and said he had been wrongly charged. He was detained for a second time on Sunday.

His arrest came amid accusations by the opposition that President Robert Mugabe's government was trying to sabotage MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai's campaign ahead of a June 27 run-off presidential election. The second round vote follows a disputed March poll which showed Mr Tsvangirai beat Mr Mugabe, but not by enough votes to avoid a run-off.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23833575-12377,00.html>

ATTORNEY-GENERAL MEETS CHINESE LEGAL EXCHANGE PARTICIPANTS

Attorney-General Robert McClelland met eight representatives of the Chinese legal fraternity, who have recently completed an intensive study and work placement program in Australia, as part of the Australia-China Legal Profession Development program (10/8/08).

“The program provides a great opportunity to not only promote professional links, but also camaraderie and understanding between the Australian and Chinese legal professions,” Mr McClelland said. “The eight lawyers have gained an insight into the skills required to practice law in Australia, while making friends and exchanging knowledge with their Australian counterparts.”

The Chinese participants undertook work placements with Australian and state government agencies, and private law firms in Melbourne, Canberra, Sydney, Adelaide and Brisbane. They have also attended intensive university courses in Australian law and practice, and went on study tours of various courts and institutions. The Chinese lawyers were awarded *Australian Leadership Awards – Fellowships* by AusAID. [DETAILS](#): Adam Sims on 0419 488 240.

IMPACT OF EFFICIENCY DIVIDEND ON SMALLER AGENCIES INQUIRY

Chairperson of the Public Accounts Committee, Sharon Grierson, announced this week that the committee would inquire into the impact of the efficiency dividend on smaller public sector agencies.

The dividend was introduced in 1987-88. Each year, the public funding component of agencies' budgets has usually been trimmed by 1.25 per cent. For the 2008-09 year only, the government increased the efficiency dividend by an extra 2 per cent.

Ms Grierson said, "The committee is concerned that the efficiency dividend may have had a greater effect on small agencies than the larger ones. Small agencies often don't implement new policy, so they don't receive extra funding on a regular basis. It appears that for some agencies the only funding experience may be a constant shaving of their budget.

"Although they have small budgets, these agencies play a vital part in our system of government. They include the High Court, the Australian National Audit Office, the Ombudsman and the Parliamentary Departments."

Preliminary statistics of agencies' budgets between 2000-01 and 2008-09 show a noticeable difference in growth between types of agencies. For small agencies (budgets less than \$150 million per annum), their budgets grew by 27 per cent on average. For non-security large agencies, budget growth was 57 per cent. In the large security agencies, budget growth was 185 per cent on average. Over this period, the Consumer Price Index increased by 30 per cent.

Ms Grierson said, "Preliminary statistics suggest that the budgets of small agencies are barely keeping up with inflation, and have lagged behind the budgets of larger agencies. The committee will examine the impact on smaller agencies' functions, performance and staffing arrangements." [DETAILS](#): Inquiry secretary on 0) 6277 4574 or <http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/jpaa/efficdiv/index.htm>

OPIUM CULTIVATION 'SHOCKINGLY HIGH'

The Security Council, concerned at the "high level of opium cultivation, production and trafficking" in Afghanistan, has [called on](#) states to bolster cooperation to counter this illicit practice which is thwarting the country's security and development (11/6/08). According to a [study](#) released in February by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), this year's opium cultivation levels in Afghanistan remain shockingly high, and will be broadly similar to or slightly lower than last year's record harvest of 192,000 hectares. Afghanistan is currently the world's largest producer of opium and heroin.

[REPORT](#): <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=26978&Cr=afghan&Cr1=opium>

KENYAN OAP PUPIL TAKEN INTO CARE

Kenya's oldest pupil, 88-year-old Kimani Nganga Maruge, has been forced to abandon his studies and move into a home for the aged, his school told the BBC (6/6/08). Teachers said Mr Maruge had been identified as vulnerable by the Red Cross following the unrest which shook the country after December's election.

Mr Maruge's schooling was disrupted in January, when his home was burnt down. The great grandfather has held since 2004 the world record for being the oldest person to start primary school. Mr Maruge enrolled at Kapkenduywa Primary in Eldoret a year after the Kenyan government introduced free primary schooling.

