

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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Millions of Afghans are sliding further into need just as increasing attacks on aid workers are preventing aid deliveries, setting up the possibility of a massive humanitarian crisis in the country, aid groups warn. **AUSTRALIAN DOCTOR LAUNCHES MIDWIFERY TRAINING TO PREVENT FISTULA**

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US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, joined her counterparts from Pacific island nations in Samoa to press Fiji's coup leaders to revive plans for elections next year.

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THOUSANDS IN MYANMAR STILL SUFFERING: UN REPORTS

Nearly three months after deadly Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, hundreds of thousands of children and adults are in need of critical humanitarian assistance, two United Nations agencies on the frontlines of relief efforts reported.

ANOTHER \$1 BILLION NEEDED FOR MYANMAR TO RECOVER

A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES (UNity, UN AND UNAA Contacts)
SOUTH EAST ASIA/ASIA

MYANMAR 'GROUP OF FRIENDS' BRIEFED

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened a meeting of the so-called 'Group of Friends' established to review developments in Myanmar (22/7/08).

The participants were briefed by Mr Ban's Special Adviser Ibrahim Gambari on his trip planned for next month to Myanmar, where the government forcefully cracked down on peaceful protesters last year. It was the fourth since the group was created in December 2007.

According to the Secretary-General's spokesperson, Australia, China, France, India, Indonesia, Japan, Norway, Russia, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Thailand, the UK, the US, Vietnam, the European Community and the European Union attended.

The top UN humanitarian official has undertaken a three-day visit to assess the situation of survivors of the deadly Cyclone Nargis which struck the country in May.

SEE also [ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT](#) page '\$1 BILLION NEEDED FOR MYANMAR TO RECOVER' and [HUMAN RIGHTS](#) page 'SUU KYI'.

SEE also [ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT PAGE](#).

UN MISSION TO NEPAL EXTENDED SIX MONTHS

The United Nations Mission in Nepal ([UNMIN](#)) has been [extended](#) for another six months to allow the mission to complete its monitoring and management of the arms and personnel of the Nepal army and the former Maoist combatants from the civil war (23/7/08).

In a resolution adopted unanimously, the Security Council renewed the mandate of the mission through January 23 next year and called on Nepal's political parties to support the peace process so that UNMIN can wrap up its work soon.

The resolution, which follows a request from Nepal and a similar recommendation from Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his most recent report on the issue, noted that it also endorsed Mr. Ban's proposals "for a phased, gradual, drawdown and withdrawal of UNMIN staff, including arms monitors."

UNMIN was set up at the start of last year to help Nepal, which endured a decade-long civil war that claimed an estimated 13,000 lives until the Government and the Maoists signed a peace deal in 2006 and conducted Constituent Assembly elections.

AFGHANISTAN LOSING BATTLE AGAINST DRUGS

Efforts to address Afghanistan's massive poppy cultivation have been hampered by a lack of political will, widespread corruption at all levels of the Afghan power structure and the absence of alternatives for local farmers, Thomas Schweich, a former U.S. counternarcotics official, writes in *The New York Times*. A multi-pronged strategy including pressure on Afghan President Hamid Karzai to cease protection of drug lords, more drug treatment centers and developmental rewards to provinces that become poppy free is needed. [The New York Times](#) (24/7/08).

EUROPE

NEW REALITIES IN KOSOVO

The situation in Kosovo has changed fundamentally in the past few months and events on the ground have contributed to creating a "profoundly new operating reality" for the UN Interim Administration Mission there (UNMIK), the UN top official in Kosovo told the Security Council.

"The ability of UNMIK to perform the vast majority of its tasks as an interim administration has been fundamentally challenged, owing to actions taken by the authorities in Pristina and the Kosovo Serbs," said Lamberto Zannier.

In his first address to the Council since taking up his post as the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of UNMIK, Mr. Zannier recalled that after declaring its independence from Serbia in February, the Kosovo Assembly adopted on April 9 a constitution that came into effect on June 15.

"Since then, the Kosovo authorities continue to seek to assume powers and responsibilities of a sovereign state," he stated. These included the recent approval by the Kosovo Assembly of funds for establishing a Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a minister appointed. The prime minister had announced his intention to open embassies in a number of European countries and in the US.

Meanwhile, the Kosovo Serbs had continued to oppose cooperation with the authorities in Pristina, stressing that they will only cooperate with UNMIK. As a result of the Serbian local elections on May 11, new parallel municipal authorities were now operating in all Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

"As a consequence of this stark divergence of paths taken by Kosovo's Serbian and Albanian communities, the space in which UNMIK can operate has changed," he stated. While he and his staff continued to monitor the work of the Kosovo authorities and to mediate and facilitate in disputes between communities, his power to impose solutions throughout much of the territory had in practice "disappeared."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27490&Cr=Kosovo&Cr1=>

KARADZIC AT THE HAGUE

Under the cover of night and to the protests of thousands of nationalist supporters, Radovan Karadzic was moved from the war crimes court in Belgrade to a cellblock in The Hague, where he will await trial for some months. He was held in Belgrade for nearly a week following his stunning capture, as the courts awaited a mailed appeal challenging his extradition, which did not arrive. The crowds protesting Karadzic's removal were an order of magnitude smaller than the violent protests that followed Kosovo's declaration of independence. [The Washington Post](#) and [The New York Times](#) (30/7/08).

AFRICA

CALL FOR UN TO TAKE BOLD, DECISIVE AND FAST ACTION ON SOMALIA

The UN envoy to Somalia has told the Security Council that there were limited choices for bringing peace to the violence-wracked Horn of Africa country, but that the time had come to make a final decision on the best possible option.

Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah said that the options included converting the current African Union peacekeeping mission to Somalia, known as AMISOM, to a UN operation by "rehatting" the troops, creating an international stabilisation force or establishing a new UN peacekeeping force (23/7/08).

He also called on the council to make a strong public expression of support for the peace agreement signed in Djibouti in June between the Transitional Federal Government of Somalia and the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia.

REPORT: www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/archives/20080723_archive.html

ISLAMIC INSURGENTS TARGET FOREIGN AID WORKERS IN SOMALIA

Islamist insurgents in Somalia have launched what appears to be a targeted campaign of violence against foreign aid workers, pushing the already war-torn nation toward a full-scale famine, UN officials and observers warn, the Christian Science Monitor reported (21/7/08).

The warnings come amid fresh violence that has left many civilians dead in the Somalian capital, the central battleground between the Western-backed government and armed Islamist militias.

The Islamist insurgents, who are fighting for the creation of an Islamic state, have long attacked foreigners working inside Somalia. But the recent spate of violence suggests the

attacks have now coalesced into a deliberate [terror campaign](#), The International Herald Tribune reported.

Ominous leaflets recently surfaced on the streets of Mogadishu, calling aid workers "infidels" and warning them that they will be methodically hunted down. Since January, at least 20 aid workers have been killed, more than in any year in recent memory. Still others have been abducted....

Further reports have been published by Agence France-Presse (AFP), the Associated Press (AAP) and Garowe Online. **DETAILS:** <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0721/p99s01-duts.html>

AFRICAN UNION ASKS UN TO DELAY SUDAN INDICTMENT

Following a meeting of the African Union Peace and Security Council and coming after a similar appeal from the Arab League, the African Union has called on the UN Security Council to suspend the war crimes indictment of Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir. The UN may suspend the International Criminal Court's action for a period of one year, which is renewable. **REPORT** [Reuters](#) (22/7/08).

UN APPOINTMENTS/CONFERENCE/CONTACTS

FRENCH DIPLOMAT TO BE CHIEF PEACEKEEPER

French diplomat Alain Le Roy has been tapped to assume the role of chief peacekeeper for the UN at a time when UN peacekeeping missions are in high demand and in potential jeopardy -- in both a mortal and conceptual sense. Recent reports from Darfur have mirrored the situation in Bosnia before the fall of Srebrenica: UN peacekeepers are under attack and unable to fulfill their mission. The risk of failure and lives lost in Darfur, combined with a global peacekeeping force that is stretched too thin, threaten the legitimacy of the UN peacekeeping mission. [International Herald Tribune](#) (22/7/08).

ABDULLAH SALEH MBAMBA LEAVES CANBERRA

The United Nations Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific (UNIC) in Canberra has announced that Abdullah Saleh Mbamba, director of the UN Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand and the South Pacific, left Canberra on July 1, after completing his tour of duty. Pending the arrival of his successor, Richard Towle, Regional Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, will undertake the representational duties for this office. Those wishing to contact Mr Towle in this capacity, should contact Julia Dean, National Information Officer, UNIC Canberra on 61 (2) 6273 8200.

