

# 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.

August 15 2008

561

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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](http://www.unaa.org.au) or email the editor.

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

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

**UNAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE BEGINS IN BRISBANE** The challenges to the UN are as strong as ever, but with the changing political climate in both the US and Australia, the capacity for constructive multilateral action is starting to increase again, UNAA National President John Langmore.

**FIRST WOMAN TO BE UN LEGAL CHIEF** Ban appoints Patricia O'Brien of Ireland as the new UN legal chief, making her the first woman in the UN's history to hold the post.

### **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

**KANGAROO 'COULD SAVE THE WORLD'** Switching from beef to kangaroo burgers could significantly help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, says Australian scientist

### **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **USING THE INTERNET TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

How do you eliminate slavery and human trafficking? Modern abolitionists across the globe are tackling that question head on – and collaborating via the Internet on their efforts.

### **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

**WORLD OLYMPICS MESSAGE: WE MEAN NO HARM** If the opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games lavished grand tribute on Chinese civilization and stirred an ancient nation's pride, there was also a message to the world: Do not worry. We mean no harm.

### **ICRC LAUNCHES APPEAL FOR CONFLICT REFUGEES**

The ICRC launched a preliminary appeal for \$7.4m to meet the emergency needs of people affected by the armed conflict involving Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian troops.

**THREE WOMEN AID WORKERS SHOT DEAD IN AFGHANISTAN** Three Western women aid workers and their Afghan driver were shot dead on Wednesday near Kabul.

### **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **G. OTHER NEWS**

### **H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

### **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

#### **WARNING BELLS ON MURRAY IGNORED: REPORT**

A 2006 report warning urgent intervention was needed to save the mouth of the Murray River and the Coorong wetlands from 'irreversible' damage was ignored, one of its authors says.

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

### THE FUTURE IS IN OUR HANDS

The theme of the UNAA National Conference is exactly right: the future *is* in our hands. The feeling of powerlessness is still quite widespread. That feeling is seductive but it is self-fulfilling. If we despair, we simply give up. If we retain hope and take initiative we can make a difference. Those people with clear aims, determination and persistence can and do influence outcomes. This is as true internationally as locally.

The issues to be addressed by the conference on 21 and 22 August are amongst the most important: sustainability and climate change, peace and conflict resolution, human rights, life-long education, corporate social responsibility, governance, youth and evaluation of past experience.

These sessions will provide opportunities for discussion about possibilities and also about concrete actions.

Each of us will attend the conference with particular concerns. Let's make this a particularly productive meeting where plans are made and informal networks launched and strengthened. The challenges to the UN are as strong as ever, but with the changing political climate in both the US and Australia, the capacity for constructive multilateral action is starting to increase again. The value of the discussion will depend on participants and the extent to which each of us follow up afterwards.

**John Langmore**  
**UNAA National President**

### 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](mailto:unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au); Tel/Fax 07 32541096; PO Box 244, New Farm Qld 4006.

### **BAN'S MESSAGE FOR INTERNATIONAL YOUTH DAY**

Though the science of climate change is complex, the facts are simple: our world is heading towards trouble. I saw this last year when I visited the Antarctic, where age-old ice is melting much faster than we originally thought it would. Left unaddressed, climate change could cause an unravelling of the progress that has been made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and could also have serious implications for peace and security. Unless we make radical changes in the way we live, by the time the youth of 2008 reach my age, the world may well have become a rather inhospitable place.

The theme for this year's observance of International Youth Day on Tuesday was "Youth and climate change: time for action". Today's young people will bear the consequences of climate change, thanks to the unfortunate legacy of their elders. In many developing countries in particular, youth -- especially girls and young women -- are often responsible for farming, finding water and collecting fuel wood. These tasks will be rendered more difficult -- and will take even more time away from education or productive activities -- as climate change affects the availability of water, agricultural productivity and the survival of ecosystems.

Yet young people are also well placed to contribute to the fight even now. They are adept at spreading new habits and technologies. They are adaptable and can quickly make low-carbon lifestyles and career choices a part of their daily lives. Youth should therefore be given a chance to take an active part in the decision-making of local, national and global levels. And they can actively support initiatives that will lead to the passage of far-reaching legislation.

We will need the spirit of youth in abundance as the world seeks to embrace cleaner, more sustainable forms of energy, including renewable resources. The transition to a low-carbon economy that we hope young people will see in their lifetimes offers tremendous opportunities. Not least, economic growth that is fuelled by clean energy and technological innovation will create jobs that could help alleviate the dire global problem of youth unemployment.

On this International Youth Day, I urge young people around the world to invest their energies and bright ideas into shaping a safer, more sustainable planet.

UN ON YOUTH ISSUES: '*Growing Together*':

[http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/growing\\_together.pdf](http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/growing_together.pdf)

UN YOUTH: <http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/index.html>

### **UN FINANCIAL EXPERT APPOINTED**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has **appointed** Japan's Jun Yamazaki as Assistant Secretary-General, Office of Program Planning, Budgets and Accounts, and Controller.

Jun Yamazaki replaces Warren Sach, who now **assumes** the role of Assistant Secretary-General for Central Support Services, where he will be responsible for procurement, among other functions. He will also remain the Secretary-General's Representative for Pension Fund investments.

Mr Ban **praised** Mr Sach for his dedicated service as Assistant Secretary-General and Controller and said he "appreciates the strong sense of commitment and professionalism shown consistently by Mr. Sach in the fulfilment of his responsibilities."

Jun Yamazaki has extensive experience in the UN budget process, having been a member of the UN Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) from 2003 to 2007. **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27696&Cr=ki-moon&Cr1=Appointment>

### **FIRST WOMAN TO BE UN LEGAL CHIEF**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Patricia O'Brien of Ireland as the new United Nations legal chief, making her the first woman in the organisation's history to hold that post. Since 2003, Ms O'Brien has served as legal adviser to the Department of Foreign Affairs in Ireland, when she provided counsel on legal issues arising in Irish foreign policy, particularly public international law, human rights law and European Union law.

The new Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and UN Legal Counsel brings to the job "an extensive experience of legal and international affairs to integrate the legal dimension in the internal decision-making processes, to promote the rule of law in international relations, and to contribute to the strengthening of the culture of the end of impunity," UN spokesperson Michele Montas said.

The new UN legal chief, who replaces Nicolas Michel of Switzerland, was previously senior legal adviser to the Irish Attorney General and legal counsellor at the Irish Permanent Representation to the EU in Brussels.

She has also advised the Irish Government in legal proceedings before the International Court of Justice, the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice, as well as participated in expert legal meetings in the UN, the EU and the Council of Europe. Ms. O'Brien, 51, holds an LL.B. from the University of Ottawa, Canada, and an M.A. and B.A. from Trinity College, Dublin.

### **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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UNAA WA [unaawa@tpg.com.au](mailto: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.

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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 [judycnn@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judycnn@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>

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

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **MOVE OVER BIG ENERGY USERS**

Amendments to the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act to require large energy users to implement the findings of energy efficiency audits will be re-introduced in the next Senate sitting period by the Australian Greens, climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne said (11/8/08).

The Greens claimed a report for COAG by Allen Consulting Group, in June now revealed in the Carbon and Environment Daily newsletter, backed the Greens position that mandating energy efficiency for large users would have a substantial impact in reducing emissions with economic benefits that companies currently do not consider given the broad range of decisions they face each day.

Senator Milne said, "Energy efficiency provides a tremendous opportunity to reduce emissions fast and save money into the bargain, and yet too often it is overlooked.

"The rush to claim, and to hand out, 'compensation' for increased prices due to emissions trading clearly demonstrates the lack of information about efficiency opportunities that even those in positions of great responsibility have.

"Very few decision-makers, from governments to industry to householders, seem to understand that almost everyone can save more money by saving energy than they will have to pay out thanks to higher energy prices.

"The Greens will argue strongly that, if the government insists on compensating big polluters for the impact of the emissions trading scheme, any compensation must be linked directly to efforts to reduce emissions. Unless polluters make a real effort to reduce the amount they pollute, and to achieve the scheme's supposed desired outcome, they should not be 'compensated' for the financial imposition the scheme places on them.

"The Greens will re-introduce amendments to the Energy Efficiency Opportunities Act 2006 to mandate the implementation of the energy efficiency audits that large energy users are already required to conduct. Any opportunities with a payback period of three years or less would have to be implemented immediately, with longer-term investments phased in over time.

"Both Labor and the Coalition opposed these amendments on both occasions they have been debated until now. Perhaps now that my amendments have the backing of Allens Consulting, and a similar scheme is operational in Victoria, the big old parties could see their way to supporting them?"

**ALLEN CONSULTING GROUP REPORT:**

<http://www.sedo.energy.wa.gov.au/pdf/CBA%20Potential%20Mandatory%20Energy%20Efficiency%20Requirements%20for%20Industry.pdf>

**DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on +61 (0)2 6277 3063/+61 (0) 437 587 562;www.christinemilne.org.au

### **KANGAROO 'COULD SAVE THE WORLD'**

Switching from beef to kangaroo burgers could significantly help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, says an Australian scientist, the BBC reported (9/8/08).

