

UNITY

THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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

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Unity and Supplement can also be accessed at: <http://www.unityunaa.info/>

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au or email the editor.

(It may be necessary to copy and paste links into your browser/address box)

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

UN ENVOY TO TIMOR-LESTE 'VALUES AUSTRALIAN ROLE'

The UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Timor-Leste, Dr Atul Khare, who met with Foreign Minister Stephen Smith this week, confirmed that the United Nations saw a key role for countries such as Australia in the future of East Timor.

The meeting was seen as an opportunity to further Australia's close cooperation with the UN in joint efforts to assist the people and government of East Timor.

Mr Smith said Australia welcomed the important contribution made by the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) in promoting stability, human rights, democracy and the rule of law in East Timor and appreciated Dr Khare's strong and effective leadership of UNMIT.

Dr Khare said, "We value Australia's continued support for reform of the national police and army, strengthening of the rule of law and democratic governance and the promotion of socio-economic development".

Australia contributes 50 police to the United Nations Police in East Timor and the Australian-led International Stabilisation Force, made up of Australian and New Zealand soldiers, works closely with, and supports, the UN presence in East Timor.

DETAILS: Foreign Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; Department on 02 6261 1555;
http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s097_08.html

GOVERNMENTS ASKED TO RATIFY TREATY TO PROTECT UN STAFF

The head of the UN staff union and the top UN legal official has called on governments to join a legal instrument designed to protect humanitarian personnel around the world (25/6/08).

At a ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York, Staff Union President Stephen Kisambira and UN Legal Counsel Nicolas Michel presented a certificate to diplomats from the 14 countries that have ratified the Optional Protocol to the 1994 Convention on the Safety of UN and Associated Personnel.

The countries are Austria, Botswana, Gabon, Germany, Kenya, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and Tunisia.

"Your ratification was a significant step," Mr. Kisambira said. "It will enhance security of staff worldwide. I encourage all member states to follow your lead."

The 2005 Optional Protocol provides legal protection to staff delivering emergency humanitarian assistance and to those providing political and development assistance in peace-building. It extends the legal protection offered by the 1994 Convention, which only applies to personnel engaged in peacekeeping operations. The convention has been ratified by 84 member states, or 43 per cent of the UN membership. The Optional Protocol is not yet in force, as eight ratifications are still required for its coming into effect. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27160&Cr=humanitarian&Cr1=personnel>

UN SECURITY HEAD RESIGNS

The head of United Nations security has resigned, saying he will shoulder full responsibility for any security lapse that may have occurred concerning the deadly terrorist attack against UN facilities in Algiers last December (23/6/08).

Sir David Veness, Under-Secretary-General for Security and Safety, informed Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon that, as the head of the Department of Safety and Security, he had voluntarily offered to resign in light of his responsibility.

"I am grateful to Sir David Veness for his high sense of devotion to duty and strong professional motivation," Mr Ban said in a [statement](#). "As the first head of the Department, he has provided it strong leadership at a critical period in building a safety and security structure for the UN that has significantly improved its security management system in a whole range of areas."

Mr Ban added that this had been recognised by the Independent Panel tasked with assessing the safety and security of UN staff worldwide, which had handed in its report earlier this year.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27131&Cr=algiers&Cr1=bomb>

UN STAFF MEMBER ABDUCTED FROM HIS SOMALI HOME

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) has called for the immediate and unconditional release of a Somali staff member who was abducted on Saturday from his home outside the war-torn capital, Mogadishu (23/6/08). Hassan Mohamed Ali, also known as Keynaan, was taken from his home by gunmen. "We demand the immediate and unconditional release of Hassan Mohamed Ali," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27112&Cr=Somali&Cr1=>

ARAB CITIES LAUNCH DISCRIMINATION

Several cities across the Arab world are launching a campaign to fight racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation ([UNESCO](#)).

At a ceremony in Morocco, the municipalities of Casablanca, Doha, Essaouira, Cairo, Nouakchott, Rabat and Tangiers announced the formation of a coalition to combat racism, following similar ventures in Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region (24/6/08).

With Casablanca acting as the leader of the network, the cities will sign a joint declaration committing to local action based on a ten-point plan which takes into account the forms of discrimination specific to their region.

[Initiated by UNESCO in March 2004](#), the project aims to help municipalities share their experiences to improve policies to fight discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion.

UNESCO says that municipal authorities, as policy-makers at the local level, are key players in this process, which has the ultimate aim of creating an international coalition, drawing in all the cities around the world which want to work together to combat racism.

The official international coalition launch was scheduled for June 30 in Nantes, France, as part of the 3rd World Forum of Human Rights.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27132&Cr=unesco&Cr1=racism>

UN AND LEBANESE GOVERNMENT TO REBUILD REFUGEE CAMP

The UN and the Lebanese Government were seeking \$445 million to rebuild the devastated Nahr El-Bared Palestinian refugee camp during an international donor conference in Vienna (20/6/08).

The camp, situated in northern Lebanon, was the scene of heavy fighting from May to September 2007 between the national army and Fatah el-Islam gunmen. The violence left 30,000 Palestinian refugees and Lebanese homeless.

Matthias Burchard of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East ([UNRWA](#)) told reporters in Geneva that 70 countries and international organizations had been invited to the conference, which is being hosted by Austria in cooperation with Lebanon, the European Commission and the Arab League.

The reconstruction of the Nahr El-Bared camp represents the largest undertaking in UNRWA's history, and will require the building of a new town with houses, schools, health centres, mosques and other community facilities, as well as a UN compound and associated infrastructure, he noted.
REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27099&Cr=unrwa&Cr1=>

STAND UP AND TAKE ACTION AGAINST POVERTY 2008

The director of the United Nations Information Centre, Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific is seeking support for the 2008 Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty Campaign scheduled for October 17/19.

UNIC reports that last year more than 43 million people all over the world stood up and spoke out sending a clear and powerful message to governments: "Keep your promises to end poverty and achieve the Millennium Development Goals."

The centre says, "This year the centre is inviting you to Stand Up and Take Action Against Poverty, to be a part of the growing global movement determined to stamp out poverty and inequality.

"We have reached the halfway mark to 2015, the target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals. There has been some progress, but there is still a long way to go. We need to take urgent and inspired action now, to remind our governments we expect them to deliver. That's why this year we're focusing on country-specific actions in support of the achievement of the Millennium Goals. Millions will be Standing Up and Taking Action, locally, nationally and globally.

"Standing up and taking action can involve signing a petition, sending a text message campaign, making phone calls to local government representatives, face to face meetings with parliamentarians, local and national leaders. We can all take action to eradicate extreme poverty.

"Schools can do their part in standing up too. Listening to the principal read a pledge from the United Nations will send a clear and vital message to students: That everyone can stand up for a cause. (School pledge will be provided: standup@un.org.au). What's important is that we all Stand Up and Take Action to make our demands heard loud and clear.

"By starting on a Friday and concluding on a Sunday, everyone, whether at home, at work, at school, university or in a place of worship will have the chance to take part. We will once again be aiming to break the world record for the most number of people to Stand Up Against Poverty. But even more importantly, you will be building on the momentum created over the last two years, a momentum which has already contributed to real progress.

"Thank you for all you have done to make Stand Up a strong movement and powerful force in the fight to end poverty and see the Millennium Goals achieved and exceeded. Let's resolve to make Stand Up and Take Action even more successful in 2008."

IDEAS AND RESOURCES:

<http://www.endpoverty2015.org/resource> and <http://www.un.org/Pubs/CyberSchoolBus/>

Information on the 2007 Campaign: <http://www.un.org.au/Page.aspx?element=78&category=1>.

DETAILS: Julia Dean, UN Information Centre for Australia, NZ & South Pacific on 61 (0)2 62738200 and 61 (0)2 62738205.

UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS

To access major United Nations websites, go to:

[United Nations.](#)

[Secretary-General.](#)

[UN News Centre.](#)

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

United Nations Information Centre for Australia,
New Zealand and the Pacific, Level 1, 7 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600, Canberra

or PO Box 5366, Kingston ACT 2604, and on 61 (2) 6273 8200 .

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

For more information about the United Nations Association of Australia in your state or if you want to join UNAA, access <http://www.unaa.org.au/> or contact:

UNAA ACT unaaact@cyberone.com.au on 02 6247 4499 .