RENEWING THE AUSTRALIAN NATIONAL COMMISSION FOR UNESCO

The Australian Government is currently in the process of re-constituting the Australian National Commission for UNESCO. Dr James Page writes that he believes this is a key opportunity for UNAA members to lobby government to legislate to establishing the National Commission as an independent agency, to re-instate previous staffing for the National Commission, to establish regular funding for the commission, and to invite NGO representatives to participate as members of the commission.

DETAILS: <http://eprints.gut.edu.au/archive/00003578/>

Dr James Page: jamesmithpage@hotmail.com

**UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION
NATIONAL CONFERENCE 08
BRISBANE**

The Future is in Our Hands

The theme: Making a Difference

United Nations Associations are established in over 100 countries – we believe that the United Nations DOES make a difference in world affairs, and Associations are part of making a difference.

The United Nations Charter focuses on peace, security and justice, and the Human Rights Charter focuses on people's rights. Join us and make a difference.

The Conference Organising Committee has invited distinguished speakers to present papers, on a range of themes being addressed at community, state, national and international levels with the opportunity for delegates to contribute.

Parliament House 21-23 August 2008

The conference will run over three consecutive days.

Day 1 & 2 will be in conference at Parliament House, Brisbane and will address:

Climate Change
Life Long Education
Governance
Peace, Conflict & Resolution
Global Compact
Sustainability
Human Rights
Plus Gala Conference Dinner, Socratic Meeting in the Red Room, Australia Outback Spectacular.

Day 3 will be an opportunity to visit World Heritage, UNESCO Ecobiosphere, Rainforests, Eco Centres etc. either on the Gold Coast (South of Brisbane), the Sunshine Coast (north of Brisbane) or special facilities within Brisbane.

DETAILS: unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au; Tel/Fax 07 32541096; PO Box 244, New Farm Qld 4006

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:

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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

CITY FLICKS SWITCH FROM HOT AIR TO USABLE HEAT

"Cities are our most profligate consumers of scarce resources and our worst polluters," writes Allan Jones, of Woking UK, in the Sydney Morning Herald (22/7/08). "Cities are the primary cause of climate change and are most at risk from climate change, but they also provide the solution to tackling it.

"In the 1980s, I was already convinced that global warming was a reality, so when I joined the Borough of Woking in Surrey, I was determined to do something about it. As chief engineer of this borough of 100,000 people, I introduced the energy efficiency revolving fund that led to replacing the town's electricity and heating systems with co-generation, also known as combined heat and power generation.

"In Woking, we installed a gas-fired system (far less polluting than coal), which generates electricity locally. Heat from the generation process is captured and piped underground to supply heating and hot water. This is co-generation, and in some countries such as Denmark and the Netherlands, more than 50 per cent of their energy comes from cogeneration.

In addition, "trigeneration - supplemented by fuel cells and renewable energy such as solar panels - enabled the town to produce 80 per cent of its own power by 2004 and to drop its CO2 emissions by 77 per cent in 14 years. The power and heat was also cheaper for customers" he says. [DETAILS:](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/21/1216492347746.html)
<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/21/1216492347746.html>

BOB BROWN: SERIOUSNESS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson was taking the Coalition out of the political process to determine Australia's climate change trajectory, Greens leader Bob Brown said (23/7/08).

"Dr Nelson's demand that nothing happen before 2012 dismisses the world's scientists' calls for urgent action to halt climate change," Senator Brown said. "The Opposition Leader is putting the wishes of major polluters ahead of the interests of ordinary Australians."

He said his statements indicating that even 2012 might be too early were perplexing.

"The plan he outlined yesterday, to implement a trading scheme with a carbon price and trajectory 'so low as to be near meaningless' if the world's largest emitters won't commit to targets, is economically reckless and environmentally irresponsible," he said.

"As Professor Garnaut has said 'Delaying now is not postponing a decision, it's making a decision. To delay is deliberately to choose to avoid effective steps to reduce the risks of

climate change to acceptable levels'." The senator said the Greens would engage with government constructively, not taking this pre-conditional Coalition approach.

"The seriousness of climate change demands that all of us participate to get early action-that is also in the best interest of business, as the German experience shows," he said.

DETAILS: Ebony Bennett 0409 164 603

NOTE: A further statement from the Coalition on climate change is expected shortly.

POPULATION TIME BOMB 'TICKING ON EMISSIONS'

A two-thirds cut in household greenhouse gas emissions would still not achieve Federal Government carbon targets because the population is growing too fast, a study into immigration policy and climate change contends, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (23/7/08).

By 2050, when Australia plans to have cut its total emissions by 60 per cent, the population will have risen to just over 30 million unless immigration policies change radically, said Bob Birrell, director of the Centre for Population and Urban Research at Monash University. "I just can't see how they can realistically aim for these targets," he said.

"My main concern is that business doesn't seem to be aware of the consequences of the population rise and there's no discussion about it."

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/22/1216492448158.html>

US VOLUNTARY POLLUTION PROGRAMS 'FAILING'

Industry lack of interest and unreliable data leave voluntary pollution reduction programs largely ineffective, the US Environmental Protection Agency's inspector general said in a recent report. The current US administration has relied almost exclusively on voluntary programs, the report said, but must now consider other policy options. [The Toronto Star/Associated Press](#) (24/7/08).

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

AUSTRALIA TO CHANGE ASYLUM SEEKER DETENTION

Federal Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes, welcomed the Federal Government's announcement of a major shift in immigration detention policy to a model where detention in Immigration Detention Centres is only to be used as a last resort and for the shortest practicable time (29/7/08).

"This is a huge step forward for the protection of the human rights of people in immigration detention, perhaps the biggest step taken in three years since children were moved out of immigration detention centres," said Commissioner Innes.

"The implementation of this approach would go a long way toward meeting our international commitments, including to people who have travelled to Australia to escape fear, persecution and injustice in their own countries," said Commissioner Innes. "It would also assist in repairing the shameful reputation Australia has developed for the way it has treated such people over the last decade or so.

"I am especially pleased that the seven key values on immigration detention, endorsed by Cabinet, assert that indefinite and long term detention is simply not acceptable," he said.

In announcing the new policy reforms to the immigration detention system, the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, Senator Chris Evans, indicated that detention will only occur if the need to detain is established.

The presumption will be that people will remain in the community while their immigration status is resolved, unless there is a risk to the community. According to the Minister, the Department for Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) will have to justify a decision to detain – not presume detention.

"We look forward to working with DIAC and the government on the best means of putting

these values into practice," said Commissioner Innes.

The Human Rights Commissioner will be inspecting Christmas Island immigration detention facilities on August 12/13 as part of an annual inspection of immigration detention facilities across the country.

GOVERNMENT PUSH OVER DR HANEEF INFORMATION

The Federal Government says it would like the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to publicly disclose some of the information it has submitted to the Haneef inquiry, (ABC News 31/7/08).

Former Gold-Coast-based doctor Mohamed Haneef was arrested last year on a terrorism-related charge that was later dropped. The inquiry is investigating the handling of Dr Haneef's case and the spy agency ASIO has made much of its submission public.

Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland says the AFP cannot release some classified information, but believes some details should be made public. Former Howard government immigration minister Kevin Andrews says he did not receive any advice from ASIO about Dr Haneef.

ASIO's submission to the Haneef inquiry says it repeatedly told the Federal Government and other agencies that the Indian doctor was not a threat to national security.

HUMAN RIGHTS 'DETERIORATE' AS GAMES APPROACH: AMNESTY

The human rights situation in China has deteriorated, not improved, with its hosting of the Olympic Games this year, campaigners Amnesty International say, the BBC reported (28/7/08).

Amnesty documents the use of "re-education through labour", the suppression of rights activists and journalists, and the use of arbitrary imprisonment. A spokesman urged world leaders due to attend the games, opening in 10 days, to speak out against the violations.

It was reported that Beijing routinely denies allegations that it abuses human rights, arguing that recent reforms have improved the situation and saying its economic management has improved the quality of life of hundreds of millions of people.

The Amnesty report says that Chinese activists have been locked up, people have been made homeless, journalists have been detained, websites blocked, and the use of labour camps and prison beatings have increased.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7529453.stm>

PILLAY NOMINATED AS UN HUMAN RIGHTS CHIEF

South African lawyer and ICC judge Navanethem Pillay has been named to replace Louise Arbour as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised Ms Pillay's "outstanding credentials in human rights and justice." The jurist won similar plaudits from UN ambassadors from Britain, France and the United States. [BBC](#) (25/7/08).

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSIONER FOUGHT A LONG BATTLE FOR HER OWN RIGHTS

The new UN high commissioner for human rights, the South African judge Navanethem Pillay, has spent a lifetime toppling barriers and exceeding expectations, Maggie Farley reports in the Sydney Morning Herald (26/7/08).