The school's head teacher, Jane Obinchi, said he had never missed school before and so when he failed to show up on Thursday, they began to look for him. The Red Cross later confirmed Mr Maruge had been taken into care. Ms Obinchi expressed her disappointment at the decision and said it may have been hastily taken. Mr Maruge, two of whose grandchildren also attend the school, had said he wanted to eventually complete a veterinary diploma.

ARTICLE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7441208.stm>

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

PRINCE: HELP ME SAVE THE RAINFORESTS

The Prince of Wales writes: Today is World Environment Day, a day that should remind us that there is just the smallest window left for us to act to stop catastrophic climate change. The frightening reality is that the consequences of global warming are being felt far more rapidly than most scientists predicted even 18 months ago, the Expat Telegraph reported (5/6/08).

The polar ice caps are melting faster, the ability of the oceans to absorb carbon dioxide is diminishing and our weather patterns are ever more erratic and more extreme. But we do still have a chance to stop the worst excesses of climate change, so long as we act now. And one of the most effective ways to do this is by halting the destruction of the rainforests, one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

Today I am launching the website for my Rainforests Project. On it are three films, together with the findings of some new research. The films, which The Daily Telegraph is hosting on its website today, and which can also be viewed at www.princesrainforestsproject.org, make use of compelling images from the world's rainforests, as well as animation, to describe some of the stark facts and implications of tropical deforestation.

In a little less than my lifetime, we have lost 50 per cent of the world's rainforests. Every year, 32 million acres - an area the size of England - is destroyed or degraded. The message is clear: our world is in grave danger of losing its life-support system.

These forests, which straddle the equator in a belt around the world, contain not only some of the richest biodiversity known to science, which is crucial to human health and survival in the future, but are also home to millions of the world's poorest people, whose livelihoods depend on them. They also play a crucial role in cooling and cleaning the atmosphere and providing fresh water and rainfall.

At a time when shortages of food are being experienced the world over and population continues to rise, this rainfall is more important than ever before. Amazonia's forests alone, for instance, help to store the largest body of flowing freshwater on the planet, and they release 20 billion tonnes of water vapour into the atmosphere every day. At the same time, and of vital importance, these forests store carbon on a giant scale; when they are cut down and burnt, the carbon is released into the atmosphere in vast quantities. That is why stopping deforestation is one of the quickest and most certain ways of slowing climate change and thus purchasing a breathing space.

Many people are pinning their hopes on new technologies. But while the search for these is gathering momentum, whether it be carbon capture and storage, third-generation biofuels or hydrogen systems, so is global warming. And these technologies, however quickly they can be developed, are unlikely to make a significant contribution in time. Yet, in the world's tropical rainforests, nature has given us an infinitely more effective in reducing the rate of climate change, preserving the rainforests was put second only to switching to renewable energy across all four countries.

But, while research shows that people in developed countries understand how rainforests matter, do we truly understand how we are, in large part, the problem? The cause of deforestation does not lie with the rainforest nations. Too often it is demand from developed countries for palm oil,

beef and soya which is driving the destruction of the rainforests and making them worth far more dead than alive.

In his ground-breaking report in 2006, Lord Stern identified avoiding deforestation as a "relatively cost-effective" measure to mitigate climate change. He estimated it would cost \$10-15 billion a year to halve deforestation by 2030. Although the recent increase in demand for food commodities may have altered this estimate, tackling deforestation is still one of the cheapest and quickest routes to fight climate change. But we need to halt deforestation, not halve it. If this were to cost, say, \$30 billion, it would represent just under one per cent of the approximately \$3,500 billion spent on insurance premiums every year - insurance that often ends up paying for the damage caused by climate change.

What seems to be lacking, however, is what Martin Luther King described as "the fierce urgency of now" and that is why I have set up my Rainforests Project, with the support of some of the world's biggest businesses and leading experts, and working with countries around the world, including the Coalition for Rainforest Nations.