UNAA NSW office@unaansw.org.au 02 9212 0998 ;f 02 9280
0137 .

UNAA Qld unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au on ph/fax 07 32541096.

UNAA SA unaasa@picknowl.com.au on 08 8226 4141 .

UNAA Tas. secretary@UNAATasmania.org on 03 6229 4269
<http://www.unaatasmania.org/>.

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

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

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

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au or email the editor.

As a regular reader of UNity, please make sure you notify us if you change your email address by sending your new email address to judycnnn@yahoo.com.au

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

CLIMATE CHANGE REFUGEES A REALITY ALREADY: UN PRESIDENT

Climate change is forcing people around the world to leave their villages or even their countries because of the increased frequency of floods and droughts and the re-emergence of diseases, UN General Assembly President Srgjan Kerim said (24/6/08).

"The topic of climate refugees is no longer a concept – it is a sad fact," he [told](#) the first annual meeting of the Global Humanitarian Forum in Geneva. The impact of global warming was already so intense it was altering the lives of the world's most vulnerable people, calling for "a global alliance for action" to devise solutions to the problems raised by climate change, he said.

"Each nation, each city, each town, each community and individual has a stake," he said, stressing that climate change affected nearly every aspect of human activity, including the environment, health, migration, energy, good governance, security and economic development.

He also highlighted the work of the 192-member General Assembly this year on climate change, including the debate earlier this month between member states and financial institutions on the role that private investments can play in tackling the problem.

Mr Kerim, who is on the first leg of an official visit to four European countries, has held talks in Bern with Swiss President Pascal Couchepin, State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Michael Ambuehl and parliamentarians. The discussions focused on UN reform, the global food crisis and climate change. He is also visiting Liechtenstein, Austria and Italy.

[REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27135&Cr=kerim&Cr1=climate](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27135&Cr=kerim&Cr1=climate)

TALKS WITH KIRIBATI PRESIDENT

Minister for Climate Change, Senator Penny Wong, met with the President of Kiribati, Mr Anote Tong, to discuss the impact of climate change and both countries' efforts to tackle it.

Pacific Island countries, such as Kiribati, are particularly vulnerable to climate change and sea level rise. As a country with many low lying islands, Kiribati is increasingly likely to be affected by climate change over time (20/6/08).

[REPORT: http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080620a.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080620a.pdf)

GREENHOUSE EMISSION RESULTS 'ON TARGET' BUT ...

Australia's greenhouse emission results for 2006 and a preliminary result for 2007 were released (24/6/08). The National Greenhouse Accounts showed Australia's emissions for 2006 and preliminary estimates of 2007 emissions remained on track to meet the Kyoto target, but Minister for Climate Change and Water Senator Penny Wong said: "But we still have a big job ahead of us to reduce greenhouse emissions." (24/6/08).

[DETAILS: http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080624.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080624.pdf)

In an interview Senator Wong said: "First, climate change is already happening, and second that failing to act, the cost of not acting, will be greater than the cost of acting. That is the way the Government understands this challenge and I think the Australian community understands this challenge." [DETAILS: http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/tr20080623.pdf](http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/tr20080623.pdf)

QUEENSLAND EMISSIONS SURGE 10 PER CENT

Queensland's greenhouse gas emissions had surged by almost 10 per cent and Australia's emissions per capita remain among the world's highest, the Courier Mail reported (26/6/08). According to data just released, this was due largely to use of coal for power generation.

Federal climate change minister Senator Penny Wong this week released data on Australia's emissions of gases. A report said that, if left uncontrolled, those gases are forecast to greatly exacerbate Australia's drought, bring more frequent and dangerous cyclones and kill the Great Barrier Reef.

The federal Climate Change Department's latest data - which covers 2006 - showed that Queensland overtook NSW as the largest greenhouse gas emitter of the states and territories, producing 170.9million tonnes of carbon dioxide-equivalent gases, up 8.9 per cent from 2005.

Environment group WWF's climate change policy manager Kellie Caught said the energy sector was the biggest contributor to emissions in Queensland, accounting for 95 million tonnes, or almost double the 1990 figure of 50 million tonnes.

"Queensland has (Australia's) highest emissions per capita due to its reliance on coal power and road transport," Ms Caught said.

REPORT: <http://www.news.com.au/couriermail/story/0,23739,23915536-3102,00.html>

TEAM FINDS RAPID RISE IN OCEAN WARMTH

A team of Australian and US climate researchers found the world's oceans warmed and rose at a rate 50 per cent faster in the last four decades of the 20th century than documented in the 2007, according to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change Report (IPCC AR4). . The research gives significantly greater credibility to the way climate models simulate the degree of warming in the world's oceans - a key indicator of sea-level rise and climate change. The Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research is a partnership between CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology (23/6/08). **DETAILS:** <http://www.csiro.au/news/OceansWarming.html>

AUSTRALIAN ANNOUNCEMENTS ON WATER AND CLIMATE CHANGE:

\$2.5 million for a national water education and awareness program to be developed by science and technology centre Questacon with the National Water Commission. (22/6/08).

DETAILS: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080622a.pdf>

FORUM DEVELOPS TACTICS ON FORESTRY AND AGRICULTURE

Scientists and key players in the bio-energy industry were to gather in Canberra on Thursday to discuss the implications for forestry, agriculture and bio-energy of an emission trading scheme (ETS). RIRDC General Manager of New Industries and chairperson of Bioenergy Australia, Dr Roslyn Prinsley, said the forum was on developing current thinking about forestry and agriculture in tackling climate change and to generate ideas for policy-makers. Bio-energy Australia is the leading forum for the development of bio-energy options.

DETAILS: http://www.rirdc.gov.au/pub/media_releases/24june08.html

AUSTRALIA TO REVIEW KYOTO PROTOCOL

Climate change is one of the major issues facing the international community and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a necessary measure in the response to climate change, a Federal Government media release stated. The Kyoto Protocol aims to address climate change by enforcing binding international greenhouse gas emission targets. The Protocol sets binding emission reduction targets against 1990 levels for Annex I parties (of which Australia is one) under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change for the commitment period 2008-2012.

Australia signed the Kyoto Protocol on 29 April 1988 and ratified it on 12 December 2007. The ratification of the Kyoto Protocol was a key election commitment for the Government, along with a domestic emission reduction target of 60% by 2050, and the establishment of an emissions trading scheme by 2010.

On June 25 2008, the Kyoto Protocol was tabled in Parliament and referred to the Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee for review. Committee chairman Kelvin Thomson said he believed the Treaties Committee investigation would provide an opportunity to call witnesses and hear evidence concerning:

the position Australia should be taking to future international negotiations concerning the 'second commitment period' (beyond 2012), both for itself and other nations;

the opportunities and the obligations arising from ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, including Australia's development of an emissions trading scheme and the present and prospective impacts of global warming and climate change on Australian industry, agriculture, transport and the environment.

The National Interest Analysis undertaken by the Department of Climate Change states that following ratification, Australia is actively engaged in the discussion on future climate change action, including in negotiations for a second commitment period for the Protocol.

SUBMISSIONS: No later than August 15 2008.

PUBLIC HEARINGS: www.aph.gov.au/jsct; on 02 6277 4002.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

THAILAND FORCIBLY RETURNS HMONG REFUGEES TO LAOS

Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) is calling again on the governments of Thailand and Laos to immediately stop all forced repatriations of Hmong refugees, MSF reported (25/6/08).

An estimated 800 ethnic Lao Hmong refugees were forcibly returned to Laos by the Thai government on June 22, it reported and that the Thai authorities had stated publicly they intend to continue with further repatriations to Laos from among the remaining 6,700 refugees in the Huai Nam Khao camp in Thailand's Petchabun province.

Médecins Sans Frontières said both governments should facilitate the access of independent monitors to all forced returnees in Laos and those believed to be held in detention centres in Thailand in order that adequate medical and humanitarian assistance are provided to them.

MSF is also requesting that the presidency and secretary general of the Association of South East Asian Nations, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and the governments of France, United States and China ensure that Thailand and Laos resolve this issue in accordance with international standards for refugee protection.

It was reported that the estimated 800 Hmong refugees were forced back to Laos after the military rounded up some 5,000 refugees who had engaged in a protest march against an agreement between the Thai and Lao governments to send them back to Laos.

MSF, which has been assisting the Hmong refugees since 2005, estimates that as many as 1,300 people have not returned to the camp since the protest ended near the Thai village of Kek Noi. Their fate remains unknown to MSF.