So when human rights groups and some American officials expressed scepticism before her appointment, she said she was used to it. As a member of a minority from a poor Indian neighbourhood in apartheid-era South Africa, she was long kept from becoming a judge by the colour of her skin. For years, although she was a lawyer, she could not even sign a contract without her husband's consent.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/25/1216492734171.html>

FORMER ARGENTINIAN GENERAL GETS LIFE

An Argentine court has convicted Luciano Benjamin Menendez, a former army commander, to life in prison for his role in the kidnap, torture and murder of Argentinians during the country's 1976-1983 "dirty war." [The New York Times](#) (25/7/08), [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (25/7/08).

UZBEKISTAN BANS HUMAN RIGHTS REPRESENTATIVE

Despite the threat of continued sanctions, Uzbekistan has banned a representative from Human Rights Watch from entering the country, stripping him of accreditation and notifying him while he was abroad that he would not be allowed back in. While the EU has gradually eased sanctions against the nation, human rights campaigners have noted several deeply alarming incidents, including the imprisonment of journalists and political opponents and a 2005 massacre in which hundreds of protesters were gunned down. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](#) (25/7/08).

SUU KYI: NO RELEASE CONSIDERED UNTIL MAY 2009

Myanmar's ruling military junta will not reconsider releasing Aung San Suu Kyi from house arrest until May 2009, Foreign Minister Nyan Win said, according to Singaporean officials. [International Herald Tribune/Associated Press](#) (22/7/08).

AMNESTY CONCERN OVER DISAPPEARING PAKISTANIS

Pakistani officials have not done nearly enough to address the disappearances of hundreds of Pakistanis into detention since the war on terror began in 2001, despite the dedicated campaigning of family members and local rights groups, Amnesty International said in a report released on Wednesday. [REPORT: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080723.wpakistan23/BNStory/International/home](#) [The Globe and Mail \(Toronto\)](#) (23/7/08).

HAITIAN CHILDREN REMAIN HIGH KIDNAP TARGETS

Haitian children remain the target of kidnappings, killings, sexual violence and child trafficking, and they have also been active participants in recent public protests, the UN peacekeeping mission to the impoverished Caribbean country reported (22/7/08).

The latest report from [MINUSTAH](#), covering the period from January to July this year and released this week, found that children continue to be affected by armed violence, despite the general improvement in the security situation in Haiti.

Kidnapping is a particularly strong concern, with children comprising more than one in three victims and girls becoming an increasingly favoured target of armed gangs. Since the start of the year 66 minors have been abducted, compared to 80 for all of 2007.

Two child victims were killed, including one 16-year-old boy whose tortured body was found despite the payment of a ransom to his kidnapers. Many of the girls who are abducted are also sexually abused.

Overall, sexual violence against children remains "a high concern," according to the report, although some local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) have indicated there has been a decrease compared with last year.

There has also been an "alarming increase" in the trafficking of children to the neighbouring Dominican Republic for labour and sexual exploitation. Nearly 750 children were repatriated by Dominican authorities in the first five months of the year.

[REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27451&Cr=Haiti&Cr1=](#)

INQUIRY INTO IMMIGRATION DETENTION: GetUp LAUNCHES PETITION

There was a chance to end a regrettable chapter of Australian history that caused unimaginable suffering to some of the world's most desperate and downtrodden, GetUp said this week. GetUp describes itself as an independent, not-for-profit community campaigning group.

The Federal Government had launched a long-awaited inquiry into immigration detention and “We believe this Inquiry signals that the government genuinely wants to put an end to Australia’s inhumane detention regime, and for the first time they are asking us for our views,” GetUp said. “If ever you have despaired at the treatment of asylum seekers, put your name to GetUp’s petition submission and help end this ongoing national shame.”

DETAILS: www.getup.org.au/campaign/EndMandatoryDetention

ABORIGINES WANT END TO NT INTERVENTION

Thousands of Aborigines are petitioning to have the Northern Territory intervention abandoned, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (25/7/08).

Activists say their petition will be tabled in federal parliament in mid-September to coincide with the end of the Rudd Government’s 12-month review into radical measures to combat child sex abuse. Organisers of the petition have warned that Labor is at risk of repeating the mistakes of the Howard Government.

In a statement, signed by Northern Land Council chairperson Wali Wungamurra and 52 traditional owners, they demanded the scrapping of “intervention bureaucracy”, advocating implementation of a case-by-case basis. **REPORT:** <http://news.smh.com.au/national/aborigines-want-end-to-nt-intervention-20080725-3ksk.html>

PLAN TO IMPROVE GENDER EQUALITY

Introducing paid maternity leave, tackling sexual harassment and bridging the gender gap in retirement savings were among the priorities highlighted when federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick outlined her plan of action towards gender equality in Sydney (22/7/08). The stories and ideas she heard on a listening tour shaped the plan of action.

“Progress towards gender equality has stalled,” she said. “We have more work to do if we want to ensure women and men live in a fair and equal Australia.”

She has focussed on five areas:

- * Increasing the number of women in leadership positions, including a focus on supporting Indigenous women’s leadership;
- * Balancing paid work and family responsibilities beginning with the implementation of a national government funded paid maternity leave scheme;
- * Decreasing the incidence of sexual harassment;
- * Reducing the gender gap in retirement savings; and
- * Strengthening laws to address sex discrimination and promote gender equality.

Reducing sexual harassment was a main priority, she said. A national survey is being commissioned to track trends on the extent of sexual harassment in Australia. The research will be used to develop an education strategy to reduce sexual harassment in the workplace.

She said there would be concrete programs to address each of the issues identified and as part of a women-in-leadership program, work was in progress to create a forum to bring together Indigenous women and women in the corporate sector. She also plans to continue a push for the implementation of a national paid parental scheme.

DETAILS: www.humanrights.gov.au/listeningtour/launch

FORGET THE GUILT, SISTERS, IT'S TIME TO GET ANGRY AND ORGANISED

The image on the cover has all the hallmarks of a superannuation brochure, Lisa Pryor in the Sydney Morning Herald (26/7/08). But this is the report on gender equality released by the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, Elizabeth Broderick, following her listening tour of the country.

“The woman on the beach seems emblematic of the way we talk about women and work now. Feminism has become the movement that dares not speak its name and feminist principles must be cloaked in the soft-focus imagery and gentle language of equivocation and hand wringing, juggling and balancing. As if getting angry and demanding stuff is so ‘70s.”

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/25/1216492729372.html>

DELAYS HIT CHANGES TO FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

The Federal Government has decided to implement only one of its promised changes to freedom-of-information law this year and to consult widely before introducing more extensive reforms, a move that will delay major changes until well into next year, the Sydney Morning Herald's Freedom of Information Editor Matthew Moore writes (23/7/08).

The cabinet secretary, John Faulkner, announced cabinet had agreed to legislate in the next session of Parliament to fulfil an election promise to abolish conclusive certificates - the right of ministers and senior bureaucrats to block access to documents by certifying release is not in the public interest. REPORT:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/22/1216492448185.html>

'TRUST' POSTER TO HELP NSW POLICE COMBAT RACIAL HATRED

Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma, and the NSW Police Force Corporate spokesperson for Cultural Diversity, Deputy Commissioner Nick Kaldas, unveiled the 'TRUST' poster, aimed to assist police monitor and respond to incidents of racial and religious hatred throughout NSW (22/7/08).

The 'TRUST' poster was developed to address some of the issues identified by the Muslim community and police during the Unlocking Doors Project," said Commissioner Calma.

The Unlocking Doors Project, which is a collaboration between the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC), the NSW Police Force and Victoria Police, brought Muslim communities and police together, in an environment of trust, to discuss and respond to incidents of racial and religious discrimination and abuse.

"The 'TRUST' poster provides valuable guidance to police officers who respond to incidents of racial and religious hatred and abuse when it occurs in the community," Mr Calma said.

The poster will be exhibited in all NSW police stations to encourage officers to record all such reports and offences and to refer victims to HREOC or the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board (ADB), the NSW Police Force Deputy Commissioner Kaldas said.

DETAILS: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/racial_discrimination/index.html

HREOC UPDATES RELEASED

HREOC human rights web pages on immigration, refugees and asylum seekers have been updated, including a new fact sheet on the impact of bridging visas restrictions on asylum seekers, questions and answers on immigration detention and human rights.

DETAILS: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/human_rights/immigration/index.html

UK REPORT ALLEGES VIOLENCE TOWARDS DEPORTEES

Outsourcing Abuse, a report on nearly 300 alleged assaults against asylum deportees, by Birnberg Peirce & Partners, Medical Justice and NCADC, just published, alleges an alarming number of injuries sustained by asylum deportees at the hand of private "escorts" contracted by the UK Home Office.

The report was described as revealing evidence of widespread and seemingly systemic abuse of vulnerable people who have fled their own countries seeking safety and refuge, and that assault claims have largely been brushed off by the Home Office.