The project's objective is to find innovative ways of paying the countries that are the custodians of the tropical rainforests an appropriate price for the eco-system services they provide and so out-compete the drivers of deforestation. Put simply, our aim is to make the rainforests worth more alive than dead. It is worth remembering, perhaps, that it has become accepted throughout the developed world that people pay for utilities such as gas, water and electricity. The rainforests are probably our greatest natural utility, providing huge and irreplaceable benefits. It is time we started to pay for them, too.

OBAMA, LIKE JFK, HAS THE WIND BEHIND HIM

Obama is the Kennedy of a new generation, writes William Rees-Mogg in the London Times (9/6/08). "I have strong personal memories of the Kennedy election in 1960 that took a Roman Catholic to the White House for the first time ... On February 18 I wrote: "It is hard to see who can stop Senator Barack Obama becoming the next president of the United States. He has built up an excitement such as no candidate has created since President Kennedy in 1960." Hillary Clinton tried to stop him and she failed. The Republican candidate, Senator John McCain, is a fine man, but he will not wage as forceful a campaign as Senator Clinton. [ARTICLE: http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/william_rees_mogg/article4092125.ece](http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/william_rees_mogg/article4092125.ece)

RUSSIA ON EDGE AS CHINA GROWS

Wang Yong, a 33-year-old entrepreneur in the town of Manzhouli, has been waiting all morning on the Chinese side of the Russian border for his Russian truck drivers to arrive, John Garnaut writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (9/6/08) ... Mr Wang relies on Russian drivers to take his fresh fruit to Chita, in Russia's wild east, because Chinese drivers face a minefield of extortion. Russia is erecting legal and illicit barriers to Chinese trade in a climate of rising paranoia summed up in the *Pravda* headline: "Chinese immigrants to conquer Russia". Russia's anxiety trades partly on an old fear that Chinese hordes are itching to take back the resource-rich and under-populated regions of Siberia that Russia annexed from Qing Dynasty China. [ARTICLE: http://business.smh.com.au/russia-on-edge-as-china-grows-20080608-2nlq.html](http://business.smh.com.au/russia-on-edge-as-china-grows-20080608-2nlq.html)

IT'S TIME TO BURY THE BAN

Kevin Rudd should overturn the policy championed by former senator Brian Harradine of not providing foreign aid for abortion advice, according to the Sydney Morning Herald (8/6/08) ... For some time in the Howard days, Harradine had enormous power as a swing vote, enabling that Coalition government to pass some crucial legislation. But he was also the man who said no to the GST, forcing Howard into a deal with the Democrats to get the tax in. That deal was one of the factors in the long drawn-out death of the Democrats, who will disappear from the Senate on June 30. Harradine was a tough bargainer, and the Howard government was always accommodating him. Money poured into Tasmania for this and that. But it was moral issues that Harradine was most passionate about. And one of those involved the aid budget. The Howard

government, in recognition of how much it would need him, agreed to a ban on Australian aid funding advice on abortion.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/opinion/its-time-to-bury-the-ban/2008/06/07/1212259177542.html>

FEAR, DISILLUSION AND DESPAIR: A DIVIDED LAND AS PEACE SLIPS AWAY

Samiullah is 23. His family farm is in the village of Sohrabi, an hour's drive, he says, from Kabul. Samiullah has not seen it or his family recently. They are living in Peshawar in Pakistan. "In Afghanistan everything is in chaos," says Samiullah in a London Guardian article (8/6/08) ... Afghanistan's problems spring from "lies and promises that were not kept. There is no security. Everything is in disorder. And the poor are no better off than they were before. They have to take out loans that they cannot return." ... In the seventh year after the fall of the first incarnation of the Taliban, two Afghanistans exist. The first is defined by international effort in the country - civil and military - whose story is told in battles won and reconstruction projects brought successfully to fruition. It is largely told through the prism of foreigners, diplomats and soldiers, British, Canadian and American. It emphasises good news, most recently a claim - that would surprise Afghans - that foreign forces were "routing" the Taliban. The other Afghanistan is largely ignored. This has 30 million people in whose name the war is being fought.

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jun/08/afghanistan>

SURGERY OFFERS MUSLIM WOMEN ILLUSION OF VIRGINITY

The operation in the private clinic involved one semicircular cut, 10 dissolving stitches and a discounted fee of \$2,900, the New York Times reported (11/6/08).