Gilles Isard, MSF head of mission in Thailand, said, "Thai authorities claim that these were voluntary repatriations. It is hard to believe. Families have been torn apart. One of our Hmong staff members who joined the protest has been sent back to Laos without her children and we know of other similar cases. Many of these refugees have expressed grave fears at the prospect of being sent back to Laos."

M. Isard also said, "In the camp there are more than 150 people who have suffered from bullet wounds that they claim they received a few years ago from the Lao army while staying in the jungle. Hmong refugees who were receiving treatment from MSF for mental trauma caused by the violence and persecution they experienced in Laos are among the missing. Those people do not trust the Lao Government and demand real guarantees before going back."

According to internationally recognised and fundamental rights of protection for refugees, repatriation cannot be forced or imposed on individuals fearing for their safety and any repatriation must remain linked to guarantees for safety upon return, including the provision of appropriate assistance.

"MSF believes that the total lack of transparency surrounding the management of this crisis only exacerbates the problem. If the government of Thailand and Laos would accept an independent monitor, then this issue might be resolved", M. Isard said.

MSF BRIEFING PAPER: www.msf.org.au

DETAILS: Helen Pantenburg on 0438 677 166/02 8570 2613; helen.pantenburg@sydney.msf.org

MYANMAR REFUGEES LEAVE THAILAND

The number of Myanmar refugees that have left Thailand to begin new lives in third countries since January 2005 topped 30,000 this week, marking a major milestone in the world's largest resettlement operation, the United Nations refugee agency said (25/6/08).

Almost all of the 30,144 men, women and children that have left since the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)) began the resettlement program were living in nine camps along the Thai-Myanmar border after fleeing fighting and oppression in their homeland.

"Some of the refugees have been here for nearly two decades. Some were born in refugee camps, grew up there and are now raising their own families in refugee camps," said UNHCR Regional Representative Raymond Hall. "For them, resettlement offers a way out of the camps and the opportunity for a fresh start in life."

The majority of those that have left – 21,453 – have gone to the United States, while Australia has received 3,405 and Canada 2,605. The rest have gone to Finland, Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

Nearly 124,000 refugees and asylum-seekers remain in the nine camps along the border. Meanwhile, relief efforts are continuing in the wake of the deadly cyclone which battered Myanmar in early May and left as many as 2.4 million people in need of humanitarian assistance.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reports that 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, has confirmed the need for continued relief efforts to cover unmet needs.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27158&Cr=myanmar&Cr1=>

ROUNDTABLE ON PEOPLE TRAFFICKING BEGINS WORK

The first National Roundtable on People Trafficking, held on Tuesday in Canberra, involved government and non-government agencies, representatives of anti-people trafficking NGOs, service providers, victims of crime support organisations as well as the legal, employer and union sectors (24/6/08).

The roundtable is to produce a mechanism for consulting, testing and developing government policy on people trafficking issues. A working group to develop guidelines for community and welfare groups working with trafficked persons was established. **DETAILS:** Samantha Wills on 0448 721 372 and

http://www.ministerhomeaffairs.gov.au/www/ministers/ministerdebus.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2008_Secondquarter_24June2008-GovernmentConsultsonPeopleTrafficking

TORTURE OF WOMEN: CALL FOR SPECIAL ATTENTION

Despite a strong international legal framework outlawing torture, much more needs to be done to end this scourge, UN human rights officials have stressed, adding that special attention be given to ensuring better protection for women (25/6/08).

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which is celebrating its [60th anniversary](#) this year, provided for the first international prohibition of torture, and successive human rights treaties have built on this provision.

However, six decades later, greater efforts are needed to prevent torture, punish the perpetrators and ensure adequate assistance for the victims, six UN entities that deal with the issue stressed in a [statement](#) marking the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, observed annually on June 26.

They noted that women fall victim to torture in different ways, as highlighted by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's global campaign to [end violence against women](#), launched in February.

"Certain forms of gender-specific violence perpetrated by state actors, as well as by private individuals or organisations, clearly amount to torture, and it is now recognised that gender-specific violence falls within the definition of torture in the [Convention against Torture](#)," they stated.

They called for strengthening the global campaign to end violence against women, by ensuring a broader scope of prevention, protection, justice and reparation for victims, including access to international assistance, than currently exists.

In addition, they appealed for increased contributions to the [UN Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture](#) – which distributes funds to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and treatment centres to assist those subjected to this horrific practice and their families – so that more torture victims can receive the help they need.

Also marking the day, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan ([UNAMA](#)) has called for all allegations of torture in the strife-torn nation to be properly investigated.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27150&Cr=torture&Cr1=>

MORE UN WOMEN PEACEKEEPERS WANTED

The UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon, wants more women peacekeepers and police to help counter "the abominable practice of sexual violence" resulting from armed conflicts.

Mr Ban told a Security Council hearing on women and security that sexual violence posed a grave threat to the safety of women and girls in areas recovering from armed conflict.

He called for future UN mandates to include clear provisions protecting women and children, and said he wanted more women to act as peacekeepers and to provide leadership (21/6/08).

His comments came as UN peacekeepers in Darfur said the biggest problem now confronting the blighted region was the systematic rape of women and children as young as four. Aid groups suggest rape is used as a weapon of ethnic cleansing.

Mr Ban said, "Violence against women has reached unspeakable and pandemic proportions in some societies attempting to recover from conflict."

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/more-women-needed-to-avert-rapes-un/2008/06/20/1213770924670.html>

MOST PEOPLE AGAINST TORTURE: UN

The majority of people polled in 19 countries were against the use of torture, even in the case of terrorists who have information that could save innocent lives, according to a survey presented at the United Nations in New York (24/6/08).

The findings of the WorldPublicOpinion.org poll were released ahead of the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture, observed on June 26, and as part of this year's 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

"These discussions take place at a moment when human rights are very much under fire internationally for a range of reasons – some of them related to the ascendancy of unhelpful notions of security and counter-terrorism, others related to destructive approaches to global economics," Craig Mokhiber of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights said.

"Today the focus is on what the people are saying," he said. "Do they still share the vision as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?" Some 19,000 people took part in the survey, showing, in 14 of the 19 nations, most people favoured prohibition against torture.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27147&Cr=torture&Cr1=>

RESPONSIBILITY SHOULD NOT 'END AFTER EXTRADITION PROCESS'

In its 91st report, the Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee has recommended to the Federal Government a number of measures to better protect human rights concerning extradition arrangements, police-to-police cooperation, and film production in China.

The committee has tabled a report giving the go ahead to a treaty on extradition with the United Arab Emirates. Australia currently has 35 extradition treaties with other countries.

The committee has recommended however that the general operation of Australia's current treaty arrangements for extradition should be reviewed.

According to Treaties Report 91, Australia's responsibility for persons extradited should not end at the conclusion of the extradition process, but extend to a formal system of monitoring the detention of extradited persons, any resulting judicial proceedings, sentencing and imprisonment.

DETAILS: Secretariat on 02 6277 4002 and www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/reports.htm

NEW ZEALAND SETTLES RECORD MAORI CLAIM

The New Zealand Government has signed the most expensive treaty settlement in the country's history, handing prime forestry land back to Maori tribes, the ABC reported (25/6/08).

Eight hundred Maori packed into Parliament to watch the signing of the deal; the treaty is being dubbed "treelords". One hundred and seventy thousand hectares of forestry in the North Island will be handed back to 100,000 Maori from seven tribes.

"It will go a long way in ending our grieving because we do want to grow and develop socially and economically," Rawiri Te Whare said.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/25/2285578.htm>

LORD'S RESISTANCE ARMY STILL USING CHILDREN

Although the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) did not seem to be recruiting children in Uganda, women and children were still present in its ranks, and the rebel group was allegedly enlisting young people from neighbouring countries, according to a UN [report](#) (25/6/08).

The LRA, which has fought a civil war with the Ugandan Government since the mid-1980s, became notorious during the conflict for abducting as many as 25,000 children and using them as fighters and porters. The children were often subject to extreme violence shortly after abduction, with many girls allocated to officers in a form of institutional rape.

"Owing to the apparent absence of LRA from Ugandan territory, there have been no recent cases of recruitment and use of Ugandan children, or other grave violations against children attributable to LRA," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in a new report to the Security Council.

"However, children and women are still present in the LRA ranks, and there has been no movement on their release," he adds.