DETAILS: Emma Ginn (NCADC) on 07703 189665, Medical Justice : 07904 778365, Juliet Riddell : 07779 790766. National Coalition of Anti-Deportation Campaigns (NCADC), 110 Hamstead Road, Birmingham, B20 2QS. UK.

REPORT:

[http://www.ncadc.org.uk/emmaginnsfolder/emmaginnsfolder/july%2008/Outsourcing Abuse.pdf](http://www.ncadc.org.uk/emmaginnsfolder/emmaginnsfolder/july%2008/OutsourcingAbuse.pdf)

REPORT: 'Failed asylum-seekers are abused by private security companies, says report' by Robert Verkaik and Chris Green, The Independent (14/7/08).

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/failed-asylumseekers-are-abused-by-private-security-companies-says-report-866879.html>

PUBLIC HEARINGS OVER FUEL TANKS IN BRISBANE

The Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade will due to hear from former Royal Australian Air Force personnel and their families how they were affected by the deseal/reseal cleaning process of fuel tanks on F-111 bombers during public hearings in Brisbane over July 28/29.

The Defence Sub-Committee is investigating and reviewing claims for compensation made by former F-111 deseal/reseal maintenance personnel, including the Commonwealth's response to their health and support needs.

The Deputy Chief of the Air Force, Air Vice Marshall Geoff Brown, told the federal parliamentary inquiry on July 21 that about 460 RAAF personnel and possibly up to 2000 civilians may have suffered illness and other medical conditions related to the chemicals used for cleaning the fuel tanks of F-111s.

The sub-committee is investigating compensation claims and whether the response was adequate and consistent with the findings of the previous Study of Health Outcomes in Aircraft Maintenance Personnel (SHOAMP) by the Department of Veterans' Affairs, and whether the overall administration and handling of the program was accurate.

DETAILS: Senior Research Officer Muz Ali on 02 6277 2313/0412 085 958;
www.apf.gov.au/jfadt

D. PEACE & SECURITY **SOUTH EAST ASIA**

CAMBODIA AND THAILAND TO TALK

Cambodia and Thailand have agreed to bilateral talks over disputed border territory rather than taking the matter to the UN for resolution, officials from the two countries said. Both countries have sent troops to the border, raising fears of an armed conflict. [The Globe and Mail \(Toronto\)/Associated Press \(24/7/08\)](#).

MIDDLE EAST

BAN 'CONCERNED/ ABOUT ISRAELI SETTLEMENT PLAN

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed deep concern Thursday over Israeli plans to build a new settlement in the West Bank as being contrary to international law and Israel's commitments under the struggling peace process. [Reuters \(24/7/08\)](#).

MIDDLE EAST MOVES 'ENCOURAGING' ... BUT FOR WEST BANK

The top UN political official welcomed recent positive moves towards peace that have been made in the Middle East, but sounded the alarm on the lack of progress in the West Bank (22/7/08).

"During a month that saw a number of encouraging developments across the Middle East, we are particularly heartened by the progress in Lebanon, where a major step forward was taken with the announcement of a national unity government," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe said in his briefing to the Security Council.

He also cited the indirect talks between Israel and Syria, along with the continued ceasefire and drop in violence in Gaza, as hopeful developments.

"We are concerned, however, about the lack of improvement in the situation on the ground in the West Bank," Mr Pascoe told the 15-member body in [open debate](#) on the region.

In parallel with the consolidation of the cessation of hostilities in Gaza, he said it is important to speed up progress in the West Bank, where he said Israeli military operations have intensified since June 19.

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) had shut down institutions – such as schools, medical centres and media outlets – in Nablus that were allegedly affiliated with Hamas, while Israel had banned dozens of international NGOs it accused of fund-raising for Hamas.

He was concerned “about the effects of Israeli raids on the efforts of Palestinian security forces to operate effectively in areas under their control.” On the humanitarian front, he said he was pleased that the number of truckloads entering Gaza from Israel had surged over 50 per cent in the four weeks following the ceasefire.

“We welcome this improvement, but note that current import levels stand at 30 per cent of the level before June 2007,” with the continuing lack of raw materials and banning of exports holding back economic recovery, Mr Pascoe said. Also inhibiting growth was the fuel supply to Gaza, which was significantly lower than needed.

“The reduction of violence in Gaza is a significant, but fragile, achievement,” he said. “We hope that this calm can be sustained and, together with internal Palestinian dialogue, lead to other positive steps: the return of the legitimate Palestinian Authority to the Gaza Strip, the re-openings of crossings, the release of Gilad Shalit and a number of Palestinian prisoners and reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority on a basis which allows the peace process to move forward.”

Regarding Lebanon, he said the UN was looking forward to working closely with the new government, but warned clashes in and around the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli could have implications for the country’s stability and security.

WEST BANK CONSTRUCTION PLANNED BY ISRAEL

A key committee has approved construction of the first new Jewish settlement in the West Bank in a decade, an Israeli official said, the Canadian Globe & Mail reported (24/7/08). The news infuriated Palestinians, who said the decision could cripple peace efforts.

The only hurdle that remained was Defence Minister Ehud Barak, who was expected to approve the Maskiot settlement within weeks, the official said. Mr Barak had signalled to the national planning committee that it should authorise the plan.

The official spoke on condition of anonymity because the Defence Ministry had not officially announced the settlement would be built in the Jordan Valley Rift, an arid north-south strip that forms Israel’s eastern flank with Jordan.

Asked why Israel was moving ahead with the politically charged plan, the official said that it had been in the pipeline for years. Israel originally announced in 2006 that it would build Maskiot, then froze the plan after an international outcry. However, earlier this year, nine Israeli families settled in mobile homes at the site, which Palestinians claim as part of a future state. [REPORT:](#)

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080724.wwestbank0724/BNStory/International/home>

BRITAIN TO WITHDRAW TROOPS FROM IRAQ

British Prime Minister Gordon Brown said his government would seek to withdraw most British troops from Iraq in early 2009. Mr Brown did not lay out a firm timetable and indicated any decisions would hinge upon the advice of military commanders on the ground. [The New York Times](#) (23/7/08).

BUSH, IN A SHIFT, ACCEPTS CONCEPT OF IRAQ TIMELINE

President Bush agreed to “a general time horizon” for withdrawing American troops in [Iraq](#), the White House announced, in a concession that reflected both progress in stabilising Iraq and the depth of political opposition to an open-ended military presence in Iraq and at home, the New York Times reported (19/7/08). Mr Bush, who has long derided timetables for troop withdrawals as dangerous, agreed to a notional one as part of the administration’s efforts to negotiate the terms for a US military presence in Iraq after a [United Nations](#) mandate expires at the end of the year ... The agreement, announced in coordinated statements released by

the White House and Prime Minister [Nuri Kamal al-Maliki](#)'s government, reflected a significant shift in the war in Iraq. More than five years after the conflict began with the overthrow of [Saddam Hussein](#), the American military presence now depends significantly, if not completely, on Iraqi acquiescence.

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/19/world/middleeast/19iraq.html?th&emc=th>

LEBANON: ICRC CALLS FOR HUMANITARIAN PRINCIPLES

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has called on all those involved in the current armed clashes taking place in Bab Tebbaneh, Jabal Mohsen and Kobbeh to spare the population and facilitate evacuation of all the wounded (27/7/08).

The ICRC reports that in recent weeks, intense fighting has occurred in northern Lebanon. It resumed on July 25. At least 14 people have been killed and around 100 injured. Many have been forced to flee their homes, and public infrastructure and private property have been destroyed.

The ICRC is appealing to those engaged in the fighting to allow medical and humanitarian personnel to carry out their tasks and to give them unimpeded access to the wounded and those in need of humanitarian aid. It says those personnel, as well as medical vehicles and facilities, must be protected against the effects of the hostilities.

DETAILS: Christian Cardon, ICRC Beirut, tel. +961 1 739 297/8/9 /+961 70 129 869; Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific, Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, (61 2) 9388 9039/Mobile (61 2) 418 485 120; <http://www.icrc.org>

CYPRUS TALKS UNDER UN AUSPICES

Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat have announced that they would meet for full-fledged talks under United Nations auspices on September 3, in a move aimed at ending the long-running dispute in Cyprus (25/7/08).

"The aim of the full-fledged negotiations is to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Cyprus problem, which will safeguard the fundamental and legitimate rights and interests of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots," the Secretary-General's Special Representative and head of the UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP), Taya-Brook Zerihoun, said in a statement read out on behalf of the two leaders.

The two leaders said that the agreed solution arising from the talks would be put to separate, simultaneous referenda. They also announced that they had agreed to establish a secure hotline to facilitate direct contact between them.