The methane gas produced by sheep and cows through belching and flatulence is more potent than carbon dioxide in the damage it can cause to the environment. Kangaroos produce virtually no methane because their digestive systems are different, according to Dr George Wilson, of the Australian Wildlife Services, who advocates farming them.

He says they have a different set of micro-organisms in their guts to cows and sheep. Sheep and cattle account for 11 per cent of Australia's carbon footprint and over the years, there have been various proposals to deal with the problem.

Now Dr Wilson believes kangaroos might hold the answer. He said: "It tastes excellent, not unlike venison - only a different flavour." The country already produces 30 million kangaroos farmed by landholders in the outback.

Dr Wilson is keen to see that population dramatically increased to produce the same amount of kangaroo meat currently produced by conventional livestock.

**REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/7551125.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/7551125.stm)

### **ELEPHANT SEALS CAN RETRIEVE INFORMATION ON ANTARCTIC ICE**

For all the data Australian scientists have about the climate, there is a big blind-spot - the area underneath 19 million sq km of Antarctic sea ice, the ABC reported (12/8/08).

Ocean buoys and ships are not able to gather crucial data from under the sea ice, but elephant seals can. The CSIRO scientists have enlisted 85 seals to bring back information about ocean currents and sea ice. When they attached sensors to the elephant seals, the aim was to find out where the seals go and why populations were declining in some regions. Oceanographer Dr Steve Rintoul says he soon realised the data retrieved by seals had another important use. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/12/2332594.htm>

### **ARCTIC SUMMER ICE COULD DISAPPEAR BY 2013**

The meltdown in the Arctic is faster than scientists anticipated, as summer ice continues to melt at a rapid pace. According to one estimate, the Arctic could be ice-free by the summer of 2013. Without the cooling effects of the summer ice, weather patterns and wildlife habitats could be drastically altered. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (10/8/08).

## **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **USING THE INTERNET TO COMBAT HUMAN TRAFFICKING**

How do you eliminate slavery and human trafficking? Modern abolitionists across the globe are tackling that question head on – and collaborating via the Internet on their efforts, writes Jane Lampman in the Christian Science Monitor (11/8/08).

Through Changemakers.net, many have joined in a global competition to identify the most innovative antislavery programs and extend their impact.

More than 230 groups from 50 countries entered this summer's competition, titled 'Ending Global Slavery: Everyday Heroes Leading the Way'. Judges, knowledgeable about slavery, selected 15 finalists, and last week the online community voted for three winners.

"We're incredibly proud of our online community who stepped forward to collaborate, discuss, and draw out the most effective ideas in this issue regarding human dignity," said Charlie Brown, Changemaker's executive director, announcing the winners on August 6.

An initiative of Ashoka, a global association of social entrepreneurs, Changemakers has run 20 competitions online to promote innovative solutions in areas such as water and sanitation, geo-tourism, ending corruption, and sports for a better world. All applications in a competition go up on the Web, where others can comment, learn from, and help refine the ideas and programs.

"We wondered if the topic of slavery would be so sensitive or taboo that it might endanger people doing the work," says Tito Llantada, director of competitions. "But many more applications came in than usual."

The three winning programs pioneer differing approaches to fight the complex problem:

Carpets for Communities, a Cambodian organisation, carries out grassroots interventions into child trafficking and labour, (by) providing mothers with an income (rug-making at home) so that their children can go to school instead. Children are often sold or forced into working so their families can survive.

The Code.org provides the international tourism industry with a tool to prevent and combat child sex tourism. According to UNICEF, about two million children fall victim to sex tourism, pornography, and trafficking every year. Some 600 companies so far have signed on to a code of conduct that addresses the tourism supply chain, from corporate ethical policies and training personnel to educating travellers, requiring standards of suppliers, and working with local officials in countries of destination.

The Emancipation Network (TEN) raises awareness of slavery among Americans and creates jobs for survivors of slavery in several countries to help them achieve independence. Once slaves are rescued and go to shelters, they often have no place to go. Trafficked as children, they lack the skills to live on their own and are stigmatised by society.

**REPORT:** <http://www.csmonitor.com/2008/0811/p02s02-usgn.html>

### **LAURA BUSH LISTENS TO MYANMAR REFUGEES**

With a steady downpour outside, the US First Lady, Laura Bush, sat in a small hut near the Thai border with Burma, and invited a group of refugees from one of the world's most repressive regimes to tell her what they "would like the people of the world to know" about their situation (9/8/08)

"Our dream is to go home," said one of the refugees, Mahn Htun Htun. "But there is no peace and democracy in Burma — and it's impossible to go home."

For the past two years, Mrs Bush has made the cause of freedom in Burma a focus of her official duties. During her visit she ventured as close to the closed country as she ever has, visiting a muddy refugee camp and medical clinic just kilometres from the border.

Mrs Bush She sat in on school lessons in the Mae La refugee camp, a virtual city of about 35,000 Burmese, most of them of the Karen ethnic minority. She also visited a medical clinic run by Cynthia Maung, described by many as Burma's Mother Teresa.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/08/1218139078157.html>

### **AUSTRALIA 'MUST CUT ECONOMIC TIES WITH MYANMAR'**

Twenty years ago on August 6 more than 3000 Burmese students, activists and monks were murdered by the military regime in scenes of unprecedented violence and brutality, according

to the President of the Australian Coalition for Democracy in Burma John Kaye, who said this week Australia must now sever economic ties with the corrupt and repressive dictatorship.

Dr Kaye, who is also a member of the NSW Parliament, said: "On the day on which the world remembers the innocent Burmese murdered by the military in the uprising two decades ago, we call on the Australian Government to ensure that the children of those responsible for atrocities against their people are not being educated in this country.

"It is time for the Rudd Government to increase pressure on the regime by expelling these students and freezing all Australian bank accounts associated with the regime.

"Australia should not give comfort to those who have grown wealthy by stealing from their own country. At least three children of senior military figures are reported to be living in Sydney.

"Just as in last September's 'Saffron Revolution', on the eighth day of the eighth month of eighty eight, decades of incompetent, corrupt and repressive dictatorship drove a famously tolerant and peaceful Burmese people on to the streets. And like last year's unprovoked attacks on the demonstrators, the military responded with systematic bashings, arbitrary arrests and torture and widespread murder," he said.

"The events of twenty years ago not only demonstrated the viciousness of the military and their determination to maintain a vice-like grip on the power to pillage their country regardless of the human cost.

"It also showed the courage of the people of Burma and their commitment to restoring democracy after 56 years of dictatorship.

"In 1988 Australia disgracefully was the first country to recognise the repressive military dictatorship that emerged from the chaos of the uprising.

"Twenty years later it is well past time we undid that mistake and gave every assistance to the Burmese people struggling to be free," Dr Kaye said.

**DETAILS:** John Kaye 0407 195 455. The ACDB is a cross-party coalition of federal and state parliamentarians committed to the restoration of democracy in Burma, also known as Myanmar.

#### **UP TO 2000 MYANMAR CHILDREN DISPLACED**

The devastating cyclone that swept through Myanmar also separated children from their families. According to aid agencies such as UNICEF, as many as 2,000 children in Myanmar are displaced. Reuniting fractured families is complicated by the lack of telephones in Myanmar, as well as the disorganized nature of the country's refugee camps. [The Times \(London\)](#) (10/8/08).

#### **THE ORDEALS OF ANWAR**

For the second time in a decade, Anwar Ibrahim, Malaysia's opposition leader, is facing a criminal charge of sodomy - this time based on an accusation by a political aide, reported the Sydney Morning Herald (10/8/08). Declaring his innocence, Mr Anwar called on more than just his status as a 60-year-old married grandfather. Plausibly, he calls the charge a "malicious accusation" and a plot designed to stop him taking power.

Mr Anwar suffered his first fall from grace under Mahathir Mohamad, the former prime minister, who sacked him as deputy. After a court overturned his earlier sodomy indictment, he was released from six years in prison early in the tenure of Abdullah Badawi, Dr Mahathir's handpicked successor.

Now a new sodomy charge has come as Mr Abdullah's coalition, dominated by the United Malays National Organisation, is reeling from the strong swing against it in the March election,

achieved by a diverse opposition coalition led by Mr Anwar, and Mr Anwar's efforts to secure enough defections from the Government to form a majority.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/10/1218306656298.html?page=2>

### **ONE MILLION INDIGENOUS COLUMBIANS FORCED TO LEAVE**

As the United Nations marked the first International Day of the World's Indigenous People, UN refugee officials are drawing attention to the more than one million Indigenous people of Colombia. Ongoing conflict has forced nearly all of them to leave their ancestral homes. [Voice of America/VOA News](#) (9/8/08).