He noted reports alleging that the group had been recruiting children from southern Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR).

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27152&Cr=uganda&Cr1=>

ECUADOR OPENS REFUGEE OFFICE ON BORDER

The Government of Ecuador this week [opened](#) its first refugee office along the border with Colombia with the support of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (24/6/08).

The new office, located a few kilometres from the Colombian border in the northern city of Lago Agrio, will provide advice to refugees and carry out interviews to decide the eligibility of asylum-seekers who are applying for refugee status.

The UNHCR, which will support the running of the centre for the next year, welcomed the decentralisation of the Government Refugee Office as a significant step towards strengthening refugee protection in the country. About 18,000 registered refugees come mostly from Colombia and Ecuador has the largest refugee population in Latin America. The government estimates that up to ten times that number may be in need of international protection.

OMBUDSMAN'S REPORT ON IMMIGRATION FOI REQUESTS

The Commonwealth and Immigration Ombudsman, Professor John McMillan, released a report on delay by the Department of Immigration and Citizenship in dealing with requests under the Freedom of Information Act 1982 (24/6/08).

These included the increased number of FOI requests to DIAC, the complexity of many requests, the number of locations at which records were held, the diffusion of data across electronic and hard copy files, poor communication between DIAC and FOI applicants, and the centralisation of FOI processing.

The report recommended that DIAC conduct a wide-ranging review of its FOI and information disclosure processes having regard to specific recommendations in the report.

DETAILS: http://www.comb.gov.au/commonwealth/publish.nsf/Content/mediarelease_2008_07

CHRISTMAS ISLAND DETENTION CENTRE UNDER PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works receive a briefing from the departments of Finance and Deregulation & Immigration and Citizenship on the development of the Christmas Island Detention Centre (26/6/08). The committee will focus on the increase in the cost of the work from an estimated \$276 million in 2003 to \$396 million.

Committee Chairman Mark Butler noted, "In 2003 the committee examined the proposal for the purpose built detention centre at Christmas Island with respect to its need, cost, scope, purpose and value for money. Five years down the track, it is important to take stock of how the development has been implemented and consider the reasons for the \$120 million increase in the cost to the Australian taxpayers".

In 2001 temporary facilities were established on Christmas Island to accommodate people attempting to enter Australia without immigration authorisation. The temporary facilities proved inadequate and by 2002 the Australian Government announced its intention to develop a purpose built detention centre on the island.

The Public Works Committee examined a detailed proposal for the detention centre in 2003. That proposal provided for an accommodation capacity of 800 people with approximately 50% housed in purpose-designed accommodation with the remainder in more basic contingency accommodation. The 2003 proposal was estimated to cost \$276.2 million.

DETAILS: Committee's original report into the Detention Centre, transcripts and copies of submissions: <http://www.aph.gov.au/pwc> or contact the Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4636.

GOVERNMENTS 'SHOULD RECOGNISE CULTURAL DIFFERENCE'

Cultural differences should be recognised, respected and incorporated into policies that attempt

to provide members of new and emerging communities with meaningful social and economic participation in our broader Australian community, Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma, said on Thursday in a speech at the Migrant Resource Centre of South Australia's Social Inclusion Conference in Adelaide (25/6/08).

"Social inclusion differs from the approach of social cohesion, which places emphasis on integration of communities into our existing Australian culture," he said. An approach of social inclusion should be a consultative one that brings new and emerging communities along from the outset, thereby providing understanding about how: to engage with particular groups, to deliver services to these groups and to ensure outcomes for them, while promoting commitment to and respect for the core Australian values of democracy and human rights. **SPEECH:** www.hreoc.com.au

ASSISTING REFUGEES ATTAIN CITIZENSHIP WELCOMED

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia has welcomed the Federal Government's initiative of providing grants to assist refugees in their quest for citizenship, while recognising that the recommendations of an independent review panel lead by Richard Woolcott were still pending (20/6/08).

FECCA's stance on citizenship was made clear in its submission to the government citizenship test review, that is:

It remains strongly opposed to the concept of a formal citizenship test as it creates an unnecessary barrier to full participation and social inclusion;

refugees and asylum seekers have traditionally taken up citizenship at the earliest possible opportunity. Creating the barrier of a test will see the numbers taking up citizenship decrease;

the current questions in the test are inappropriate and often subjective and give no indication or guarantee of the potential contribution the applicant may make to Australian society. The language complexity of the resource booklet, which is beyond 'basic level English', is discriminatory putting citizenship out of reach for those of basic English or limited education. **DETAILS:** Voula Messimeri, FECCA Chairperson on 0414 532 529 or 02 6282 5755.

LAWS FOR DEFACTO COUPLES

The Federal Government has introduced landmark legislation to allow for de facto couples to access the federal family law courts on property and maintenance matters, a media release stated (25/6/08). There would be greater protection for separating de facto couples. **DETAILS:** http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/RobertMc.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2008_SecondQuarter_25June2008-Financialburdenliftedfromseparatingdefactocouples

D. PEACE & SECURITY

ZIMBABWE 'FREE AND FAIR ELECTION IMPOSSIBLE'

With [Zimbabwe](#)'s opposition under siege and its leader taking refuge at the Dutch Embassy, the UN Security Council issued its first sweeping condemnation of the violence gripping the nation, saying it would be "impossible for a free and fair election to take place," the New York Times reported (24/6/08).

Zimbabwe has been reeling from a widening campaign of violence and intimidation ever since [Robert Mugabe](#), Zimbabwe's president for nearly 30 years, came in second in the initial round of voting on March 29. On Sunday [Morgan Tsvangirai](#), the opposition standard-bearer, pulled out of the race, citing extensive violence against his supporters. **REPORT:** http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/24/world/africa/24zimbabwe.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

The ABC reported that Mr Tsvangirai had called for world leaders to back their tough rhetoric with military force in his country (26/6/08). He wrote in the London Guardian that the United Nations

had to go further than verbal condemnation of Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe and move on to "active isolation" which required "a force to protect the people".

MANDELA: TRAGIC FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP

Former South African leader Nelson Mandela added his voice to the growing international condemnation of the political violence in Zimbabwe, the BBC reported (25/6/08).

He noted "the tragic failure of leadership" of President Robert Mugabe. Southern African leaders earlier called for Friday's run-off presidential vote to be postponed because conditions did not permit a free and fair election.

Speaking at a dinner in London to mark his 90th birthday, Mr Mandela said: "We watch with sadness the continuing tragedy in Darfur. Nearer to home we have seen the outbreak of violence against fellow Africans in our own country and the tragic failure of leadership in our neighbouring Zimbabwe." Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai has urged foreign help to end the crisis.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7474561.stm>

MANDELA IN UK FOR 90TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

The Queen held a private audience at Buckingham Palace for South Africa's former leader Nelson Mandela as he celebrates his 90th birthday with a week-long series of events in the UK, the Press Association reported (25/6/08).

The Queen and the statesman have met a number of times over the past decade and are said to have formed a warm friendship.

Mr Mandela spent 27 years in jail for his role leading the campaign against apartheid in South Africa before being elected his country's president in 1994. Despite his age and ill health, the PA reported that he has continued to campaign around the globe for peace and an end to poverty.

ANC ISSUES HARSH CRITICISM YET

South Africa's ruling ANC party has issued its harshest criticism yet of Zimbabwe's Government and called for the postponement of Friday's run-off presidential election, the ABC reported (25/6/08).

In its statement the ANC says it is deeply dismayed by the actions of the Zimbabwe Government which it says is riding roughshod over the hard won democratic rights of the people. It says it is a flagrant violation of every principle of democratic governance.

ANC President Jacob Zuma says despite many years of struggling alongside Mr Mugabe's ZANU-PF Party, it was no longer possible to support its actions. The ANC statement left South Africa's President Thabo Mbeki - who is the region's official go-between with Robert Mugabe - even more isolated in his appeasement policy. Mr Zuma is expected to replace Mr Mbeki.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/06/25/2284825.htm>

Senegal's president Abdoulaye Wade issued a statement calling for the election to be postponed indefinitely. Similar statements came from Rwanda, Tanzania, Botswana and Zambia.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7471297.stm>

The decision by the President of the Opposition Movement for Democratic Change, Morgan Tsvangirai, not to contest the presidential run-off election on 27 June, demonstrated the extremes to which the brutal Mugabe regime had pushed Zimbabwe, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said (23/6/08).