Mr Christofias and Mr Talat also commended the efforts of the working groups and technical committees which have been holding talks on a range of issues, and approved an additional 16 measures in the areas of the environment, cultural heritage, crisis management and crime. They also welcomed the appointment of Alexander Downer as the Secretary-General's Special Adviser for Cyprus.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27489&Cr=Cyprus&Cr1=>

CYPRUS LEADERS TO MEET IN SEPTEMBER

Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders have set Sept. 3 as the date for the two sides to begin reunification talks, the United Nations said Friday. Talks between the two stalled after the Greek side rejected a UN-backed plan in 2004, but the changing political landscape has renewed hopes for an agreement. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (25/7/08).

AFRICA

MUGABE SUCCUMBS TO PRESSURE AND STARTS SECRET TALKS WITH OPPOSITION

The rival claimants to victory in Zimbabwe's widely criticised presidential elections - Robert Mugabe and Morgan Tsvangirai - have agreed to immediately begin intensive talks aimed at establishing a "new government", the London Guardian reports (22/7/08). At their first meeting in more than a decade, Zimbabwe's president and the leader of the opposition

Movement for Democratic Change signed a five-page "memorandum of understanding" that envisages a fortnight of secret talks by representatives dealing with an array of issues from political violence against the opposition to constitutional reform.

Mr Mugabe, who only a few weeks ago was ruling out any deal with Mr Tsvangirai but has been forced to give ground under myriad pressures including an imploding economy, described the memorandum as a "serious matter". Mr Tsvangirai, who won the first round of presidential elections in March, said "not finding a solution is not an option".

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/jul/22/zimbabwe>

ZIMBABWE RUNS OUT OF PAPER MONEY

The government of Zimbabwe has reportedly run out of paper money, a development that could potentially undermine talks between President Robert Mugabe and opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai. Though the money is essentially worthless - one English pound is currently valued at 1.3 trillion Zimbabwean dollars - it is essential for the president control of the military and maintaining order. The European company that supplies Zimbabwe cut off supplies [AllAfrica Global Media](#) (24/7/08).

ATTACK ON UNAMID STAFFER CONDEMNED

A security officer working with the joint African UN peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID) has [condemned](#) an assault on one of its security officers in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state (22/7/08).

"Although this could be said to be an isolated incident, UNAMID condemns in the strongest terms such attacks on its staff members, who are here to help bring peace to the people of Darfur," said a mission statement.

The security officer went to the market area in El Fasher to investigate a road accident involving a UN staff member, a military vehicle and a taxi, according to UNAMID. He had just started taking pictures of the scene when a small group of military personnel assaulted him, despite the intervention of UNAMID civilian staff. After his release he was taken to a UNAMID hospital in El Fasher.

Separately, the mission reported its police advisers have conducted their first helicopter patrols over five camps housing internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Darfur. The three-hour test flight was part of an initiative to use helicopters to reach selected camps as an alternative to long-distance road patrols which have proved dangerous for the unarmed police advisers.

In a related development, the Joint AU-UN Special Representative Rodolphe Adada met with the Governor of North Darfur, Mohammed Osman Yousif Kibir when the governor reiterated the commitment of the Sudanese Government to provide security and protection to UNAMID and its full support for the full deployment of the mission.

AUSTRALIA

WILPF SEEKS VOICE ON DEFENCE POLICY

The Australian Department of Defence recently published a defence policy discussion paper, also known as the Defence White Paper, as part of a process for a periodic review of defence policy issues, writes Cathy Picone, Joint National Coordinator of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (Australian Section) Inc.

As part of this review process, a five-member panel is presently conducting community consultations around Australia inviting comment and input from Australian citizens and groups on various aspects of defence policy.

"The chairperson of the five-member panel is former ALP Senator, Stephen Loosley who on the night of the recent community consultation in Adelaide called the consultations a "fundamentally democratic exercise", she said. "Having attended last Thursday's Defence White Paper community consultation in Adelaide, we can say that this so-called democratic space is presently being ceded to an extremely narrow constituency, namely men whose lives

revolve around the military. Unsurprisingly, these men are conveying to the five-member panel a very skewed view of what Australian citizens think of defence policy issues.

“We in Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) would like to see this changed. Furthermore, we believe that it could be changed very simply by people like us attending the community consultations and putting our point of view to the five-member panel. If people like us with a vision of how our defence forces might become agents primarily of humanitarian relief, peace keeping, reconstruction and peace building were to attend and contribute to the community consultations, it would make a difference,” she writes.

WILPF has decided to engage in the review process by encouraging as many of our members as possible to attend the community consultations in various centres around the country.

DETAILS: <http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/activities.htm>

<http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/discusspaper.htm>

Cathy Picone, WILPF National Coordinator on +618 8296 4357; wilpfaustralia@wilpf.org.au and

<http://www.wilpf.org.au>

SOUTH AMERICA

RUSSIA AND VENEZUELA PLAN BILATERAL COOPERATION

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev and Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez have announced plans to significantly boost bilateral cooperation. The two will seek to more closely synchronise actions on global oil and gas markets, foreign policy and trade in an attempt to counter US influence. **REPORT:** <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-iraq23-2008jul23,0,5928236.story>/[The New York Times](http://www.nytimes.com) (23/7/08).

E. HEALTH & MEANS

ATTACKS ON AID WORKERS IMPERIL HELP FOR AFGHANS

Millions of Afghans are sliding further into need just as increasing attacks on aid workers are preventing aid deliveries, setting up the possibility of a massive humanitarian crisis in the country, aid groups warn. Eleven NGO employees have died so far this year in over 68 violent incidents involving aid agencies. **REPORT:**

<http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=79366/> [IRINNews.org](http://www.irinnews.org) (22/7/08).

HOMOPHOBIA HINDERS HEALTH HIV/AIDS WORK

Persistent violence against members of the gay community across Africa is adversely affecting efforts to address the spread of HIV/AIDS, human rights and health advocates warn. The threat of violence, severe social stigma and continued illegality of homosexual relations in most African countries makes outreach difficult and hinders access to treatment.

[IRINNews.org](http://www.irinnews.org) (23/7/08).

WORM DANGER RELATED TO HIV/AIDS VIRUS

Parasitic worm infections may increase an individual's susceptibility to the HIV/AIDS virus, according to a study published on Tuesday. Researchers found test subjects with worm infections, which affect 200 million people around the world, contracted the disease after exposure to far lower levels of the virus than non worm-infected subjects. **REPORT:**

<http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/N22364823.htm> /[AlertNet.org](http://www.alertnet.org)/[Reuters](http://www.reuters.com) (23/7/08).

DIRE FOOD SITUATION IN AFRICA

The UN Food Program seeks some \$400 million to provide food and aid to the most desperate East African nations: Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti, parts of Kenya and Uganda, and above all Ethiopia. Global economic circumstances such as high energy and food prices are exacerbating a catastrophe brought on by a lack of water.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7520286.stm> /[BBC](http://www.bbc.com) (23/7/08).

MALARIA PREVENTION HITS SNAGS

A study of the UN Millennium Development Goal to curb and reverse the spread of malaria has revealed problems with both the scope and mechanism of the project. In order to

complete this mission by 2015, funding would have to be increased by as much as 450% over the \$1 billion spent annually to prevent malaria. In addition, funding is not spread evenly. Some nations receive far less per person at risk than others. [REPORT: The Guardian \(London\) \(22/7/08\)](#).
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/science/2008/jul/22/millennium.malaria>

AUSTRALIAN DOCTOR LAUNCHES MIDWIFERY TRAINING TO PREVENT FISTULA

Australian Dr Catherine Hamlin is co-founder of Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital, the world's only medical centre dedicated exclusively to providing free fistula repair surgery to poor women suffering from childbirth injuries. She visited Australia earlier in the year and was interviewed by ABC TV's Peter Thompson about her work on *Talking Heads*.

After graduating from University of Sydney Medical School in 1946, Dr Hamlin (then Catherine Nicholson) took a resident position at the Crown Street Women's Hospital under the medical directorship of Dr Reginald Hamlin, whom she later married. In 1959, she and her husband travelled to Ethiopia to establish a school of midwifery in Addis Ababa. Fifteen years later they founded Addis Ababa Fistula Hospital. Dr Hamlin has been awarded honorary fellowships in the medical associations of Australia, England and the United States and has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. She is also the author of the best-selling book, [The Hospital by the River](#).

She said recently their latest initiative was the prevention of fistulae among Ethiopian women. It was costing \$4000 a year to train each midwifery student.

She said during the interview there were 9,000 new fistula cases every year and with all the rural centres running as well as the hospital, "We can't do more than 5,000 operations a year." She felt they had been "doing this work all these years and done nothing about trying to prevent it. This is an enormous challenge. And we thought, why don't we put midwives into these villages, properly trained midwives.

"We've actually started teaching on 1st January with 12 very bright students. We've got many hospitals now in three provinces running. A fourth one (is) to be opened soon in Harare, in the east of the country."