Dr. Marc Abecassis carries out hymen reconstruction surgery on a 23-year-old French woman of north-African origin. But for the patient, a 23-year-old French student of Moroccan descent from Montpellier, the 30-minute procedure represented the key to a new life: the illusion of virginity. Like an increasing number of Muslim women in Europe, she had a hymenoplasty, a restoration of her hymen, the vaginal membrane that normally breaks in the first act of intercourse. "In my culture, not to be a virgin is to be dirt," said the student, perched on a hospital bed as she awaited surgery on Thursday. "Right now, virginity is more important to me than life."

ARTICLE: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/11/world/europe/11virgin.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

ENERGY

G8 NATIONS AGREE ON INTERNATIONAL ENERGY-SAVING FRAMEWORK

Energy ministers from the Group of Eight nations on Sunday agreed on the establishment of a new international framework aimed at facilitating energy-saving measures to temper climate change and soaring fuel costs, at a time when crude oil is closing in on \$140 a barrel, the Japan Times reported (9/6/08).

Japan, which hosted the one-day meeting, and the other G8 members - Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Russia and the US - decided to set up the International Partnership for Energy Efficiency Cooperation and invited China, India, [South Korea](#) and other countries to participate.

In the north-eastern city of Aomori, the G8 powers and the three Asian countries, which are responsible for about 65 per cent of the world's energy demand and carbon dioxide emissions, said they share "serious concerns over the current level of oil prices."

In addition to climate change, soaring food and oil prices are increasing the risk of economic and political instability on a world scale, especially in developing countries, and they will be central agenda items at the [G8 summit](#) to be held in Hokkaido on July 7 to 9.

REPORT: <http://search.japantimes.co.jp/cgi-bin/nn20080609a2.html>

BACKING FOR AUSTRALIAN HYBRID GREEN CAR

Toyota Australia will produce 10,000 hybrid Camrys a year at Altona, from 2010, according to a joint Federal and Victorian government media release (10/6/08).

Victorian Premier John Brumby said the announcement was a significant coup for Australia, and a project the Federal and Victorian Governments had been working hard on for some time. "The hybrid Camry will be the first green vehicle of its kind to be manufactured in Australia," he said. Fuel efficient cars were the future of the automotive industry.

As part of its \$500 million Green Car Innovation Fund, the Federal Government will provide \$35 million in assistance to Toyota Australia and the Victorian Government will also make a financial contribution. The hybrid Camry was claimed as the greenest car manufactured in Australia with lower emissions than any other Australian-produced model.

TWO DEAD IN EUROPE/ASIA FUEL PROTESTS

Asian consumers have protested over soaring oil prices and in southern Europe two pickets supporting truck drivers' strikes died, the ABC reported (11/6/08). Portugal, Spain and France have been affected by protests over record oil prices, now at highs of more than \$US139 per barrel.

Diesel has risen to 1.30 euros/litre from 0.95 euros a year ago, pressuring European Union (EU) governments to help heavy fuel users. In Asia governments are struggling to prevent rising prices making the burden on the public so heavy that it threatens political stability. South Korea's Cabinet offered to resign after huge street protests.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/11/2270723.htm>

MALAYSIA ACTS/ HONG KONG DRIVERS PROTEST/INDIA

Malaysian Prime Minister Abdullah Ahmad Badawi pledged one billion ringgit (\$324.4 million) in extra spending for the politically key state of Sarawak, to shore up support there among lawmakers unhappy over a jump in fuel costs. A decision last week to raise petrol prices by 41 per cent and diesel by 63 further soured the mood and the opposition is calling for protests later this week, according to AlertNet (10/6/08).

In Hong Kong about 500 minibuses, lorries, garbage trucks and coaches staged a go-slow protest, crippling traffic in a demonstration calling for fuel taxes to be scrapped. Burned tyres and blocked roads in parts of eastern India resulted during protests at fuel price rises; elsewhere in the country calls for strikes were largely ignored.

India increased petrol and diesel prices last week by around 10 per cent after the cost of fuel subsidies brought state oil companies close to bankruptcy.