"The Australian Government understands and respects Mr Tsvangirai's decision and the reasons for it," he said. "It is a matter of great regret that the people of Zimbabwe have been deprived of their basic democratic right to cast a vote for the presidency."

DETAILS: http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s099_08.html

PEACE OVER ABYEI 'VITAL'

The Security Council welcomed the recent joint plan unveiled by the Sudanese Government of National Unity's main parties to resolve their dispute over the situation in the oil-rich area around Abyei, which lies close to the boundary between the north and south of the country, the UN News reported (24/6/08).

In a [statement](#), Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad of the United States, which holds the rotating council presidency this month, said that a peaceful resolution of the Abyei dispute was vital to effectively implementing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the long-running north-south civil war in Sudan.

On June 8 the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) agreed to a Road Map for the Return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and Implementation of Abyei Protocol, including provisions about interim boundaries and revenue sharing.

The plan follows deadly violence last month that led to the destruction of much of Abyei and the sudden displacement of tens of thousands of residents, prompting concern from senior UN officials about the grave humanitarian situation and the threat to the CPA.

In the presidential statement, council members asked Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to examine the root causes of the violence, the role played by the UN Mission in Sudan ([UNMIS](#)) and what follow-up steps the peacekeeping mission should undertake. They also urged the mission to deploy personnel in and around Abyei as needed to help reduce tensions and prevent an escalation of the conflict.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27142&Cr=abyei&Cr1=>

REINTEGRATION IN SUDAN BEGINS

The United Nations Development Program ([UNDP](#)) is supporting the reintegration of 180,000 Sudanese ex-combatants as they return to civilian life under an agreement signed with the Government of National Unity and the Government of Southern Sudan this week (25/6/08).

Disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) is an important component of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), which ended the long north-south civil war in Sudan.

The agreement builds on the achievements of the disarmament and demobilisation pilot phase launched in 2006. The beneficiaries will include some 24,000 members of the Sudan Armed Forces and 26,000 others pre-registered by the Popular Defence Forces. Nearly 5,300 women associated with armed forces and groups, and 17,500 disabled combatants are also eligible.

Under the four-year program – which will be led and implemented by the DDR Commissions of North and South Sudan, with support from UNDP – ex-combatants will receive social, economic and psychological support.

"We welcome the Government of Sudan's leadership in taking forward the DDR program, and aim to assist the building of national and local capacities to support national ownership of the process," said UNDP Associate Administrator Ad Melkert.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27161&Cr=sudan&Cr1=>

COUNTRY 'STILL FRAGILE, INSECURE AND POOR'

The overall political, security and economic situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) remained fragile and characterised by widespread poverty, insecurity and a disturbing cycle of human rights violations and impunity, according to the latest [report](#) submitted by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the Security Council (25/6/08).

The current situation on human rights "victimises innocent civilians and leaves those responsible within the defence and security forces, rebel movements and highway bandits, free to commit even more crimes," Mr Ban stressed.

However, Mr Ban praised intensified efforts in the country to promote dialogue and welcomed a peace agreement that was concluded between the government of CAR and the Armée populaire pour la restauration de la démocratie (APRD) rebel movement on May 9.

The report also noted that a new zone of tension had emerged in the south-east of the country, where suspected renegade elements of Uganda's Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) rebel group had reportedly infiltrated into CAR from their bases in southern Sudan.

"I renew my appeal to all armed groups to lay down their weapons and work towards the restoration of sustainable peace and stability," Mr Ban said.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27151&Cr=car&Cr1=>

SOUTH AFRICAN CHILDREN TRAUMATISED BY VIOLENCE

Ten-year-old Fortune watched a man being shot dead in front of him as he accompanied his mother to the grocer's store, the BBC reported (24/6/08). Another 10-year-old saw men armed with clubs and guns preparing for an attack.

"I was scared," he says, "so I prayed." Both children have been receiving counselling after a wave of anti-immigrant attacks in South Africa last month.

Their school called in art therapist Michelle Booth when teachers realised that many pupils had been traumatised by violence. When Ms Booth asked the children to depict what they had experienced, she was shocked by their disturbed drawings.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7472056.stm>

ASIA

GAZA: ICRC HOPED CEASEFIRE WOULD EASE HARDSHIP

The International Committee of the Red Cross was hoping that the recent ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas would help ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods in Gaza (25/6/08).

ICRC reports that the strict closure of Gaza for the past year had devastating effects on every aspect of daily life, including employment, health and access to water, bringing the area to the brink of economic collapse.

"Fuel and raw materials are essential to local industry. While humanitarian assistance does make a difference to a lot of people in Gaza, local production and trade must resume if the situation of the civilian population as a whole is to improve significantly," said Katharina Ritz, head of the ICRC mission in Jerusalem.

The reports says essential items required to keep industry running and repair infrastructure, such as building materials, have not entered Gaza in over a year. Hospitals and water-pumping stations especially are in dire need of spare parts to maintain and replace equipment. Doctors and nurses are struggling to provide safe treatment in the absence of items ranging from simple light bulbs to sterilisation machines and operating theatre monitoring equipment.

Farmers and fishermen, who can no longer export anything, are barely able to eke out a living on the local market. Since October 2007, there has been a gradual decrease in the supply of fuel and the living conditions of civilians have steadily deteriorated as a result.

DETAILS: Dorothea Krimitzas, ICRC Geneva, on +41 22 730 25 90 or +41 79 251 93 18

ISRAEL CLOSES BORDER AFTER ROCKET ATTACK

Israel said it has closed its border crossings with Gaza in response to a Palestinian rocket attack on southern Israel that breached a ceasefire. Israel said the attack was a "grave violation" of a truce in Gaza between Israel and the militant group Hamas, the BBC reported.

Israel had been allowing more imports into Gaza since the truce was agreed, but officials said the crossings would now remain closed until further notice.

Hamas, which controls Gaza, said the closings violated the truce agreement. Hamas leader Khalil al-Haya said the group remained committed to the six-day-old ceasefire with Israel and had called on all Palestinian groups to respect it. The Erez pedestrian crossing remains open to diplomats and journalists. **REPORT:** http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7472819.stm

'GOOD START' TO UN SYRIA NUCLEAR PROBE

The head of a UN team investigating allegations that Syria has been working on a secret nuclear weapons program said their work was off to a good start, the BBC reported (26/6/08).

Deputy director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Olli Heinonen, said inspectors had taken samples at the al-Kibar site in the Syrian desert.

"We achieved what we wanted on this first trip. We took samples which we wanted to take. Now it's time to analyse them," he said.

The area was bombed by Israeli warplanes last year after Israel and the US accused the Syrians of building a nuclear reactor there. Syria adamantly denies having any kind of nuclear program. **REPORT:** http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7474467.stm

IRAN CONDEMNS EU SANCTIONS

Iran has condemned as illegal new EU sanctions against Tehran over its uranium enrichment program. A foreign ministry spokesman said the sanctions would make Iran more determined to obtain the technology.

The EU has imposed an asset freeze on Iran's largest bank and added more names to a list of Iranians banned from travelling to the EU.

Iran is defying a demand from the UN to stop the enrichment of uranium. The UN Security Council approved a third round of sanctions against Iran in March 2008

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7470961.stm

AFGHANISTAN ACCUSE PAKISTANI INTELLIGENCE

The Afghanistan Government has publicly accused the Pakistani intelligence service of organising the failed plot to assassinate President [Hamid Karzai](#) at a parade in Kabul in April, the New York Times reported (26/6/08).

In Kabul, Sayeed Ansari, spokesman for the Afghan intelligence service, said Afghan authorities had evidence of the direct involvement of Pakistan's premier intelligence agency, [Inter-Services Intelligence](#), or ISI, in the assassination attempt.

He claimed the evidence included documents uncovered during an investigation into the attempt, confessions from 16 detained suspects and mobile phone contacts. He gave no details or names of Pakistani agency officials involved. There was no immediate public response from Pakistan.

REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/26/world/asia/26afghan.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin

US AMBASSADOR'S ALLEGED COVER UP

An American ambassador helped cover up the illegal Chinese origins of ammunition that a Pentagon contractor bought to supply Afghan security forces, it was alleged in testimony gathered by Congressional investigators, the New York Times reported (24/6/08).