### **PLEA TO FUND VANISHING INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES**

Australian governments were urged to fund and resource the protection and promotion of Indigenous languages, as part of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous People (9/8/08).

"The theme of this year's International Day of the World's Indigenous People is the protection and promotion of the world's endangered languages, which is especially relevant to Australia, whose Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander languages are under threat of extinction," Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner, Tom Calma, said.

Speaking from the Garma Festival in Nhulunbuy, where cultural preservation is a major theme, Mr Calma said that the vast majority of Australia's Indigenous languages have been eroded and some have been lost forever.

"When language is lost, knowledge and wisdom are lost, and so too is identity. It is through language that we interpret our belief systems; our religion, spirituality, knowledge of country and so much more."

According to UNESCO, at least 3000 of the world's 6000 languages are endangered, and at least 800 are very close to extinction. Commissioner Calma said that while Australia once had around 300 Indigenous languages, now there are only 20 or so not endangered.

[DETAILS](#): Sarah Martin on 02 9284 9851 or 0419 258 597

### **LAST RITES FOR DEATH PENALTY IN ASIA?**

The upcoming execution of the Bali Bombers may be one of the final death throes for the use of capital punishment in the Asia-Pacific region, according to an ANU visiting academic. (13/8/08).

Professor David Johnson of the University of Hawaii has been studying the use of capital punishment in the Asia-Pacific region for his forthcoming book *The Next Frontier: National Development, Political Change and the Death Penalty in Asia*. He said that use of the death penalty was declining in many parts of the region and that would probably accelerate as development and democracy increase.

Professor Johnson said the death penalty was most firmly entrenched in the region's authoritarian regimes, but even those countries were using it less.

"It is authoritarian government that separates the high execution nations of China, Singapore, Vietnam and North Korea from the rest of the nations in the region," he said. "The most dramatic execution decreases occurred in the rapidly developing democracies of South Korea and Taiwan, but declines have also occurred in nations such as India and Malaysia.

"Until quite recently, this general pattern of decline was counterbalanced by persistently high execution volumes in the People's Republic of China, but even China seems to be joining the downward trend – as does Singapore, long one of the most aggressive executing states in Asia and the world.

"The biggest issues about the future of capital punishment in Asia concern when, rather than whether, capital punishment will cease. When development and plural democracy take root in Asia, the decline of the death penalty usually comes sooner rather than later," he said.

“Asia will be hugely important for the worldwide future of the death penalty because 60 per cent of the world’s population resides in the region and because it is where more than 90 per cent of the world’s executions have taken place in recent years,” he said. The decline in its use highlighted increased ambivalence about its appropriateness and an awareness that it had “little or no importance for crime control”.

**DETAILS:** Martyr Pearce on 02 6125 5575/0416 249 245; [www.anu.edu.au/media](http://www.anu.edu.au/media)

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **ASIA**

#### **BAN URGES QUICK END TO FIGHTING**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has welcomed the acceptance by Georgia and Russia of a proposed peace plan to end the conflict that has raged in Georgia for nearly a week and urged the parties to move quickly to halt the fighting (13/8/08).

“He calls for immediate follow through in implementing the agreed principles, including the full end to hostilities and the withdrawal of forces to previous positions,” Mr. Ban’s spokesperson said in a **statement**, welcoming the plan proposed by President Nicolas Sarkozy of France.

“The Secretary-General reiterates his support for a solution based on the full respect of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Georgia. He is prepared to use his good offices toward the restoration of peace and security in the region,” the statement said.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27685&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=>

#### **GEORGIA FILES SUIT AGAINST RUSSIA, CHARGING RACIAL DISCRIMINATION**

Georgia has filed a lawsuit against Russia at the [International Court of Justice](#) in The Hague for its actions in and around the territory of Georgia from 1991 to 2008, the court said in a statement.

Georgia has consulted the prosecutor’s office of the [International Criminal Court](#), also in The Hague, but has taken no further steps, a court official said, according to the New York Times (13/8/08).

It was reported that in recent days, Russia has threatened to file war crimes charges against Georgia in connection with its attack on the South Ossetian city of Tskhinvali.

In its 32-page complaint, Georgia said that beginning in 1991 Russia, along with separatists in Abkhazia and South Ossetia under Moscow’s control, used violent means to caused the mass expulsion of Georgians as well as other ethnic groups and prevented their return home.

As a basis for the court’s jurisdiction, Georgia invoked the 1965 International Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, which it said Russia had violated.

The International Court of Justice is the [United Nations](#) highest court and rules on disputes between nations. No hearing has been scheduled on the case and no action is expected soon, said a lawyer familiar with the court. **REPORT:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/14/world/europe/14hague.html?ex=1219291200&en=f27ade dc26ed3a6a&ei=5070&emc=eta1>

#### **US FORCES TO DELIVER GEORGIA AID**

President George W Bush has said the US will use military aircraft and naval forces to deliver aid to Georgia following its conflict with Russia, the BBC reported (14/8/08).

He expressed concern about reports of continuing Russian action in Georgia, and urged Russia to respect a ceasefire accord and hinted that Russia could be jeopardising its international ties.

The Kremlin said the US must choose between partnership with Moscow, or with the Georgian leadership. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7559252.stm>

## **GEORGIA AND RUSSIA AGREE ON TRUCE**

French President Nicolas Sarkozy has agreed an outline plan with Russia and Georgia to try to resolve their crisis, the BBC reported (13/8/08). A key element calls for all forces to return to the areas where they were before fighting broke out last week.

Georgian President Mikhail Saakashvili suggested some details were unacceptable and the French mediator admitted difficulties lay ahead. Earlier, Russia announced its military activity in the area was completed and witnesses saw troops pulling out.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7557457.stm>

## **UN CALLS FOR PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS AND ACCESS TO VICTIMS OF CONFLICT**

A senior United Nations humanitarian official has urged the parties to the conflict in Georgia, where fierce fighting in recent days has uprooted nearly 100,000 people, to do their utmost to protect civilians and ensure access for aid agencies.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27669&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=>

## **LARGE-SCALE HUMANITARIAN AID STILL NEEDED**

Tens of thousands of people are in need of emergency help in areas affected by the armed conflict involving Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian troops, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Reports from Georgia's breakaway province of South Ossetia indicate large-scale human suffering and destruction of infrastructure. The ICRC has repeatedly requested safe and unimpeded access to South Ossetia in order to assess residents' needs and start distributing relief goods (14/8/08).

"It is imperative that we gain rapid access to South Ossetia so that we can bring urgent help to those in need," said Dominik Stillhart, the ICRC's deputy director of operations.

According to government estimates, there are up to 60,000 people elsewhere in Georgia who have fled their homes and also require emergency assistance.

"We see a need for basic things, such as food, water and hygiene items at the shelter centres we are visiting both in and around Tbilisi and in Zugdidi, in western Georgia," said Dominique Liengme, the ICRC's head of delegation in Georgia. "After two days of poor security conditions, one of our teams, which included surgeons, was able to go back to Gori today to evaluate and attend to medical and general needs there. Another is on its way to Zugdidi."

In the Russian Federation, the ICRC estimates that at least 12,000 people fled to North Ossetia from South Ossetia, the vast majority of them women, children or elderly. Around half of the people who fled to North Ossetia have managed to contact the relatives they left behind by telephone.

"Some have been able to get through to their families in the South Ossetian capital of Tskhinvali, where people are using generators to charge their mobile phones. We hear that people in South Ossetia are in desperate need of water and basic supplies, and that many would like to get out but cannot," said Rachel Bernhard, the ICRC's head of sub-delegation in Nalchik.

The ICRC has provided the hospital in the North Ossetian town of Vladikavkaz with another kit for treating war-wounded people, after distributing five such kits in recent days containing enough supplies to treat around 150 patients. It is also working with the North Ossetian branch of the Russian Red Cross to provide emergency assistance for people who fled from Georgia.

The ICRC has established an air bridge from its logistics centre in Amman, Jordan, to Tbilisi, with an initial shipment of 35 tonnes of relief supplies, including blankets, jerrycans, tarpaulins, buckets and hygiene items due to leave shortly. Future shipments will include rice and food parcels.

In addition to providing medical and emergency relief, the ICRC is assessing the tracing needs of people who have lost contact with their loved ones. The organisation continues to seek access to all those arrested or captured in connection with the fighting and reminds the parties to the conflict of their responsibility to protect civilians in areas under their control.

### **ICRC LAUNCHES APPEAL FOR CONFLICT REFUGEES**

The ICRC launched a preliminary appeal for 8 million Swiss francs (\$7.4 million) to meet the emergency needs of people affected by the armed conflict involving Georgian, South Ossetian and Russian troops (12/8/08).