Dr Hamlin, who was born in 1924, continued, "I operate every Thursday. We have a huge theatre with four tables, so we can do four operations at once. We're teaching other doctors to be fistula surgeons, to make it known that these girls can be cured."

Peter Thompson asked whether she was not one of the most senior active surgeons on the planet.

Dr Hamlin replied, "I think I probably am. But I enjoy doing it, I can't see the point of not doing it if I still got skills and I'm still able to hold the instruments without shaking. So I just carry on."

"And you've got a steady hand?" he asked. .

Dr Hamlin replied, "Yes, absolutely."

BETTER CARE FOR CARERS INQUIRY

The House Family and Community Committee scheduled a roundtable discussion with carers as part of its public hearing for the committee's inquiry into better support for carers. in Perth (23/7/08).

Carers are those who look after others, usually family members and friends with a chronic illness, disability or frailty. Recent figures from an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found there were over 2.5 million carers in Australia.

Committee Chairperson Annette Ellis said that the demands placed on carers often meant they were exhausted, socially isolated and under extreme financial pressure, particularly as they were often unable to have a job. The strain on carers had been borne out in over 1200 submissions to the committee so far.

[DETAILS: Inquiry Secretary on 02 6277 4566; \[fchy.reps@aph.gov.au\]\(mailto:fchy.reps@aph.gov.au\); \[www.aph.gov.au/fchy\]\(http://www.aph.gov.au/fchy\)](#)

F. MEDIA MATTERS

US AIRWAVES FAIL TO WIN HEARTS AND MINDS

When the US Government launched an Arabic satellite station called Alhurra it was aiming to win Arab hearts and minds as a key plank of its war on terrorism. Four years on, with George Bush's tenure as President coming to a close, Alhurra has become something of an expensive flop in the eyes of many in the Middle East, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (26/7/08). The US wanted a voice to balance the regional satellite television heavyweight and US critic, Al-Jazeera, which commands a majority of the 200 million-plus viewing audience across the Middle East.

The project was given about \$US100 million (\$104 million) in funding each year. *The Washington Post* described it as "the largest and most expensive effort to sway foreign opinion over the airwaves since the creation of Voice of America in 1942". Instead, the story of Alhurra, which means "the free one" in Arabic, has become another in the list of cautionary tales of troubled US attempts to bring democracy to the Middle East.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/25/1216492734186.html>

BEIJING SECURITY OFFICIALS HARASS MEDIA

Beijing's determination to ensure a protest-free Olympics was clear as authorities obstructed foreign media covering the removal of hundreds of petitioners who were lawfully in the capital to complain about corrupt officials, land grabs, pollution and other grievances the Sydney Morning Herald reported (22/7/08). Authorities are worried the civil conflicts will cause China to lose face when it fulfils its dream of hosting the Olympics next month.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/21/1216492356912.html>

CHINA: The immediate and unconditional release of dissident writer Du Daobin after his detention by China's security bureau in Yingcheng, Hubei province, has been demanded by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) (22/7/08).

Mr Du, 43, a dissident writer and former editor of *Human Rights Poetry*, was sentenced in 2004 to three years' jail for "inciting subversion of state power" for publishing 26 articles in 2004 that were critical of the government. The sentence was suspended to four years' probation with two years' deprivation of political rights.

The IFJ has learnt that Mr Du, a member of the Independent Chinese PEN Centre's Writers in Prison Committee, was detained by police in Hubei on July 21 for allegedly publishing dozens of articles under a pseudonym during his probation. The charge of "inciting subversion of state power" has frequently been levelled at writers and journalists who publish articles critical of any aspect of Chinese Government policy.

Zhao Dagong, a member of the Writers in Prison Committee, told the IFJ he believed Mr Du was detained for allegedly writing several articles recently that were critical of the Central Government's attitude to human rights and freedom of expression as the Olympic Games approach.

"Not only Du but a number of writers, including I myself, were warned by the security bureau recently. They ordered us not to criticise the Olympic Games or the human rights situation in China," Mr Zhao said. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

FIJI: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has called on Fiji's military-led interim government to respect and uphold the independence of the media, freedom of expression and diversity of opinion as essential elements of a return to stable democratic processes in Fiji (23/7/08).

This followed an announcement by military leader and self-declared Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama on July 17 that all laws pertaining to freedom of the press were to be consolidated into one media statute.

The president was reported to have said the legislation would involve changes to a code of ethics and professional standards for journalists, and the establishment of a new tribunal to

hear appeals on complaints lodged with Fiji's Media Council. Media Council chairman Daryl Tarte reportedly said on July 18 that the president had told the council 24 hours earlier that such legislation would not be introduced.

"In view of the history of hostility shown by Fiji's interim government toward democratic processes and a critical and independent media, the IFJ is very concerned that these efforts to reform Fiji's media laws will provide further leeway for restrictions on the media," IFJ Asia-Pacific said. "Fundamental to any code of ethics and conduct for journalists is that journalists themselves draw up the code and that media is independent and dedicated to freedom of expression.

The IFJ reported that since the 2006 military coup, the interim government had sought to restrict the media. This year two expatriate newspaper publishers were deported, while the president has accused local journalists of being unethical and a threat to national security and stability.

The IFJ is also concerned about the propriety of Fiji securing the vice-presidency of the Asia-Pacific Institute for Broadcasting Development (AIBD). Local media has reported that the interim government's Permanent Secretary for Information, Major Neumi Leweni, would take up the position. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919

SRI LANKA: Reports of assault and harassment of three media personnel by government officials in Colombo on July 18 were reported to the IFJ (22/7/08).

The incident marks the eighth attack on independent media since the five main journalists' organisations in Sri Lanka welcomed moves by the government in late June to set up a Cabinet subcommittee to investigate media rights violations. The subcommittee, however, has not investigated any of the recent cases.

According to the Free Media Movement, officials from the Urban Development Authority reportedly assaulted *Daily Mirror* journalist Yohan Perera and photographer Pradeep Dilrukshana. Perera, who was hospitalised. It was reported that journalist Dushantha Manoj from Sirasa TV was also harassed by officials.

The media personnel had been covering the alleged illegal demolition of hundreds of homes in Colombo for the South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting to be held in Colombo on August 2/3. It was stated hundreds of police at the scene did not intervene or were unable to stop the assaults.

"We see this incident as a sign of the absolute intolerance towards independent coverage of critical issues related to democratic governance," the FMM said.

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

CAMBODIA: The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) has extended its full support and solidarity to the Cambodian Association for the Protection of Journalists (CAPJ), and all journalists in Cambodia as they prepare to report on the conduct and outcome of the country's national elections on July 27.

In the wake of the shocking murder of senior reporter Khi Sambo, of the Opposition-owned *Moneakseka Khmer*, and his son, who were gunned down in Phnom Penh on July 11, the IFJ urges all journalists, editors and media owners to ensure that the safety and protection of journalists is a high priority during the election and its aftermath. Recent interference by the government, including the forced closure of a newspaper supplement and radio station, raised alarm among the Cambodian media about the freedom of journalists to report on all political perspectives.

The IFJ called on the Cambodian Government, national officials, opposition leaders and local authorities to guarantee journalists and media institutions are not obstructed in preparing news reports before, during and after the elections. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

G. OTHER NEWS

PACIFIC ISLANDS CORRUPTION 'MUCH TALKED ABOUT'

Attempts to understand the level of corruption in the Pacific Islands will fail without properly distinguishing the different types of corruption present and identifying ways to treat each one, according to an ANU academic (23/7/08).

Associate Professor Peter Larmour of the ANU Crawford School of Economics and Government has been studying what corruption means in the Pacific Islands context, and whether the increased focus on the issue reflects an increase in acts of corruption. His findings are detailed in a paper that will later form the introduction to a publication entitled *Corruption in the Pacific Islands*.

Professor Larmour said that the study of corruption across many of the Pacific Islands paints a picture of mixed success in anti-corruption measures.

"Corruption is hard to measure, but there have been new international efforts to do so, such as Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index.

"Where international measures have been applied in the region the conclusions are mixed and muffled. Some countries are doing better than others and where the measures track improvements, some have improved and some have got worse. There are also issues about what counts as corruption – when does a gift become a bribe, for example," he said.

"It may be more useful to distinguish between different types of corruption, rather than trying to put them together in a single measure. There are many types, each requiring a different treatment." He added that while corruption was an old problem for government, there was now increased focus on it in the region and concern about its impact on development.

"It's an issue for Australia's relations with the Pacific Islands," he said. "Corruption was involved in the breakdown of law and order in the Solomon Islands that led to the RAMSI mission, and Australia is assisting that country in corruption prosecutions. Corruption was also an issue in the Fiji coup.

"Corruption is also much talked about by Pacific Islanders, with local NGO activists, religious leaders and journalists complaining about it as much as foreign donors. Even Pacific Island leaders seem willing to talk about corruption and to characterise their systems as corrupt. Corruption has become part of the everyday language of the region," he said.