A military attaché has told the investigators that a United States ambassador endorsed a plan by a foreign defence minister to hide several boxes of Chinese ammunition from a visiting reporter. It was claimed the ammunition was being repackaged to disguise its origins and shipped to [Afghanistan](#) by a Miami Beach arms-dealing company.

REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/24/washington/24arms.html?th&emc=th>

PAKISTANI TALIBAN KILL 22

The Pakistani Taliban have killed 22 tribesmen after they seized a town in the north-west. Locals found the bodies outside the town of Jandola in South Waziristan tribal region - some shot dead, others with their throats slit.

They belonged to a rival tribe considered by some to be friendly to the government, officials said. The inter-tribal conflict follows a massive army operation against the Taliban in South Waziristan. The government is now trying to end the violence through negotiations.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7472612.stm

TIMORESE OFFICERS GRADUATE

Two East Timorese officers graduated from the Royal Military College at Duntroon as part of an ongoing program by Australia to provide high quality training to the East Timor Defence Force.

DETAILS: <http://www.minister.defence.gov.au/fitzgibbontpl.cfm?CurrentId=7879>

E. HEALTH & MEANS

WHO CREATES NEW SURGICAL TOOL 'SAFE SURGERY SAVES LIVES'

With major surgery now occurring at a rate of 234 million procedures per year - one for every 25 people - and studies indicating that a significant percentage result in preventable complications and deaths, the World Health Organisation (WHO) launched a new safety checklist for surgical teams to use in operating theatres, as part of a major drive to make universal surgery safer.

"Preventable surgical injuries and deaths are now a growing concern," said Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General. "Using the checklist is the best way to reduce surgical errors and improve patient safety," she said (25/6/08).

Several studies have shown that in industrial countries major complications are reported to occur in 3-16 per cent of inpatient surgical procedures, with permanent disability or death rates of approximately 0.4-0.8 per cent. In developing countries, studies suggest death rates of 5-10 per cent during major surgery. Mortality from general anaesthesia alone was reported to be as high as one in 150 in parts of sub-Saharan Africa. Infections and other postoperative complications were also a serious concern around the world. These studies suggest that approximately half of these complications may be preventable.

"Surgical care has been an essential component of health systems worldwide for more than a century," Dr Atul Gawande, a surgeon and professor at Harvard, said. "Although there have been major improvements over the last few decades, the quality and safety of surgical care has been dismayingly variable in every part of the world. The Safe Surgery Saves Lives initiative aims to change this by raising the standards that patients anywhere can expect."

The Safe Surgery Saves Lives initiative is a collaborative effort led by the Harvard School of Public Health, involving more than 200 national and international medical societies and ministries of health in a effort to meet the goal of reducing avoidable deaths and complications in surgical care.

The WHO Surgical Safety Checklist, developed under the leadership of, Dr Gawande, identifies a set of surgical safety standards that can be applied in all countries and health settings. Preliminary results from a 1,000 patients in eight pilot sites worldwide indicate that the checklist has nearly doubled the likelihood that patients will receive proved standards of surgical care.

Use of the checklist in pilot sites has increased adherence to these standards of care from 36 to 68 per cent and in some hospitals to levels approaching 100 per cent. This has resulted in substantial reductions in complications and deaths in this group. Final results on the checklist effect are anticipated within the next few months.

The WHO Guidelines and Checklist were released this week are the first edition. They will be finalised for dissemination by the end of 2008, after evaluation in eight pilot sites globally.

DETAILS: <http://www.who.int/patientsafety/>

The World Alliance for Patient Safety is a World Health Organisation program launched in 2004 with Sir Liam Donaldson, UK Chief Medical Officer as chairman: www.who.int/patientsafety/en/
The World Alliance for Patient Safety issued its 2006-2007 Progress Report and 2008-2009 Forward Program on June 25. **DETAILS:** www.who.int/patientsafety/en/

CONTACTS: Edward Kelley on +41 79 509 0645; kelleve@who.int;

Martin Fletcher on +44 7980 616 992; martin.fletcher@npsa.nhs.uk;

PRESS releases, fact sheets and other WHO media material: www.who.int

DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT ADVICE SERVICE WINS UN AWARD

An Australian Government information and advice service that supports the employment of people with a mental illness and disability has won an international award (20/6/08).

The Minister for Employment Participation, Brendan O'Connor, said the government's JobAccess service which is administered by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations had been awarded a United Nations Public Service Award.

JobAccess service consists of a website and toll free phone line and provides information on job design, workplace modifications and technology to help people with a disability to find and retain employment. It also provides information to employers about government programs and support to help make workplaces accessible for people with disability.

Mr O'Connor said JobAccess was launched in July 2006 following recommendations from Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission inquiry into the barriers to employment for people with a disability. The service currently receives more than 1200 inquiries a month.

"Services like JobAccess help employers who are happy to consider employing someone with a disability but don't know where to start," he said.

DETAILS: www.jobaccess.gov.au; call 1800 464 800/Campbell Giles on 0407 972 900.

F. MEDIA MATTERS

FIJIAN POLICE RAID TV OFFICE AND CONFISCATE TAPE

Fijian police raided the offices of a local television station and seized the master tape of a current affairs program due to go to air, it was claimed (24/6/08).

According to local media reports and the Pacific Islands News Association (PINA), police entered the Fiji Television offices on June 23 with a search warrant for tapes associated with the *Close Up* program.

The tapes were reported to have featured an interview with Rajendra Chaudhry, a Suva lawyer and son of the military-appointed finance minister. Police ordered Fiji TV not to broadcast the program on the basis that the material may be considered "inciteful", PINA reported.

In a statement on Fiji TV's website, the acting CEO Tarun Patel said that as a publicly listed company, Fiji TV intended to "retrieve the footage through due process and broadcast it". PINA described the incident as "counterproductive to the promise of a free media" and voiced concerns about increasing efforts by Fiji's interim government to control broadcast media.

Fiji Media Council chairman Daryl Tarte condemned the raid and said it was an unwarranted interference in media freedom and an example of official censorship, according to a PINA statement. The move follows the sudden deportation of two expatriate Australian publishers of two local newspapers in February and May this year, creating widespread concern for media freedom under Fiji's interim government.

[DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

CAMBODIA: The Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CPAJ) has called on the government of Cambodia to respect and uphold the rights of independent media in the lead-up to the country's national election on July 27.

According to the IFJ, CPAJ has expressed concerns that recent government actions, including the forced closure of a newspaper supplement and a radio station, seek to disable the voice of independent media to report on all political perspectives and therefore jeopardise a free and fair election (23/6/08).

Earlier incidents cited include an order to the English language *Cambodia Daily* to cease publishing its supplementary section, the *Burma Daily*; a radio station broadcasting on FM 105.25 reported to have stopped its broadcast under government instruction, allegedly after the station had sold its broadcasting hours to principal opposition parties in Kratie province; and another was a claim of an election-related incident when the editor-in-chief of *Moneakseka Khmer*, one of the few Opposition-affiliated newspapers, was arrested on June 8 and jailed for one week on charges of defamation and disinformation filed by a government minister. Defamation was de-criminalised in Cambodia in May 2006. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

PAKISTAN: The IFJ reported it fully endorsed the stand taken by the Pakistan Federal Union of Journalists (PFUJ) in opposing a demand by Pakistan's apex organisation of newspaper owners for the repeal of the Newspaper Employees' (Conditions of Service) Act (24/6/08).

"The Act is an important safeguard for workers' rights and journalism as a profession, and the IFJ is concerned at moves by the All Pakistan Newspapers Society (APNS) to repeal it," IFJ Asia-Pacific said. The IFJ is calling on the APNS and its president, Hameed Haroon, to honour the law rather than seek its repeal or "substantial amendment".

According to information from the PFUJ, the constitutional validity of the Act has already been dealt with by Pakistan's Supreme Court. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

SRI LANKA: Senior Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam continues to be detained by the Terrorist Investigation Division (TID) of the Sri Lanka Police (24/6/08), the IFJ reported this week.

It was also reported that a magistrate was due to issue a decision on June 30 in the case of the editor of the OutreachSI.com news website, detained since March 7. A ruling will also be delivered on N. Jesiheran, owner of E-Kwality printers, and his partner Valarmathi, held since March 6.

The expected rulings follow a court appearance by Mr Tissainayagam and Mr Jesiheran at Colombo's Court No. 1, according to the Free Media Movement (FMM). Mr Tissainayagam was held without charge for 107 days. Under the Emergency Regulations Act, detainees must appear before a court upon completion of a 90-day detention order.