The appeal is intended to ensure adequate surgical and other medical care for the wounded as well as emergency aid for people displaced in North Ossetia and Georgia, and civilians remaining in South Ossetia. **REPORTS:** International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) SYDNEY SUPPORT OFFICE TO THE REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR THE PACIFIC: 61 (2) 9388 9039; F 61 (2) 9388 9042; [sydney.sydney@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.sydney@icrc.org)

### **THREE WOMEN AID WORKERS SHOT DEAD IN AFGHANISTAN**

Three Western women aid workers and their Afghan driver were shot dead on Wednesday by gunmen who fired numerous times into their vehicle near the capital Kabul, Afghan police said, according to the AFP (14/8/08).

The killings, claimed by the insurgent Taliban, are the deadliest in years involving international aid workers and come amid warnings about deteriorating security, said to be at its worst since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban regime.

The dead women, a British-Canadian, a Canadian and a Trinidadian-American, were employed by the International Rescue Committee, which has worked with refugees in Afghanistan for 25 years. It has now suspended relief work in Afghanistan indefinitely.

Their Afghan driver was also killed and another driver critically wounded, the IRC said. **REPORT:** <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/world/4897878/international-aid-workers-killed-afghanistan-policeR>

### **UN OFFICIALS OUTRAGED OVER 'COWARDLY ATTACK'**

The top UN official in Afghanistan voiced outrage at the deaths of three female international aid workers and their Afghan colleague after their vehicle was attacked (13/8/08).

"I condemn this cowardly attack in the strongest possible terms and urge the authorities to leave no stone unturned in the search for the perpetrators," Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan, said.

"The IRC provides life saving humanitarian assistance to those most affected by the conflict and it is reprehensible that such selfless individuals working for the most vulnerable communities should be deliberately targeted in this way," he said.

Mr Eide, who is also head of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), pointed to a "growing humanitarian challenge" in the strife-torn nation, and urged all parties to recognise and respect the neutrality and independence of the humanitarian assistance being provided to the Afghan people.

"Nothing can justify such an attack on people whose lives are devoted to helping the people of Afghanistan," said John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. He said the international community was finding it more and more difficult to assist the country – which is facing deteriorating food security, dealing with the plight of millions of returnees and internally displaced people, and weathering the impact of natural disasters and continuing conflict – owing to insecurity and lack of access.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27684&Cr=Afghan&Cr1=attack>

## SOUTH EAST ASIA

### **BAN APPEALS FOR RESTRAINT IN PHILIPPINES**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appealed for restraint by the parties to the conflict in the southern Philippines, where ongoing clashes between Muslim rebels and government troops have forced about 130,000 people to flee their homes (12/8/08).

“The Secretary-General is concerned about the unfolding humanitarian crisis as a result of fighting in central Mindanao, an area which has already been affected by conflict for several decades,” according to a **statement** issued by his spokesperson.

Mr Ban appealed for restraint, protection of all civilians as well as access for the provision of speedy humanitarian assistance to the affected population, and stated the UN’s readiness to support the efforts of the government of the Philippines in this regard.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) announced it would begin providing an initial 400 metric tons of rice to assist 96,000 people for at least one month in the conflict-affected communities in North Cotabato. This includes Mindanao, which has witnessed continued fighting between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) and government troops for several decades.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27673&Cr=Philippines&Cr1=>

## AFRICA

### **TSVANGIRAI STILL COMMITTED TO ZIMBABWE TALKS**

Zimbabwe’s main opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai says he is still committed to power-sharing negotiations after three days of talks with President Robert Mugabe broke off without a deal, the ABC reported (14/8/08).

In a statement, Mr Tsvangirai said Zimbabwe’s post-election government should be based on the March 29 first-round presidential election - which he won, but not by a clear majority.

Negotiations followed Mr Mugabe’s unopposed re-election in June in a poll from which Mr Tsvangirai withdrew because of attacks on his supporters. The ballot was condemned around the world. Key to the negotiations is who gets which leadership positions and with which powers. **ARTICLE:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/14/2334714.htm>

### **GHOST HAUNTS ZIMBABWE’S NEGOTIATION TABLE**

There is a ghost at the table around which the four principal negotiators have been sitting these last three days, trying to resolve Zimbabwe’s political crisis, Allan Little, of the BBC reports (13/8/08).

The talks are haunted by the spirit of the late Joshua Nkomo, whose fate stands as a warning to anyone trying to strike a deal with President Robert Mugabe. Joshua Nkomo was, broadly, Mr Mugabe’s contemporary, and a Zimbabwean liberation leader of impeccable credentials.

In 1980, at independence, he emerged as an alternative leader to Mr Mugabe ... (n time)  
Mr Nkomo was neutralised, destroyed.

The article continues:

Mr Mugabe has in mind what you might call the Nkomo solution: he retains control of the military and security services that he has used so successfully to terrorise his way to successive election victories. In other words he retains the coercive instruments of real executive power.

Mr Tsvangirai gets the economy to sort out.

Mr Tsvangirai is not weak enough to have to accept this poisoned chalice. For one thing the European Union and the United States have both made it clear that they would not help fund a recovery package under a deal like this.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7558578.stm>

## MIDDLE EAST

### **BOMBING IN TRIPOLI CONDEMNED BY SECURITY COUNCIL**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council condemned the bombing in the northern Lebanese city of Tripoli, voicing hope that it will not impede recent political progress in the Middle Eastern nation (13/8/08). Media reports say the bombing has claimed at least 10 lives, including those of several soldiers.

In a **statement**, Mr Ban "believes this attack should not hinder the positive steps that have been taken to return the country to normalcy."

He extended his condolences and sympathies to the Lebanese Government and to the victims and their families, including members of the Lebanese Armed Forces. Later, a statement read out by Ambassador Jan Grauls of Belgium, which holds the Security Council presidency this month, the 15-member panel, also spoke out against the attack.

Council members "underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of this reprehensible act of terrorism to justice, commended the commitment of the government of Lebanon to this end and urged all states, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Lebanese authorities," the statement said.

Mr Grauls added that council members stressed both the need for an end to impunity in Lebanon and the importance of the unity of the Lebanese people.

"They also reiterated their full support for all ongoing efforts in Lebanon to combat terrorism, solidify democratic institutions, engage in political dialogue, and pursue national reconciliation," he said.

Last month, Mr Ban welcomed the announcement of the formation of a national unity government in Lebanon, a key step called for in the agreement reached in late May ending the protracted political stand-off in the country.

### **SYRIA BALKS AT MORE IAEA VISITS**

Syria will not permit International Atomic Energy Agency inspectors to revisit a suspected atomic reactor site bombed by Israel as the country's agreement with the agency provided for only one visit, which was already completed. IAEA inspectors are looking to verify or discard intelligence that suggests Syria has a hidden nuclear program. [REPORT: The Washington Times/Associated Press](#) (8/10/08).

### **SADR LAUNCHES CULTURAL WING**

Iraqi Shia cleric Moqtada Sadr has announced the creation of a cultural wing of his organisation, known for its Mehdi Army militia, the BBC said (10/8/08).

In a statement, he said only a "resistance" group was to remain armed, AP reported. A spokesman said the militias would disarm if the US set and followed a timetable for withdrawing its troops from Iraq. The US and Iraq are negotiating the terms of a future US troop presence.

The spokesman, Salah al-Obeidi, said the decision "should not be considered an end to the Mehdi army" but was "a halfway step to dissolving the Mehdi Army".

[REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7549643.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7549643.stm)

### **SIGNS OF SUCCESS: THE IRAQ WAR BY THE MAN WHO RAN IT**

Australians should be "substantially optimistic" about a positive outcome in Iraq but there were lessons to be learnt, according to the Australian who ran the war for the Coalition in 2004 and 2005, Major General Jim Molan (12/8/08).

Major General Molan was scheduled to speak about his experience running the joint Coalition and Iraqi forces at an ANU lecture. He believes that implementing a timetable for withdrawal of US troops was now possible.

"We have made some key achievements and the signs of success are becoming apparent in Iraq," he said. "We should be substantially optimistic about bringing a successful end to the war."

"Despite the wisdom of the invasion, it was executed effectively, but we neglected to apply occupation and recovery strategies in Iraq," he said. "We must learn from our most recent war and apply those lessons to our current war, and this has not been occurring. The most basic tactic is to touch the hearts and minds of the people and you cannot do that until you have established security, and that requires a military that can do its job."

Major General Molan reflects on the legality and morality of contemporary warfare in his new book *Running the War in Iraq*. Major General Molan has served in the Australian Army for over 40 years, 13 of them as a general. He has accompanied five countries down their road to democracy, including Papua New Guinea, Indonesia, East Timor, Solomon Islands and Iraq. **DETAILS:** Penny Cox, ANU, on 02 6125 3549/0416 016978.

#### **NORTH KOREANS 'INTRANSIGENT': PM**

Plans to de-nuclearise the Korean peninsula were going nowhere because of North Korean "intransigence", the Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, said.

He emerged from long talks with the South Korean President, Lee Myung-bak, to blame North Korea for a sharp slide in North-South relations and for painful negotiations in the six-party talks, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (12/8/08).