DETAILS: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP106193.htm>

ENVIRONMENT

NGOS 'ONLY 40 PER CENT' OF FUNDS NEEDED FOR BURMA

UN aid agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have received just 40 per cent of the funding needed to meet their flash appeal launched after Cyclone Nargis battered Myanmar, more than five weeks after the catastrophe struck the Asian nation (11/6/08).

As of Monday this week, there have been firm contributions of \$82 million – far short of the total \$201 million sought – and there have been another \$51 million of uncommitted pledges.

Amanda Pitt, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), said in Bangkok that humanitarian agencies were concerned that there could be

shortages of food relief, shelter and other supplies in the coming weeks unless more money was provided.

"We need some half a million tarpaulins to help with shelter, and funding is urgently needed to sustain the pipeline for food assistance," she said. "Of course the overall concern is to continue to try to get systematic assistance to those most in need, and particularly to those most vulnerable to disease, malnutrition and exposure."

More than 134,000 people are dead or missing as a result of Cyclone Nargis and the subsequent tidal wave, which struck Myanmar on 2-3 May, causing the greatest damage to Ayeyarwady Delta area and Yangon, the country's most populous city. As many as 2.4 million people were affected and need humanitarian assistance.

The World Food Program ([WFP](#)) has dispatched 11,000 tons of food assistance to affected areas, but with food prices rising due to the scarcity of many commodities, the agency is distributing cash in lieu of food in some areas.

In a joint operation by the World Health Organisation ([WHO](#)) and the national health ministry, three mobile health teams will conduct a one-week mission to trace TB patients whose treatment has been disrupted.

Meanwhile, a joint relief and early recovery assessment team, involving 250 staff from UN agencies, the [World Bank](#), the Asian Development Bank and 18 government ministries, will spend 10 days travelling the affected region to determine both immediate needs and longer-term issues. Ms Pitt said the preliminary findings of the assessment were expected to be released by June 25.

CHINESE TROOPS BEGAN DRAIN 'QUAKE LAKE'

Chinese troops began draining a "quake lake" at Tangjiashan, formed behind a landslide after the 12 May earthquake in Sichuan province, the BBC reported (7/6/08). Water started draining through a sluice and channel built to release some of the water threatening to break through the make-shift dam. More than 250,000 people had been evacuated to higher ground. The threat posed by more than 30 quake lakes formed during the earthquake has become one of the most pressing issues in the aftermath of the quake. Government figures put the quake death toll at 69,130 with another 17,824 people missing.

[REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7441456.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7441456.stm)

DROUGHT BUS TOURS RIVERINA

Continuing a tour of drought affected regions of Australia, the Federal Government Drought Bus is visiting Riverina towns in June to inform farmers, residents and small businesses about available payments and support.

"We're making it easier for farmers, small businesses and town people to access drought assistance payments as well as other Australian Government support services such as Centrelink, by taking the Drought Bus directly to the people," said Drought Bus Coordinator Andrew Gregory. said. [REPORT:](#)

http://www.centrelink.gov.au/internet/internet.nsf/news_room/08nsw_drought_bus_riverina.htm

NT 'TOXIC DUMP' PROMISE BROKEN SAY GREENS

The Rudd Government was about to ditch a key election promise as Martin Ferguson moved to foist a nuclear waste dump on to the Northern Territory, the Greens stated (9/6/08). The Labor Party had promised Northern Territory electors it would repeal Howard's nuclear waste dump legislation in the heat of their election campaign," said Senator Rachel Siewert. Now Mr Ferguson was telling the Territorians that they have to have it anyway, she said.

"Martin Ferguson is claiming the dump will only be used to store Australian nuclear waste – but how can we now trust the ALP to break one promise yet keep another?" asked Senator Siewert.

"This decision is opening the flood-gates to this toxic industry."
DETAILS: Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025; <http://www.rachelsiewert.org.au>

SeaNet MAY CLOSE ITS DOORS

While the Rudd Government could be applauded on World Oceans Day for its strong stance on Japanese whaling, it was claimed it had turned its back on a vital key to the rest of its marine obligations (8/6/08).