In court, Mr Tissainayagam's lawyer, Subandiran, argued that Sections 19 and 21 of the emergency regulation in force further required that detainees must be transferred to fiscal custody (that is, removed from TID special detention into general detention) upon completion of a 90-day detention order. The court also heard allegations that Mr Jesiharan had endured torture in detention. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

In another report, it was reported that officials of the Sri Lankan Police's Criminal Investigation Department (CID) visited the office of the web-based news portal www.lankaenews.com on June 17 and questioned editor Sandaruwan Senadeera and news editor Benet Rupasinghe for more than three hours (25/6/08).

The CID visit to the office of www.lankaenews.com was reportedly provoked by a report published in February. CID officers wanted the editors to name sources.

According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), the news portal was among eight media institutions named recently by Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence as being "treacherous" and "partial to terrorists". Sandaruwan Senadeera had reported receiving threatening phone calls and hate mail for more than a year.

The IFJ was further informed that Lakshman Hulugalla, director of the Media Centre for National Security (MCNS), complained recently of a violation of "guidelines" issued by his agency in 2006, which require, among other things, that all news related to national security be submitted to the MCNS for scrutiny before publication or broadcast.

NEPAL: A series of violent incidents against journalists working in Nepal's far east and west has been reported (25/6/08). The Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) reported to the IFJ that it was concerned by a continued violent targeting of individual journalists for their professional work, with four separate attacks reported in the past week.

Karna Kunwar, publisher and editor of *Tikapur Times Daily*, in the far-western district of Kailali, was attacked on June 24 by a group allegedly connected to Maoist cadres. The incident followed a decision by 12 editors and publishers in Kailali on May 29 to close their operations. They cited lack of security and fear for personal safety.

Lekhnath Khatiwada, the president of the Panchthar chapter of the FNJ, in the eastern region, reported physical abuse and threatening phone calls on June 17 and 18. He was reported to have been told to cease writing or lose his life.

In nearby Morang district, the editor-in-chief of *Nirantar Weekly*, Mahendra Luintel, was attacked by the owner of a local business as he sought to collect information about allegations of malpractice and corruption made against the business.

Meanwhile, in Kathmandu, a reporter for the *Janadisa Daily*, Mahesh Shrestha, received threats and was physically abused by members of a local company after publishing an investigative report alleging corruption in the business. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

INDIA: The arrest - under a law preventing insults to the dignity of people of lower ritual status in the Indian caste hierarchy - of the editor and two reporters of *Andhra Jyoti*, a Telugu-language daily published from Hyderabad and other cities of Andhra Pradesh state, was reported by IFJ (25/6/08).

It was reported that K. Srinivas, the editor of the daily, and two reporters, Kumar Vamshi and N. Srinivas, were remanded in custody after arrest by Hyderabad city police on June 24. The background to the arrests was claimed to be a May 26 attack by activists of a community-based organisation on the offices of *Andhra Jyoti* in Hyderabad and two other cities in Andhra Pradesh. The attack, which caused serious injuries to staff members and extensive damage to

property, was ostensibly in retaliation for an editorial in the newspaper criticising a leader's political stance and statements.

It was claimed that there was nothing verging on insult to the community in the editorial. Following this incident, employees of *Andhra Jyoti* were joined by various journalists' unions in a protest demonstration to demand action against those responsible for the attack.

The IFJ has been informed by K. Sreenivas Reddy, General Secretary of the Indian Journalists' Union, that there was no legal basis for the complaint since the journalists were merely expressing indignation over the May 26 attack.

"No evidence of any insult to the community by the three journalists has come to light," he said. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

G. OTHER NEWS

NEW REPORT ON AUSTRALIA'S CONSTITUTION

A new report, *Reforming our Constitution: a roundtable discussion* was released (23/6/08) by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs.

It is nine years since the last referendum was held to amend the Australian Constitution, and it is over 30 years since there was a successful referendum to amend Australia's Constitution. The present decade may be the first since federation during which there is no referendum held.

The lack of reform to the constitution has had many unintended consequences, including a proliferation in the number of federal-state intergovernmental agreements with no formal oversight mechanisms for these agreements. The report recommends that all intergovernmental agreements are referred to a parliamentary committee for scrutiny.

The report also advocates greater public debate on constitutional reform, and in particular on issues such as whether the constitution should be revised to:
acknowledge where we as Australians have come from;
set out rights and protections as well as practical national governance structures; and
articulate aspirations for a nation.

Committee Chairman Mark Dreyfus said, "The stepping stone to nationhood that the Australian Constitution represented in 1901 is now in some aspects a boulder placed in the way of cooperative federalism, Indigenous reconciliation and public engagement in our governance".

"While the constitution has served us well, there are now several areas where reform is long overdue if the constitution is to reflect contemporary Australia and be a document to guide our nation for the future," he said.

To advance public debate on constitutional reform, the committee conducted a roundtable on May 1 2008. The report summarises those discussions and covers key issues such as:
mechanisms to change the Australian Constitution;
introducing fixed four year election terms;
the disqualification provisions for members of parliament;
Federal-State relations, cooperative federalism and the escalation of intergovernmental agreements;
constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians and a new preamble for all Australians, and citizenship in the constitution and a Bill of Rights.

[BACKGROUND INFORMATION](#): Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 2358.

ELECTORAL COMMISSION TO APPEAR AT PUBLIC HEARING ON 2007 ELECTION

The Australian Electoral Commission was due to appear before the Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee on June 27. This is the first public hearing for the committee's inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 election and related matters.

The 2007 federal election, which cost almost \$100 million to conduct, saw almost 10.5 million people vote at 7,723 polling places across the country. A further 2.5 million people took the opportunity to cast pre poll, postal or absentee votes.

The Chairman of the Committee, Daryl Melham, said, "The committee's hearing with the Australian Electoral Commission provides an opportunity to look closely at the conduct of the election and identify areas where our electoral system can be improved".

Submissions to the inquiry have highlighted a number of issues relating to the election and the electoral system including: informal voting, the success of electronic voting trials for the vision impaired and overseas defence force personnel, the impact of recent changes to electoral laws on enrolment and provisional voting and changes to political finance and disclosure arrangements.

"It is sometimes too easy to take our democracy for granted", Daryl Melham said. "We need to ensure that our electoral system moves with the times so that the acts of enrolling to vote and voting are as accessible as possible and that public confidence in the electoral system is maintained."

DETAILS: contact the Inquiry Secretary (02) 6277 2374, email jscem@aph.gov.au

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

WE'RE TOAST IF WE DON'T STOP GLOBAL WARMING

Exactly 20 years after warning America about global warming, a top NASA scientist says the situation has got so bad that the world's only hope is drastic action, ACCORDING TO THE Sydney Morning Herald (24/6/08). James Hansen told US Congress that the world has long passed the "dangerous level" for greenhouse gases in the atmosphere and needs to get back to 1988 levels. He said Earth's atmosphere can stay this loaded with man-made carbon dioxide only for a couple more decades without changes such as mass extinction, ecosystem collapse and dramatic sea level rises. "We're toast if we don't get on a very different path," Hansen, director of the Goddard Institute of Space Sciences, who is sometimes called the godfather of global warming science, told The Associated Press. "This is the last chance."

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/06/24/1214073221343.html>

TRAGEDY OF REFUGEE AUSTRALIA SENT BACK

Bill Zhang, a school teacher who became a dissident after being swept up in the 1989 Tiananmen Square democracy protests, killed himself last Saturday night (21/6/08). He threw himself off the sixth or seventh floor of a friend's housing estate in the southern province of Guangdong because he had lost the will to keep fighting to return to Australia. Mr Zhang (not his real name) lived in Sydney for eight years, driving a bottle recycling truck in Botany, while he kept applying for a protection visa. He was refused six times - the refugee tribunal doubted his story - and ended up in Villawood detention centre before being deported last year.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/tragedy-of-refugee-australia-sent-back/2008/06/20/1213770924667.html>

INSIDE A 9/11 MASTERMIND'S INTERROGATION

In a makeshift prison in the north of [Poland](#), [Al Qaeda](#)'s engineer of mass murder faced off against his [Central Intelligence Agency](#) interrogator, Scott Shane writes in the New York Times (22/6/08). It was 18 months after the 9/11 attacks, and the invasion of Iraq was giving Muslim extremists new motives for havoc. If anyone knew about the next plot, it was [Khalid Shaikh Mohammed](#). The interrogator, Deuce Martinez, a soft-spoken analyst who spoke no Arabic, had turned down a CIA offer to be trained in [waterboarding](#) ...Mr Martinez came in after the rough stuff, the ultimate good cop with the classic skills: an unimposing presence, inexhaustible

patience and a willingness to listen to the gripes and musings of a pitiless killer in rambling, imperfect English. His rapport with Mr Mohammed astonished his fellow CIA officers.