North Korea tested a small nuclear bomb in 2006 and then last year agreed to end its nuclear program in exchange for aid and security guarantees. The isolated and impoverished nation continues to cling to a handful of nuclear weapons, which give it leverage against world powers. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/11/1218306776033.html>

#### **WORLD OLYMPICS MESSAGE: WE MEAN NO HARM**

An ecstatic China finally got its Olympic moment on August 8 night. And if the astonishing opening ceremonies of the 2008 Olympic Games lavished grand tribute on Chinese civilization and sought to stir an ancient nation's pride, there was also a message for an uncertain outside world: Do not worry. We mean no harm.

Any Olympic opening is a propaganda exercise, but Friday night's blockbuster show demonstrated the broader public relations challenge facing the Communist Party as China becomes richer and more powerful, the New York Times reported (9/8/08). The party wants to inspire national pride within China, and bolster its own legitimacy in the process, even as leaders want to reassure the world that a rising China poses no danger.

**REPORT:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/09/sports/olympics/09china.html?th&emc=th>

### **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

#### **ICRC NEEDS BETTER ACCESS TO PEOPLE IN NORTHERN YEMEN**

Insecurity and fierce fighting in the northern governorates of Yemen have had a dramatic effect on the civilian population in recent months, forcing more people to flee the area, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) reported (11/8/08).

ICRC reports that more than 15,500 displaced persons are currently living under difficult conditions in camps near Sa'ada city and thousands more are scattered around the governorates. The lack of clean water and medical care are particularly serious for the people who are displaced, sick, wounded and isolated communities. Spiralling food prices have placed an additional burden on the population.

To respond to the increasing needs of more than 100,000 people directly affected by the conflict, the ICRC in May appealed for additional funds to step up the provision of food, water, shelter, essential household items and medical care in all areas of Sa'ada Governorate.

However, the security situation has often prevented the ICRC from responding to the most urgent humanitarian needs in a timely and adequate manner. Except in Sa'ada city and its immediate vicinity, it remains difficult or impossible for the ICRC to operate in the conflict zones of northern Yemen. Working closely with the Yemen Red Crescent Society (YRCS), the ICRC has so far only provided basic emergency assistance, mainly to displaced persons in camps close to the city.

The ICRC is continuing to press the authorities for improved access to the areas most affected. As the organisation continues its efforts to reach those in need, it expects to increase the number of expatriate staff in Sa'ada in the near future. There are currently 13 ICRC staff based there, of whom five are expatriates. Water and sanitation remain priority issues.

Between April and June 2008, an ICRC surgical team based in Sa'ada treated more than 500 people who had been injured in the fighting and were unable to obtain proper medical care because of the hostilities. Three mobile clinics have opened in the newly built Sa'ada city IDP camps, bringing to seven the number of such clinics run by the YRCS with support from the ICRC. Children injured by mines and explosive remnants of war received a total of 47 artificial limbs and orthotic devices.

**DETAILED INFORMATION:** Simon Schorno, ICRC Geneva, on +41 22 730 25 90 or +41 79 217 32 08; Rafiullah Qureshi, ICRC Yemen on +967 711 94 43 43; [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org); **SYDNEY** Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific: Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, on 61 (2) 9388 9039/61 (2) 418 485 120.

#### **UN FOUNDATION MOVES INTO MYANMAR WITH MALARIA NETS**

The UN Foundation reports that for the first time it is working outside of Africa and is helping to meet the emergency needs of refugees and internally displaced persons in Burma (Myanmar) by providing bed nets. Some of the most vulnerable people in the world, these children and families are now at risk of contracting malaria as the rainy season approaches.

"We first heard of this situation from the UN High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) and then a few days ago, First Lady Laura Bush asked us to join her on the Thai-Burmese border in Mae Sot," the foundation said.

The foundation reported that Mrs Bush went to Burma and Thailand to bring attention to the rising malaria rates - 40 percent in this region. The medical teams in the area, early pioneers of malaria prevention and treatment, were concerned for the stateless people in the mountains of Burma who are the most affected and least provided for.

The UN Foundation's *Nothing But Nets* campaign contributed 10,000 nets for Mae La camp refugees who live in extreme poverty. **DETAILS:** *Nothing But Nets* [blohttp://www.nothingbutnets.net/g](http://www.nothingbutnets.net/g). **SEE ALSO HUMAN RIGHTS PAGE**

#### **CARERS A 'CRUCIAL LYNCHPIN' OF THE COMMUNITY**

Support by Australian's for their family members and friends who have a disability, mental illness, chronic condition, or who are frail aged is a "crucial lynchpin" of strong communities according to Carers Victoria.

The House of Representatives Family and Community Committee listened to carers at recent public hearings in Melbourne and Adelaide for the committee's inquiry into better support for carers.

Carers Victoria noted that most Australian's will provide some form of care across their life span. Recent figures from an Australian Bureau of Statistics survey found there were over 2.5 million carers in Australia, including more than 470,000 primary carers – people who provide

the most care to a person needing support. However, the longer people act as carers the more likely that they will become socially isolated, exhausted and suffer financial pressure.

Committee chairperson Annette Ellis (Member for Canberra, ACT) said that the committee had been struck by the range of challenges most carers faced on a day to day basis. With over 1200 submissions received so far, the committee has had a window into the lives of many carers.

**NOTE:** 'Carers in Crisis' – the Federal Parliamentary Committee continues to hold hearings around the country. **DETAILS:** Inquiry Secretary on 02 6277 4566/0421 051 837; [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

### FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND TV ADVERTISEMENTS

"Freedom of speech is alive and well in Australia, right?" writes GetUp this week. "We thought so - until this weekend. *The Australian* said it best: 'Nothing has sucked the air from the lungs as much as Seven's decision to drop an advertisement by GetUp' (Seven at home in a moral pollution *The Australian*, 11 August 2008).

"Ordinary Australians donated to put an ad to air featuring a Tibetan women asking the prime minister to raise the issue of Tibet when in China, says GetUp. "The ad was booked, paid for and confirmed to air on either side of the Opening Ceremony - but it never showed. In the Olympic spirit of fairness, we want to give Seven a chance to show they do support freedom of speech - by showing another GetUp Tibet ad during the closing ceremony.

"GetUp is an independent, not-for-profit community campaigning group. We use new technology to empower Australians to have their say on important national issues. We receive no political party or government funding, and every campaign we run is entirely supported by voluntary donations."

GetUp's planned new advertisement: [www.getup.org.au/campaign/SevensDeadlySin](http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/SevensDeadlySin)

**DETAILS:** Brett Solomon, Level 2, 294 Pitt St, Sydney NSW 2000.

### PROTESTS OVER TV POOLING FOOTAGE

A confidential Crikey source claimed that ABC Rural department staff members were furious because they believed their work was "being flogged to the commercial web site by the ABC's own Content Sales Department." (11/8/08). **REPORT:** <http://www.crikey.com.au/Media-Arts-and-Sports/20080811-ABC-rural-sells-content-just-dont-tell-the-journos.html>

In another story, the ABC has been accused of "shameless collusion" with a commercial television rival amid allegations that it regularly provides news footage to a Nine Network station in a way that threatens its charter commitments to independence, Mark Day reports in *The Australian* reported (14/8/08).

ABC news director John Cameron was quoted as saying the relationship between the ABC and Nine Adelaide was "an awkward but necessary marriage of convenience", but the arrangements did not involve any editorial compromise. **REPORT:** [http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24176660-7582,00.html?from=public\\_rss](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,,24176660-7582,00.html?from=public_rss)

### FIFI: JOURNALIST ARRESTED

Serafina Silaitoga, a reporter for the *Fiji Times*, was arrested by police at her home in Labasa on August 10, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported.

It was claimed she was interrogated about an article which discussed the Cabinet tenure of interim Finance Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, a former prime minister. Police were reported to be treating the article, published in the *Fiji Times* on August 9, as seditious.

Ms Silaitoga, who is pregnant and whose four children witnessed her arrest, refused to provide a statement to police unless her legal representative was present. She was released after several hours.

*Fiji Times* editor-in-chief Netani Rika said police threatened Ms Silaitoga when she demanded legal representation and refused to answer questions. Police deny issuing threats. According to local news reports he said the *Fiji Times* would lodge a complaint with the Police Commissioner.

Silaitoga's detention follows the sudden deportation of *Fiji Times* publisher Evan Hannah in May and *Fiji Sun* publisher and managing director Russell Hunter in February. Mr Hunter's deportation was linked to reports in his paper regarding allegations of tax evasion by a government minister, the same minister whose name was also linked to a police raid on the offices of a television station in June, and the seizure of a news program's master tape.

The IFJ has called on Fiji's interim government, which was installed after a military coup led by Commander Bainimarama in 2006, to honour its promise in February to ensure "media freedom is secured and guaranteed" as a key aspect of Fiji's return to political and democratic stability. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

#### **INDIA: MEDIA TARGETED IN JAMMU AND KASHMIR**

According to reports received from sources in the state capital of Srinagar, police seized all copies of an Urdu-language daily, *Etalaat* on August 9 for allegedly carrying the report of a village being razed by a mob in the Jammu region.