DETAILS: Martyn Pearce ANU on 02 6125 5575; www.anu.edu.au/media

A copy of the introductory chapter to *Corruption in the Pacific Islands* is available on request.

RICE ADDS PRESSURE ON FIJI

US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice, joined her counterparts from Pacific island nations in Samoa to press Fiji's coup leaders to revive plans for elections next year, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (28/7/08). It was the first visit to Samoa by an American secretary of state in two decades.

Brigadier-General Ratu Epeli Nailatikau, Fiji's interim foreign minister, attended the talks hosted by the Samoan Prime Minister, Tuilaepa Lupesoliai Sailele Malielegaoi, who is also the foreign minister.

Earlier this month Fiji's interim Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, reneged on a promise to hold elections by March 2009, saying the timetable was no longer achievable because of the need for electoral reforms. He led a military coup in December 2006 that overthrew the elected government, accusing it of corruption and racism against the Indian minority, and has been under pressure to return the country to democracy.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/27/1217097059929.html>

ABORIGINAL RIGHTS TO GO INTO CONSTITUTION

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd told a gathering in Arnhem Land on Wednesday that he intended to honour an election promise to recognise the rights of Aboriginal people in the constitution.

He said it was time to "give attention to detailed, sensitive consultation with indigenous communities about the most appropriate form and timing of constitutional recognition" (24/7/08).

Indigenous leaders at the Yirrkala meeting asked Mr Rudd to abandon key aspects of the federal intervention in remote Aboriginal areas, including the quarantining of welfare payments, the Sydney Morning Herald reported.

The leaders, representing 8000 Aboriginal people, said the intervention had created a wasteful bureaucracy and described the quarantining system, under which payments had to be spent on food or other essentials, as punitive. They want payments quarantined on a case-by-case basis.

The prime minister was presented with a statement detailing the demands during the visit.
REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/23/1216492541163.html>

COMMITTEE LOOKS AT 2007 FEDERAL ELECTION

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee scheduled public hearings in Sydney on July 23/24 as part of its inquiry into the conduct of the 2007 election.

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

Committee Chairperson, Daryl Melham, said: the committee planned to visit most capital cities and several regional centres to hear concerns about improvements to the electoral system.

Submissions had highlighted a number of issues including: informal voting concerns; success of electronic voting trials for the vision impaired and overseas defence force personnel; impact of recent changes to electoral laws on enrolment and provisional voting and concerns over recent changes to political finance and disclosure arrangements.

DETAILS: Secretary on 02 6277 2374; jscem@aph.gov.au; <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>

INDIGENOUS BUSINESSES EMERGING IN SYDNEY

The House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee has been holding a roundtable discussion with a diverse and dynamic range of Aboriginal-owned and operated businesses from the Sydney metropolitan region in Eveleigh this week.

Committee Chairman Richard Marles said the inquiry into developing Indigenous enterprises wanted to hear from emerging businesses looking for opportunities within the new agenda for Indigenous economic empowerment recently adopted by the City of Sydney.

"One of the ideas being discussed is the development of an Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council, along the lines of the minority development council model operating successfully in America," Mr Marles said.

At its Sydney public hearing the committee set out to assess the potential of the model, among other initiatives, with Aboriginal-owned businesses, such as Message Stick Group, corporate partnering organisations including Indigenous Enterprise Partnerships and Gunya Australia and a 'social venture capital' company Indigenous Capital Limited. The committee is also talking with the new Australian Indigenous Chamber of Commerce set up by George Newhouse and Warren Mundine.

The committee hoped to uncover the best and fairest ways to attract corporate investment in Indigenous business, including by boosting trade with them, Mr Marles said. The next step was to expand these opportunities into regional townships and remote areas around Australia.

DETAILS: Secretariat on 02 6277 4559; atsia.reps@aph.gov.au; <http://www.aph.gov.au/atsia>.

AFGHAN LEADER ACCUSED OF PROTECTING DRUG TRADE

Former US counter-narcotics official Thomas Schweich has accused Afghan President Hamid Karzai of obstructing drug eradication efforts and protecting drug lords, the ABC reported (25/7/08).

Mr Schweich says Mr Karzai seems to tolerate a certain level of corruption rather than lose power and that many of his supporters were financed by the drugs trade.

Mr Schweich, one of the state department's most senior counter-narcotics officials until June, said Mr Karzai was responsible for protecting drug lords for political reasons. While the US spent billions of dollars on infrastructure development and fighting the Taliban, Mr Karzai's friends continued to get rich from the drugs trade.

"I think that he's part of the problem in the sense that he perceived that there are certain people he cannot crack down on," Mr Schweich said.

The comments, published on the New York Times website, prompted Mr Karzai to deny the allegations, saying his government had reduced drug production in more than half of the country's provinces. [REPORT: http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/07/25/2314181.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/07/25/2314181.htm)

FREE MARKET REFORM ON CARDS FOR CUBA

Raúl Castro may implement free-market reforms, taking a hint from both China and the grey-area micro-enterprises that have taken root covertly across Cuba. Observers expected Castro to elaborate on reforms he's already introduced for agriculture. [The Christian Science Monitor \(23/7/08\)](http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0723/p01101-01.htm).

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

THE UN'S TEMPLE OF THE VETO

The recent double veto by Russia and China, scuttling a UN resolution that would have imposed further sanctions on the brutal regime of Robert Mugabe in Zimbabwe, is further evidence of just how futile recourse to the international body has become in recent years, Graham Cooke writes in On Line Opinion (21/7/08). There was a clear majority on the UN Security Council in favour of sanctions, but because two of the minority that voted against were Russia and China, permanent members with the right of veto, the resolution is dumped into the wastepaper basket. The reasons given by the Russian delegation were breathtaking in their arrogance and cynicism. The Security Council had "exceeded its mandate" in bringing the resolution forward. The Zimbabwe situation was "not a threat to international security" and therefore no business of the UN. What went on inside Zimbabwe was an internal matter and the sanctions would be "excessive interference" in that country's affairs ...this article is not meant to be a condemnation of Zimbabwe's government, nor is it an attack on an ineffectual UN ... what I wish to advocate is a reform of the UN that will once again make it an effective voice for what is right and decent on the international stage.

[ARTICLE: http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7644](http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=7644)

GORE'S ENERGY OOMPH

On the issue of gasoline prices, Republicans think they have a winner in their call for new drilling, and Democrats are playing defence. Democrats need - this is a technical term - a lot more oomph, the Washington Post reports (18/7/08). [Al Gore](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/17/AR2008071701840.html?wpisrc=newsletter) wants to help them. In a speech here yesterday and in an interview, Gore played his usual role of unpaid party visionary by arguing that we can ease the climate crisis, the economic crisis and the crisis of dependence on foreign energy all at once. "We're borrowing money from China to buy oil from the [Persian Gulf](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/17/AR2008071701840.html?wpisrc=newsletter) to burn it in ways that destroy the planet," Gore said in his speech. "Every bit of that's got to change." He urges a 10-year goal of getting 100 percent of our electricity from renewable sources and clean, rather than carbon-based, fuels. It sounds like a typical, idealistic Al Gore idea. But two things about this proposal merit attention. It points a country that uses too much energy down the right path. And Gore is showing that being environmentally responsible is economically sensible.

[ARTICLE: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/17/AR2008071701840.html?wpisrc=newsletter](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/17/AR2008071701840.html?wpisrc=newsletter)

THE CURSE OF OIL ON AFRICAN NATIONS

In the coming decades Africa's oilfields may begin to rival the strategic significance of the Middle East's reserves. As discoveries elsewhere steadily diminish, the global balance of oil wealth shifts towards Africa with every passing year, the Brisbane Times reports (21/7/08). Already, the US buys more oil from Angola and Nigeria than it does from Saudi Arabia. Angola, the newest member of Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), has overtaken Nigeria to become Africa's biggest producer, turning out almost 2 million barrels a day. In the next three years Angola will probably raise its daily output to match Kuwait's 2.6 million barrels ..Experience suggests that oil bonanzas inflict nothing but harm on African countries. A tiny elite seizes the chance to enrich itself and virtually nothing trickles down to the poor.