ARTICLE:

http://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/22/washington/22ksm.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin

UNEQUAL ALLIES MUST FIND WAY TO DO DUTY

When discussing Afghanistan, many newspapers continue to suggest that some of Europe's NATO allies are under-performing in Afghanistan, and are either unable or unwilling to make a greater effort, writes NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer in *The Australian* (23/6/08). Naturally, these allies feel that their efforts are undervalued. What is a fair and equitable burden? First of all, the debate about burden-sharing should not be reduced solely to today's force levels in Afghanistan, because however important these force levels are, they tell only part of the story. So let me broaden the debate and offer a more holistic perspective by covering three interconnected elements: defence transformation, operations and the wider context of the international community's efforts.

ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23904414-7583,00.html>

TO UNDERSTAND CHINA'S FUTURE, LOOK TO ITS PAST

Visitors flying in to Beijing's new Norman Foster-designed airport, or gazing across Shanghai's Huangpu River from the Bund to the tower city of Pudong, are liable to think of China as a land that has turned its back on the past, according to Jonathan Fenby, *Times on Line* (24/6/08). His book, *The Penguin History of Modern China*, has just been published by Allen Lane. "Watch the destruction of old Beijing to make room for a city of concrete, steel and glass, take the world's highest railway to Tibet or drive across 20-mile bridges, and you seem to be witnessing a country on steroids that cannot wait to embrace a future in which it feels destined to displace the hidebound powers that dominated the last century."

ARTICLE:

http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/comment/columnists/guest_contributors/article4200589.ece

WEST KEEN TO KEEP IRAN CHANNEL OPEN

They are not usually used to the limelight. In fact you might imagine them blinking as they emerge into the sunshine. The political directors of the foreign policy departments of the great powers are the archetypal bureaucrats - more used to influencing policy behind closed doors, than appearing before the glare of television lights. But in the stylish residence of the German ambassador to Iran, they took their place alongside the EU foreign policy envoy Javier Solana, in what was ... a rather bizarre news conference. The aim was to demonstrate the unity of the international community, in the face of Iran's nuclear program. In the event, it showed rather the opposite.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7455890.stm

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

BAN TO FOCUS ON FOOD CRISIS AT UPCOMING G8 SUMMIT

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon plans to focus attention on raising the issue of food security at the G8 summit of major industrialised nations in Japan early next month, as well as the challenges of climate change and the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)

The UN News reported that he will chair the third session of the High Level Global Task Force on the world's food crisis (24/6/08). Mr Ban said the international community needed to build on the momentum generated by the High Level Conference on Food Security held in Rome earlier this month and stressed the need for the Task Force – which brings together the heads of key UN agencies, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – to engage all necessary stakeholders, including states, civil society organizations and the private sector.

He said upcoming meetings at the General Assembly would also be critical occasions to build on the foundations built in Rome to confront global challenges effectively and in a coherent way.

Task Force coordinator Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes updated members on the action plan to tackle immediate and longer-term needs, including the structural factors underlying the current food price hikes.

Among the immediate measures proposed are increasing nutritional and other feeding programs, as well as supplying fertilisers, seeds, animal feed and veterinary services to help smallholder farmers in the current planting season. The plan also calls for a reduction in export bans on food commodities, and focuses on the need for much greater investment in agricultural production in the longer term. The Task Force agreed to complete the plan in time for the G8 summit.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27139&Cr=food&Cr1=crisis>

ANTARCTIC MEDAL FOR WORK ON ICE RUNWAY

Matt Filipowski has been awarded the Australian Antarctic Medal for 2008 for his role in the construction of Wilkins Runway in Antarctica.

Environment Minister Peter Garrett said that Mr Filipowski's outstanding service in support of Australian Antarctic expeditions had earned him this year's medal (20/6/08).

"The construction of the ice runway in Antarctica is an integral part of the new Antarctic air service and the modernisation of Australia's Antarctic program. Matt Filipowski was responsible for all aspects of the work during the construction of Wilkins Runway during the summers of 2003/04, 2005/06, 2006/07 and 2007/08 and spent almost 90 per cent of his time in Antarctica at the runway site.

"His efforts have delivered an outstanding new capability for Australia's Antarctic program. We will be able to do new and important science in Antarctica that would not have been possible in the past," Mr Garrett said.

The landing of the first intercontinental jet aircraft took place at Wilkins Runway on December 10 2007 and the first official passengers arrived in January 2008. The last two continents on earth are now linked by air passenger services.

Established in 1987, Australian Antarctic Medal is an award in the Meritorious Service Awards category of the Australian Honours System. The Australian Antarctic Medal replaced the (British) Imperial Polar Medal and its variations which date back to 1857.

AUSTRALIAN WHEAT REFORM BILL PASSES

The Wheat reform Bill passed in Federal Parliament this week. **DETAILS:** http://www.maff.gov.au/media/media_releases/june_2008/wheat_reform_bill_passes_federal_parliament

TOWARDS IMPROVED WATER USE AND PRODUCTIVITY

Funds of \$8.6 million for a new research project into how changed farming practices can simultaneously improve water use and productivity, while delivering better environmental outcomes (22/6/08). 'The Farms, Rivers and Markets Project will develop a 'how to' guide for farmers to integrate their farm water needs with broader environmental needs,' Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, said.

DETAILS: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2008/pubs/mr20080622b.pdf>

DISCOVERY HELPS SCIENTISTS BETTER PREDICT CLIMATE CHANGES

In a paper published this week in Nature, the authors - including Dr Ying Ping Wang from The Centre for Australian Weather and Climate Research, say that nitrogen fixation has long been recognised as an important process in controlling responses of many ecosystems, particularly boreal and temperate forests, to global environmental change.

The team found that nitrogen-fixing species in phosphorous-limited tropical savannas and lowland tropical forests enjoyed a clear advantage over nitrogen-fixing species found in mature forests at high latitudes, where modern-day temperatures appeared to have constrained their numbers and nitrogen-fixing abilities. '

Working on the basis of these two hypotheses the team produced a new model, which should help scientists to better predict the effect of climate change on different ecosystems and the interactions between terrestrial biosphere and climate change at decadal-to-century time scales, Dr Wang said. [REPORT: http://www.csiro.au/news/NitrogenFix.html](http://www.csiro.au/news/NitrogenFix.html)

WHALING MEETING A DIPLOMATIC TEST FOR AUSTRALIA: EXPERT

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) was holding its 60th meeting in Santiago, Chile, over June 23-27, with an estimated attendance of 79 countries party to the 1946 International Convention. Environment Minister Peter Garrett was leading the Australian delegation.

ANU Professor of International Law Don Rothwell said key issues on the agenda were IWC reform and the ongoing debate between pro-whaling and pro-conservation members of the commission over the legitimacy of Japan's 'scientific whaling' program in the Southern Ocean.

He said that earlier this month Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and Peter Garrett confirmed that Australia was keeping open the option of taking Japan before an international court to contest the legality of Japan's scientific whaling program.

"IWC 60 will be the biggest diplomatic test so far for the Rudd Government's policies on whaling," the professor said. "Australia has been one of the few countries to put forward concrete proposals for IWC reform. Garrett will have the key responsibility of arguing Australia's position for reform which includes closing the loophole in the convention which permits Japan's unilateral scientific whaling program.

"The Rudd Government has so far committed itself to a diplomatic course of action in dealing with the whaling issue. If diplomacy fails in Santiago, then pressure will build upon the government to pursue its international legal case against Japan in the international courts."

Donald R. Rothwell is Professor of International Law at the ANU College of Law, chairman of the 2006 Sydney Panel of Independent International Legal Experts on Japan's Special Permit ('Scientific') Whaling Under International Law.

[DETAILS:](#) Jane O'Dwyer, ANU Communications and External Liaison Office, on: 02 6125 5001 and 0416 249 231.