Reports have also been received that the staff of the English-language daily, *Rising Kashmir*, were warned by state authorities not to carry certain kinds of reports and that the Jammu offices of another English-language daily, *Greater Kashmir*, were attacked by mobs.

The IFJ reported that one of the best-known journalists from Kashmir has had to travel through the Jammu region using a false identity card, for fear of being attacked because of his religion. On August 9 a conclave of Srinagar's most senior journalists called on state authorities to adopt a policy of complete transparency with the media and the Kashmir public about recent violence and lawlessness in the Jammu region.

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

#### **SRI LANKA: GOVERNMENT ASKED TO EXPLAIN ANTI-MEDIA STATEMENTS**

Government officials and police media representatives have been requested to provide an explanation for police statements defending unwarranted attacks on Sirasa TV journalists by a Sri Lanka minister on August 6, the IFJ reported (11/8/08).

According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), police media spokesperson SSP Ranjith Gunsekara said at a press conference on August 7 that the minister had a legitimate right to prevent anyone from filming politicians at the public highway opening.

He was reported to have criticised Sirasa TV management for sending a report crew to the site in light of the minister's hostility towards the media. The minister was claimed to have assaulted journalist Thushara Saliva Ranawaka and video cameraman Waruna Sampath at the bridge opening in Kelaniya on August 4.

"Any journalist is free to report from, be present at, and record public events and those to which they have been expressly invited to cover," the FMM said.

On August 13 FMM reported the same minister organised a protest of about 100 people outside the Sirasa TV station on August 11 calling for a ban on the broadcaster.

Sirasa TV says it has consistently reported to the police a series of verbal and physical attacks by the minister against journalists but none of the complaints have been investigated "in any meaningful manner". [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

#### **PHILIPPINES: DISGRUNTLED COUNCIL 'ATTACKS JOURNALIST'**

The Zamboanga City Council in the Philippines had declared senior veteran journalist Al Jacinto "persona non grata" on August 7 in response to unfavourable news reports, the IFJ reported (11/8/08).

According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), the declaration was connected to articles published by Jacinto on GMANews.tv regarding conflict between religious and ethnic groups in relation to the Bangsamoro Juridical Entity (BJE), a new geographical territory proposed by the Philippines Government.

The BJE agreement is part of ongoing peace negotiations between the government and local separatist groups in Zamboanga, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF).

The NUJP is demanding that Zamboanga City Council issue a formal apology to Mr Jacinto for the inflammatory statement and for instigating unnecessary anti-media sentiment.

The incident followed the murder of two journalists in the Philippines last week. Martin Roxas, anchorman for Radio Mindanao Network (RMN) was shot on August 7. Dennis Cuesta, program director for the RMN dxMD program, died in hospital on Saturday (/8/08) from injuries sustained from a shooting on August 4, the NUJP reported.

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

#### **CHINA: OLYMPIC GAMES – IFJ Asia-Pacific Bulletin:**

1. Journalists beaten and barred from reporting in Xinjiang
  2. Hong Kong Journalists bear brunt of restrictions in Beijing
  3. Games open amid restrictions on media
  4. Foreign Correspondents' Club of China logs increase in attacks
  5. New Tang Dynasty TV signal to China still down
  6. More dissident writers jailed
  7. Taiwan security officials monitor Chinese journalists
  8. Safety concerns for mainland journalists
  9. Retired soldier charged for criticising government via online messaging
  10. Press regulation head says more freedom to come in China
- Special supplement:* Interview with Foreign Correspondents' Club of China's Jonathan Watts  
**DETAILS:** [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org); [www.ifj.org](http://www.ifj.org); <http://asiapacific.ifj.org>; [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org); [ifjchina@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifjchina@ifj-asia.org). OLYMPIC GAMES site: [www.playthegameforopenjournalism.org](http://www.playthegameforopenjournalism.org)

#### **G. OTHER NEWS**

##### **CHINA IS THE UNFOLDING DRAMA, SAYS RUDD**

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has framed "the rise of China" as the great drama and international policy challenge of this century, writes John Garnaut in Singapore (Sydney Morning Herald, 13/8/08). In a key foreign policy speech in Singapore, Mr Rudd said the challenge for countries in the region was to shape their futures by working out how best to influence China.

"The rise of China in particular represents the great unfolding drama of this new century," he said. The coming century would be shaped by answers to questions such as whether the world's most populous nation became a democracy, how it interacted with the cultures of the Chinese diaspora and the wider world, and how it reacted to climate change, information technology and global economic and financial crises.

"How China responds to these forces will radically shape the future course of our country," he said. "Which means how countries such as Singapore and Australia seek to influence China's view of its role and responsibility in the merging global and regional order is also of great importance." **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/12/1218306898453.html>

##### **RUDELY INTERRUPTED PLAYS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES DAY**

The six-piece Australian rock band Rudely Interrupted will play at the United Nations for International Day of People with Disabilities. Five of the band members have physical or mental disabilities, ranging from autism to Down syndrome.

"It allows us to show off to, well basically the whole world, what we are capable of," said lead singer Rory Burnside, who is legally blind. [ABC \(Northern Tasmania, Australia\)](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2008/08/08/1218306898453.html) (9/8/08).

## **ANU LAUNCHES KOREA INSTITUTE**

The Australian National University is establishing a Korea Institute to bring together its Korean studies research and teaching under one umbrella. It is also signing a memorandum of understanding with Korea's Yonsei University.

The ANU began its teaching and research on Korea in the 1960s, and in 1980 became the first Australian university to introduce a Korean language program.

Research at the university into Korea covers spheres from politics, foreign policy, trade and economic reform to women's history and literature, civil society movements, music, film and folklore. It claims the largest number of postgraduate students researching Korean subjects in Australia. It also has more than 40 graduate students and post-doctorate fellows from the Republic of Korea (ROK) in information engineering, mathematics, history, politics, international relations, computer science, water resources, literature and economics.

[DETAILS:](#) Jane O'Dwyer, ANU Media, on 02 6125 5001/0416 249 231.

## **POWERFUL FORCE TO FIGHT POVERTY**

Oyunerdene is a happy and talented ten-year-old but, during winter, her family was forced to choose between hunger and cold, World Vision reports (12/8/08).

Oyunerdene's family once prospered as nomadic herders and shepherded over 500 livestock. That was until 2001, when their entire flock froze to death in a huge snowstorm. Devastated by the loss of their only form of income and struggling to survive on half a US dollar per day, Oyunerdene's family could not take care of her and was forced to send her elsewhere to live.

Unable to find employment, Oyunerdene's grandfather, Borshikh, had no alternative but to become an entrepreneur - something he knew nothing about. With the support of World Vision, Borshikh was trained in business management and received a non-collateral loan (a loan with no risk of losing assets).

His first loan of US\$128 - together with a following five loans worth US\$214 each - have enabled him to establish a small grocery shop. With these loans, he bought a windmill for generating electricity, then a stove, chickens and later a fridge. He is also now able to grow enough vegetables for a year and keep his home warm in the winter.

"I am very proud of what I have achieved, which has been made possible through World Vision," he said. He has also learnt to save and manage finances. Life has improved not only for him but also for his family - including little Oyunerdene. She is now a World Vision sponsored child and, after six months away from her family, sponsorship has meant that she can return home.

## **GIRL, 13, MORTGAGED FOR \$50 LOAN, MADE MATCHBOXES 11 HOURS A DAY**

In another story, World Vision writes: When Roghini was only 13, she was taken out of school and forced to work to pay off a family debt. Her sister was getting married and, according to Indian tradition, she needed a dowry (money a wife's family must provide to her husband at marriage).

Her family's house also needed repairs, so Roghini's parents took a loan of \$50 and she was mortgaged to a family who made matchboxes in their home. So for 11 hours every day, Roghini would sit cross-legged and fold and glue matchboxes. If she made 1,500 matchboxes, she was given 30 cents. But this was not enough money to buy food, or pay off the debt, so she was often hungry.

There were 20 children, mostly girls, who worked with Roghini in the airless and lightless room. The man of the house used to shout and threaten the girls, and he used obscene language that made them feel worthless and humiliated. Roghini was so depressed that she tried to take her life. She truly believed there was no escape from the never-ending work to pay off the debt, and there was no hope for schooling, fun, play or a better future.

After she'd been working for three years, the local World Vision-supported Self Help Group (SHG) found out about her situation and paid off her family's debt. SHGs enable communities to establish a social safety net so that children from vulnerable families do not fall victim to exploitation and child labour in times of financial crisis.

After her freedom was secured, Roghini was able to return to school and she is now studying to become a nurse, while campaigning for child rights.

This year the 40 Hour Famine is raising funds to help children in India, like Roghini, who are denied their basic childhood rights and are forced into child labour, trafficking and slavery. The Famine funds also supports food security projects in Laos and East Timor.