ARTICLE: <http://business.brisbanetimes.com.au/business/the-curse-of-oil-on-african-nations-20080720-3ib2.html>

OBAMA'S TOUR DE FORCE

Writing about US presidential candidates Barack Obama's overseas trip, David S. Broder IN THE Washington Post says :”What he could not have counted on is the role that luck has played in the events that have surrounded the tour and in the actions of a cast of supporting players. When, on the first day of the trip, Obama stepped onto a basketball court at the air base in Kuwait and sent his first three-point shot cleanly through the basket, you knew that the gods had decided to favour him. He could not have known in advance that on the very day he left Chicago, [President Bush](#) would suddenly reverse six years of policy and send a high-ranking [State Department](#) official off to a meeting with Iranian and European nuclear negotiators. He could not have guessed that Iraqi Prime Minister [Nouri al-Maliki](#) (was) eager to promise his constituents that the American occupation would not be endless ... that a Maliki spokesman would volunteer "the end of 2010 is the appropriate time for the withdrawal" of US troops. Suddenly, long-standing Obama policies - direct talks with Iran and a 16-month timetable for withdrawal - seemed to be ratified by events.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/07/23/AR2008072302903.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

PINHEADS AND PATRIOTS SLUG IT OUT

Distant observers are openly envious. What a fascinating time to be in America, Ian Munro writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (26/7/08). An historic, possibly transformative contest for the presidency is unfolding following the epic, and equally historic, Obama-Clinton contest for the Democratic nomination. The contest between Barack Obama and John McCain promises to be an absorbing study in contrasts. Should McCain's rejigged office find its feet, the campaign may even become the stuff for a textbook study. No less enthralling, emotional, even bitter, is the shadow contest playing out in the media, specifically in cable television.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/07/25/1216492729396.html>

SECRET 'TORTURE MEMO' GAVE LEGAL COVER 'GOOD FAITH' INTERROGATORS

Justice Department legal opinion in August 2002 advised the CIA that its interrogators would not be prosecuted for violating anti-torture laws as long as they acted in “good faith” while using brutal techniques to obtain information from suspected terrorists, according to a previously undisclosed memo, OpEd News (26/7/08) reported. The closely guarded Aug. 1, 2002 memo provided the Bush administration with the legal framework to use “alternative interrogation methods” against suspected terrorists captured in the war on terror. The heavily redacted document, obtained by the American Civil Liberties Union under a Freedom of Information Act request, was signed by then Assistant Attorney General Jay Bybee and specifically outlined approved methods the CIA could use, such as water-boarding, during interrogations.

REPORT: <http://www.opednews.com/articles/Secret--Torture-Memo--Gave-by-Jason-Leopold-080726-893.html>

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

THOUSANDS IN MYANMAR STILL SUFFERING: UN REPORTS

Nearly three months after deadly Cyclone Nargis struck Myanmar, hundreds of thousands of children and adults are in need of critical humanitarian assistance, two United Nations agencies on the frontlines of relief efforts [said](#) (25/7/08).

“The situation in Myanmar remains dire,” said Chris Kaye, Country Director for the UN World Food Program (WFP). “The vast majority of families simply don't have enough to eat.”

A joint assessment carried out by the Myanmar Government, the UN and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) stated similar concerns, confirming that more than 40 per cent of households lost all food stocks during the storm, which battered the country's southern coast in early May.

The Post-Nargis Joint Assessment Final Report put a \$1 billion price tag on recovery needs over three years, taking into account such areas as education, health, rebuilding livelihoods, infrastructure, agriculture and the environment.

The assessment also found that 34 per cent of households reported having no food stocks on the day of the survey, and a further 45 per cent reported having enough to last only one to seven days. In addition, 89 per cent of households reported that food was their highest priority expenditure.

WFP has scaled up its emergency feeding programs for 924,000 beneficiaries, which will last until next April. At the same time, it notes that the \$112 million operation is facing a 52 per cent shortfall, and there are significant logistical challenges involved in moving food and relief supplies into and around the hard-hit Ayeyarwady Delta, particularly given recent heavy monsoon rains.

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) highlighted the plight of nearly 700,000 children under the age of 17 who are in need of longer-term assistance following the cyclone, which destroyed or damaged hundreds of thousands of homes, schools and health centres.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27485&Cr=Myanmar&Cr1=>

ANOTHER \$1 BILLION NEEDED FOR MYANMAR TO RECOVER

Beginning a three-day visit to assess the situation of cyclone survivors in Myanmar, the top UN relief official said relief and early recovery operations were progressing, but more aid was needed to reach remote areas (22/7/08). Another \$1 billion has been estimated.

John Holmes, the UN Coordinator for Humanitarian Affairs, said significant progress had been made since he was last there in May. “The remarkable resilience of people so severely affected by Cyclone Nargis is evident in the way communities are rebuilding their homes and livelihoods. It is also clear that there are many relief needs still to address. We must focus now on reaching the most vulnerable communities in remote areas, especially along the southern coast of the delta.” .

TANZANIA NEEDS TO BALANCE FOOD AND BIO-FUEL PRODUCTION

Legislators have taken the Tanzanian government to task over its practice of awarding arable land to foreign investors looking to grow biofuel crops. With rising food and fuel prices and land distribution problems, the legislators argued land should be reserved for producing food for domestic consumption. [AllAfrica Global Media/The Citizen](#) (23/7/08).

GASSING UP WITH GARBAGE

After years of false starts, a new industry selling motor fuel made from waste is getting a big push in the United States, with the first commercial sales possible within months, the New York Times reported (24/7/08).

After years of false starts, a new industry selling motor fuel made from waste is getting a big push in the US, with the first commercial sales possible within months.

Many companies have announced plans to build plants that would take in material like wood chips, garbage or crop waste and turn out motor fuels. About 28 small plants are in advanced planning, under construction or, in a handful of cases, already up and running in test mode.

For decades scientists have known it was possible to convert waste to fuel, but in an era of cheap oil, it made little sense. With oil now trading around \$125 a barrel and gasoline above

\$4 a gallon, the potential economics of a waste-to-fuel industry have shifted radically, setting off a frenzy to be first to market.

"I think American innovation is going to come up with the solution," said Prabhakar Nair, research chief for UOP, a company working on the problem. [REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/business/24fuel.html?_r=2&ref=science&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/24/business/24fuel.html?_r=2&ref=science&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

SOLAR CAPTURE FARMS MOOTED FOR SAHARA

A spectacular array of solar capture farms, using either photovoltaic cells or concentrating the sun's heat to boil water to drive turbines -- could be assembled in the Sahara and could power all of Europe. Experts say capturing a mere fraction of the sunlight that falls on Saharan and Middle Eastern deserts could provide clean electricity to a developed continent such as Europe. Such a plan would allow the U.K. and Denmark to export wind energy at times of surplus or import geothermal power from Iceland when there is need.

[REPORT: http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jul/23/solarpower.windpower/ The Guardian \(London\)](http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/jul/23/solarpower.windpower/) (23/7/08).

ARCTIC HOLDS VAST UNEXPLORED PETROLEUM RESERVES

In the first assessment done on the region, the U.S. Geological Survey has revealed that the Arctic Circle holds as much as 90 billion barrels of recoverable oil -- 13% of global reserves, or enough crude to power the world for three years. The amount only becomes more easily recoverable as global warming melts Arctic ice sheets, which in turn has accelerated the race among polar nations such as Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the U.S. to stake their claims -- the UN Law of the Sea Convention notwithstanding. The Arctic Circle is also said to hold some 1,700 trillion cubic feet of natural gas. [Financial Times](#) (23/7/08). [Reuters](#) (24/7/08).

UNIVERSITIES UNITE TO SOLVE WATER ISSUES

The Australian National University and the University of Canberra .have agreed to work together to advance water research, training and education across Australia and throughout the region (22/7/08).

"ANU takes as part of its core mission the task of tackling the major problems we face in Australia as well as those faced by the world community," said ANU Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Chubb at the launch of Capital-WATER.

"This collaboration on water is another positive way in which we'll be able to find solutions to the issues around sustainable water practices, which are of prime importance for a dry continent like Australia.

"Capital-WATER offers a unique collaboration that promises to provide much needed research and analysis on the key water challenges faced by Australia," Professor Quentin Grafton from the Crawford School of Economics and Government at ANU. "We will be able to provide specialist advice, professional training and deliver world-class water research on water issues and challenges facing the community."

Professor Richard Norris, from the Institute of Applied Ecology at the University of Canberra, said, "Economic, social and environmental concerns form the triple bottom line that has become increasingly import in water management. Capital-WATER combines strengths in all these areas to address contemporary and future water management."

[DETAILS: ANU Media Office on 02 6125 3549 / 0424 016 978 and Ed O'Daly, University of Canberra on 02 6201 2441/ 0408 829 618; www.anu.edu.au/media](#)

WORLD BANK NEEDS TO FOCUS ON ENVIRONMENT

An internal review of projects conducted over the past two decades reveals that the World Bank had failed to effectively consider the environmental impacts of projects it finances in developing countries.

"It is clear now from the Amazon to India that if environmental sustainability is not raised as a priority, then all bets are off," said the bank's Independent Evaluation Group report. [REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/22/science/earth/23enviro.html?_r=2&ref=world&oref=slogin&oref=slogin/](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/22/science/earth/23enviro.html?_r=2&ref=world&oref=slogin&oref=slogin/) The New York Times (22/7/08).