It was reported that SeaNet, Australia's environmental extension program for the fishing industry which for the past ten years has worked to protect the marine environment, will have to close its doors on June 30, as the Federal Government had yet to decide on funding.

"We've gone from lifeguard to grasping for a life line," said Anissa Lawrence, CEO of SeaNet's managing body OceanWatch Australia. "SeaNet has built up a unique partnership between environmentalists, researchers, and the fishing industry that is based on an equal commitment to a healthy, sustainable marine environment and this will be lost," she said.

SeaNet won a UN World Environment Day Award in 2005 for its work in helping Australia's commercial fishers reduce the accidental capture of iconic marine wildlife and other marine animals, as well as the environmental damage that some methods cause.

"SeaNet is delivering on industry's and government commitments to reducing the accidental entanglement of such species as dugong, sharks, seals, marine turtles, dolphins and – ironically – whales," Ms Lawrence said.

SeaNet is an initiative of OceanWatch Australia (OWA) - a non-government organisation that has worked for the past 20 years towards achieving a sustainable Australian seafood industry. It has assisted more than 7000 Australian commercial fishers in Australia's fourth largest primary industry, to fish in a more environmentally responsible manner.

DETAILS: Anissa Lawrence, CEO OceanWatch Australia on 0419 903 800 or 02 9660 2262

PACIFIC FISHERIES 'FACING DESTRUCTIVE PRACTICES'

On World Ocean Day the Australian Greens renewed calls for an increased focus on protecting Australia's marine environments (8/6/08).

"Today is World Ocean Day, a day when we should be focusing on real action to protect our diverse marine environments before they are lost to overfishing and climate change," said Greens spokesperson Senator Rachel Siewert.

For example, "Pacific fisheries face increasing pressure from illegal fishing and over-fishing, and from destructive fishing practices like bottom trawling. If we do not act soon Pacific fisheries could be overfished to the point of collapse." **DETAILS:** Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025

CSIRO REPORTS ON SEAFLOOR MINING

The environmental, economic, regulatory and social issues raised as a result of the mining industry's increasing interest in extracting rich deposits of minerals from Australia's seafloor are discussed in a new report launched in Sydney by the Director of CSIRO's Wealth from Oceans National Research Flagship, Dr Kate Wilson (13/6/08).

Dr Wilson says record world demand for minerals now means the seafloor around Australia is increasingly being seen as a new frontier.

"Two offshore mining operations are already working in Australian waters and there are 31 pending offshore exploration, mining, and retention licences in both state/territory and Commonwealth waters," she says. "But does this nascent industry have a social licence to

operate? Does it have the support of the wider community and, if not, why not? The flagship's report looks closely at these questions."

The report identifies a particular concern with the levels of uncertainty about the environmental impacts of seafloor activity. (NOTE: Mineral extraction from the seabed is a subject covered by the UN's Law of the Sea Convention).

The report, titled; *Exploring the social dimensions of an expansion to the seafloor exploration and mining industry in Australia*, recommends the creation of an improved information base, enhanced communication between stakeholders and an improved understanding of the policy and legislative process.

The CSIRO initiated the National Research Flagships (www.csiro.au/flagships) to provide science-based solutions in response to Australia's major research challenges and opportunities. **DETAILS:** Meg Rive, Wealth from Oceans Flagship on 0438 007 301; Meg.Rive@csiro.au www.csiro.au/resources/SEMReport

DIPLOMACY 'STILL FAILING TO SAVE WHALES'

Stronger action should be taken over the slaughter of whales in Australia's Antarctic waters and Australia should refuse to progress a free trade agreement with Japan until it stopped killing whales, the Australian Greens said (9/6/08).

"It's clear that diplomatic efforts will not be enough to halt the slaughter," said Greens spokesperson Senator Rachel Siewert. "Diplomatic efforts have simply not proved effective with Japan. The government has failed to save a single whale since taking office, and the Japanese have indicated they plan to increase the harvest and expand the program," she said. Australia needed to take stronger action both inside and outside the IWC. "We need to pursue legal avenues through the international court and the Antarctic treaty, and confront Japan on this issue in other international forums." **DETAILS:** Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025.