DETAILS: [worldvision.com.au/youth](http://worldvision.com.au/youth).

## H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### DO-OR-DIE FOR EUROPEAN POWER

On the surface, the forces of European diplomacy responded vigorously to the challenge presented by the eruption of conflict in the Caucasus, write Janet Stobart and Sebastian Rotella in the Los Angeles Times (14/8/08). The French President, Nicolas Sarkozy, who wants to reassert French and European influence while holding the presidency of the European Union, zoomed off to Moscow and Tbilisi, the capital of Georgia, on the heels of a war-zone trip by his equally energetic Foreign Minister, Bernard Kouchner. By the end of Tuesday, Russian and Georgian leaders had agreed to a ceasefire. Other European leaders held talks with each other and Russian and US counterparts. But in reality, the crisis in the former Soviet republic of Georgia exposes the problems and limitations afflicting Europe, particularly the dream of a strong European Union playing a key role on the world stage, analysts say. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/13/1218307007014.html>

### RUSSIA'S MOVE IN GEORGIA COULD STALL NATO EXPANSION

The US and its allies may have emboldened Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili in his dealings with the Russians, analysts say (Reuters: Gleb Garanich), the ABC reported (13/8/08). Russia's military move into Georgia has effectively checked NATO's decade-long eastward expansion and is likely to revive debate about US plans for missile defences in Eastern Europe. US and NATO forces have watched from the sidelines as Russian forces poured into the breakaway region of South Ossetia and then into Georgia, routing US-trained Georgian forces and exposing the limits of the West's protective embrace. "Now we've learned that people who press to bring countries into NATO have got to understand that, if you're not prepared to back it up with real security, you could be doing them an injury," former NATO ambassador Robert Hunter said. "I think this is, among other things, a shock to those people who thought you could talk about NATO expansion willy-nilly without possible consequences." Although appalled by the Russian use of force, Mr Hunter argues the US and its allies blundered in, disregarding Moscow's geopolitical interests in the region.

ANALYSIS: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/13/2334038.htm>

### MILITARY ASSAULT NOT WAY TO DEAL WITH OLD GRIEVANCES

The last president of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev writes in the Washington Post republished in the Sydney Morning Herald (14/8/08):

The past week's events in South Ossetia are bound to shock and pain anyone. Already, thousands of people have died, tens of thousands have been turned into refugees, and towns and villages lie in ruins. Nothing can justify this loss of life and destruction. It is a warning to all (14/8/08). The roots of this tragedy lie in the decision of Georgia's separatist leaders in 1991 to abolish South Ossetian autonomy. This turned out to be a time bomb for Georgia's territorial integrity. Each time successive Georgian leaders tried to impose their will by force - both in South Ossetia and in Abkhazia, where the issues of autonomy are similar - it only made the situation worse. Nevertheless, it was still possible to find a political solution. For some time, relative calm was maintained in South Ossetia. The peacekeeping force composed of Russians, Georgians and Ossetians fulfilled its mission, and ordinary Ossetians and Georgians, who live close to each other, found at least some common ground.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/13/1218307004590.html?page=2>

## **OUTSPUN BY THE TALIBAN**

With the West outgunned on propaganda, the fight for the hearts and minds of Afghanistan is going backwards, writes Paul McGeough in the Sydney Morning Herald (9/8/08). The Afghan air is thick with dangerous munitions. Compared with Iraq, more than twice as many combat sorties are flown. But as the Afghanistan conflict becomes more a war of information and propaganda, the words, graphs and data produced on both sides can be as lethal as the rockets and missiles dropped on the Taliban. Inevitably, the information business is hazy. The US with its allies and the Taliban both seek to influence public opinion, either across the steppes of Central Asia or in the sitting rooms of the 40 nations that comprise the US and NATO-led forces in Afghanistan. But analysts dissecting their media efforts find the battle for hearts and minds is poised precariously.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/08/1218139078215.html>

## **HUMMING IN TUNE ACROSS THE NATION**

Australia used to suffer from the tyranny of distance. Now we suffer from the tyranny of difference, writes Chris Bowen in the Sydney Morning Herald (13/8/08). For years our greatest economic disadvantage was our physical distance from the giant markets of America and Europe. Now we are on the doorstep of the world's fastest growing region. No longer disadvantaged by our location, we remain disadvantaged by the operation of our federation. Harmonising regulations and achieving consistency in the way the various state governments treat businesses will not make the front pages of a newspaper. It will gain nary a vote. But it will be one of the most important economic projects the Rudd Government will undertake.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/12/1218306883555.html>

## **ARTICLES HELD OVER FROM 8/8/08**

### **DISASTER LESSONS**

Three months have passed since Cyclone Nargis and an accompanying tidal surge swept across Myanmar's fertile Irrawaddy Delta region, claiming nearly 140,000 lives and devastating the livelihoods of many more people, John Holmes writes in the Washington Post reported (6/8/08). John Holmes is UN Under-secretary General for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator. "All told, some 2.4 million people were seriously affected by Nargis, ranking it among the worst cyclones in Asia in the past 15 years and the worst in Myanmar's history. I recently completed my second trip to Myanmar, where I was again sobered by the immensity of the tragedy but was also cautiously hopeful about relief efforts. In May, government reluctance to allow international aid workers into the affected region sparked a storm of international criticism. We have made a lot of progress since then ... Without question the international response has helped save lives and reduce suffering. While it is impossible to be sure all survivors have been reached, I am confident that the overwhelming majority have received help, even if many still need a good deal more ... So, what can we learn from this crisis?"

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/05/AR2008080502924.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

### **AN ERA OF SHAME WE CAN ILL AFFORD TO FORGIVE OR FORGET**

A shameful era is over in Australian politics. The Minister for Immigration, Chris Evans, has announced fundamental changes to a detention regime that was the cruellest in the Western world, Adele Horin writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (2/8/08). It is cause for celebration, but it would be a terrible waste if Australians failed to learn the lessons of that time. It should never be forgotten that Australian politicians, with mass support, locked thousands of children and adults behind razor wire in desert camps, demonised them, stripped them of their names, turned the water cannon on them and drove many of them insane. This treatment broke their spirits and damaged their minds in ways Saddam Hussein and the Taliban never did. The vast majority were eventually found to be genuine refugees.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/01/1217097525498.html>

### **OFF WELFARE, UPSTAIRS TO WORK**

The problem with training programs for indigenous people is that we have had decades of these programs which have never been linked to any real jobs. People were, to borrow the wit of indigenous leader Tracker Tilmouth, just chopping wood for practice. It was training for training's sake, Noel Pearson writes in The Australian (4/8/08).

Having heard Forrest's concept I was convinced this was the missing piece of our reform jigsaw for the people of my region. In Cape York Peninsula we are driving, in partnership with the federal and Queensland governments, fundamental reforms to welfare. These reforms are aimed at rebuilding social responsibility within families and communities and, importantly, tackling the disincentives that keep our people on welfare rather than seeking jobs, including the necessity for our young people to become mobile, and go to those places where the jobs are available. The great missing piece in our reform agenda has been this question: where are the jobs?

ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24122118-7583,00.html>

### **DEFEND THE INDIVIDUAL AND SO THE WEST**

Thinkers of the Enlightenment, a set of new intellectual attitudes that remade Western culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, set out to understand the world and themselves through reason rather than religion, writes Ayaan Hirsi Ali in an article reproduced in the Sydney Morning Herald (4/8/08). Their ideas led to massive advances in science, economics and commerce, the arts, and human liberty, which underpin our present prosperity and social freedoms. Since the September 11 attacks, Islam has often been seen as the chief threat to the Enlightenment's legacy. But is there also something internal to Western intellectual history that leaves us vulnerable to the enemies of reason? Ayaan Hirsi Ali is author of the bestselling memoir *Infidel*. She spoke on the ideas of the Enlightenment at the CIS Big Ideas Forum at Sydney Opera House on Monday ([www.cis.org.au](http://www.cis.org.au)). This text is based on a book review published by the New York Times (6/1/08).

ARTICLE: [http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28415,filter.all/pub\\_detail.asp](http://www.aei.org/publications/pubID.28415,filter.all/pub_detail.asp)

### **DESPITE SCEPTICS' NOISE, SCIENTIFIC CONSENSUS IS GROWING**

Anyone keeping up with current affairs could be forgiven for thinking scientists are riven with doubt over climate change. Climate sceptics have enjoyed a resurgence as the federal Coalition danced around the introduction of carbon trading and heavy-polluting industries began an intensive lobbying effort to convince the Federal Government of their special needs, Ben Chubby writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (2/8/08) ... The noise has been loudest on the internet, where websites give voice to people who believe scientists are suppressing evidence to protect their careers. Unfortunately for the sceptics, and for everyone else, the evidence for human-induced climate change is stronger than ever.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/01/1217097533889.html>

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **WARNING BELLS ON MURRAY IGNORED: REPORT**

A 2006 report warning urgent intervention was needed to save the mouth of the Murray River and the Coorong wetlands from "irreversible" damage was ignored, one of its authors says.

The West Australian said (12/8/08) the report, which recommended the lower Murray area be nominated for Commonwealth protection as a critically endangered ecological area, was ignored by both the federal and South Australian governments, News Ltd reported.

The report found the system was under significant stress and had been for some years.

"A comprehensive shift in ecological character is under way. Without significant and urgent intervention, it may prove irreversible," the report said.

Bill Phillips, a former deputy secretary-general of the Ramsar Convention, which oversees internationally recognised wetlands, prepared the report.

REPORT: <http://www.thewest.com.au/aapstory.aspx?StoryName=505150>

### **WARNING BELLS ON THE MURRAY 'DID NOT GO UNHEEDED'**

"The environmental destruction of the Coorong is a tragedy that did not need to happen," said Senator Rachel Siewert (14/8/08).

"The drastic decline of these internationally significant wetlands could have been prevented if either of our environment ministers had acted in a timely and sensible fashion."

A 2006 report on the dire state of the Coorong did not go unheeded by the Senate, which backed the Greens in calling for an urgent review of the management of Australia's 64 Ramsar listed wetlands.

"By failing to act, former ministers Ian Campbell and Malcolm Turnbull and our current Environment Minister, Peter Garrett have all failed in their responsibilities to the international community, to the Australian people and to the environment," she said.

"The Coorong and these other critically threatened wetlands could have been Montreaux listed, and the Commonwealth's powers under the Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act evoked to ensure environmental water was delivered," she said.

The Greens are calling on Peter Garrett to act immediately to secure water for the Coorong, to report on the findings to date of the Ramsar review, and to release details of the health, management and recovery plans for the threatened Ramsar wetlands.

[DETAILS](#): Chris Twomey on 0407 725 025.

### **RECENT RAINFALL IN THE BASIN**

Murray Darling Basin Commission General Manager David Dreverman reported that the southern half of the Murray-Darling Basin received some light falls of between 1 and 10 mm in the week ending August 8. Some areas along the southern boundary of the basin received between 15 – 50 mm. Woods Point in north-eastern Victoria received the highest fall of 48 mm. There was little or no rain recorded across the northern half of the basin.

In July average rainfall was observed across most of the Murray-Darling Basin, with only central NSW receiving below average rainfall during July. Murray System Inflows (excluding inflow to Menindee Lakes and release from Snowy Hydro), however, remained low totalling around 300 GL over July compared with the long term average of 1 200 GL. Total MDBC storage (which is Hume, Dartmouth, Lake Victoria and Menindee Lakes) increased by 200 GL during July to around 2 200 GL (23.5 % capacity). Total storage across the entire basin also remained critically low.

### **WFP: \$214M CASH ROLL-OUT TO HELP HUNGER HOT SPOTS**

As nearly one billion poor people worldwide struggle to survive the unrelenting global high food and fuel price crisis, the UN World Food Program (WFP) announced the roll-out of a US\$214 million package directed at 16 hunger hotspots (12/8/08).

"With hunger on the rise, we are doing our best to stream incoming contributions to the people most in need in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean," said WFP Executive Director, Josette Sheeran. "It is essential to launch a bold new set of responses to stem a full-blown hunger and nutritional crisis."

The \$214 million will provide food to highly vulnerable groups; school-aged children, supplemental food to pregnant women and young children with mental and physical development at risk, expand food assistance to urban areas hardest hit by high food prices, including through cash and vouchers; and supporting small farmers and markets in countries where WFP will purchase food assistance locally.

The increased cost of food has had a direct impact on WFP, the world's largest humanitarian agency. Operational costs have ballooned, and the organisation's base budget – the funding required to reach 90 million people worldwide in 2008 – has risen from \$3.1 billion to nearly \$6 billion. So far, the voluntarily-funded agency has raised about half of its 2008 budget.

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Ms Sheeran noted that impoverished families that already spend more than 60 per cent of their income on food, are eating less, buying less nutritious foods, cutting out education and health care, and taking on more debt.

In the Horn of Africa, where the effects of drought and insecurity have been compounded by high prices, WFP is also ramping up assistance by providing \$110 million. In Somalia, where

political instability is a key factor, WFP must more than double the amount of food it delivers through the coming months, to reach 2.4 million people by December.

**DETAILS:** [www.wfp.org](http://www.wfp.org); Brenda Barton, WFP/Rome, on +39-06-65132602 WFP Cash **INFORMATION country by country** includes Djibouti, Ghana, Guinea, Haiti, Liberia, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Senegal, Tajikistan, Uganda and Yemen.

### **WFP AIRLIFTS HIGH ENERGY BISCUITS TO GEORGIA**

Two cargo aircraft chartered by the UN World Food Program (WFP) set off for Tbilisi, Georgia, with 34 metric tons of high energy biscuits to assist thousands of people in Georgia (13/8/08).

Two Antonov 12 aircraft departed in succession from the UN Humanitarian Response Depot (UNHRD) in Brindisi, Italy. The biscuits will augment in-country food stocks which WFP started distributing over the weekend to thousands of people. High Energy Biscuits (HEB) require no preparation.

WFP expected to distribute 2,300 rations on the first day with more planned for following days using the supplies in arrival. WFP has been providing 10-day food rations to more than 4,500 displaced people living in shelters in the capital, Tbilisi.

“The number of people in need of food assistance continues to escalate,” said WFP Georgia Country Director Lola Castro, adding that more than 10,000 people were now registered as displaced.

WFP will also supply wheat flour to bakeries to make bread for distribution. Before the crisis erupted, WFP was providing food to more than 212,000 people, mainly poor rural communities, as well as primary schoolchildren, tuberculosis patients and people living with HIV/AIDS. WFP has been active in Georgia since 1993.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>; Lola Castro, Country Director, WFP/Tbilisi, on +995 32 317253/63/65/85/ +995 9948 2128; Yulon Tsilosani, WFP/Tbilisi, on: +995 99 55 81 73

### **BIO-FUELS STANDARDS DRAFT ENDORSED**

A UN-backed group of international experts has endorsed a first draft of a new global sustainability standard for biofuels to assess their economic, social and environmental effects (13/8/08).

The Steering Board of the Roundtable on Sustainable Biofuels (RSB), which includes an expert from the UN Environment Program (UNEP), signed off on the draft criteria, called ‘Version Zero,’ which is based on a comprehensive “land to tank” analysis spanning the entire chain of biofuel production.

It is hoped that the new standard will be used by investors, governments, corporations and civil society to analyse the sustainability of different types of biofuels.

Version Zero contains input – submitted during teleconferences, over an innovative Wiki online format and at various meetings held worldwide – from over 300 experts from dozens of countries. It addressed such concerns as biofuels’ potential contribution to mitigating the effects of climate change, the protection of land and labour rights, soil pollution, water availability and food security.

It is hoped that all feedback on the draft standard will be submitted by February 2009.

### **SUDAN FOOD PRODUCTION BOOMS BUT NOT FOR DARFUR**

Sudan is investing billions of dollars into agribusiness and exporting hundreds of tons of foodstuffs in sales to other countries, while aid groups and foreign governments ferry in food supplies to the people of Darfur. Sudanese officials deny claims they are ignoring the hunger of the country's citizens and argue their efforts to build up the economy will help Sudan become self-sufficient. [The New York Times](#) (9/8/08).

## **PLANT MUTATION COULD LEAD TO PRODUCTIVITY**

Plant mutation, a scientific technique that dramatically improves crop productivity, could be part of the solution to the current food and energy crisis that threatens to plunge millions worldwide into hunger, according to a United Nations expert.

“At a time when the world is facing a food and energy crisis of unprecedented proportions, plant mutation breeding can be a catalyst in developing improved, higher-yield, saline-resistant, sturdier crop varieties,” Werner Burkart, Deputy Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), told a conference that at Agency HQ in Vienna (12/8/08).

The International Symposium on Induced Mutations in Plants brings together over 600 scientists, researchers and plant breeders from around the world to discuss the latest innovations and how they can improve crop varieties in the future.

Mr Burkart, who is head of the agency’s Department of Nuclear Sciences and Applications, said 2008 will be remembered as the year in which the world understood the realities of climate change, the food crisis and the energy debate in its link to hunger.

“These big issues are intimately interlinked, and translate in the agronomy field into a competition between food, feed and fuel for soil, water, human and financial resources.”  
REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27680&Cr=food&Cr1=crisis>

## **GERMAN FISH LAND ON ASIAN TABLES**

Germany's fishing industry is an example of the increasing globalisation of the time-honoured profession. Less than 15 per cent of fish caught by German fishermen lands on German tables, with the majority of fish exported to high-demand countries in Asia. Despite fishing quotas imposed by the EU, much of the world's oceans are threatened by overfishing due to unlicensed fishermen acting as modern-day pirates, [Spiegel Online](#) reports (8/8/08).

## **VIDEO CONTEST TO PRESENT WHAT REAL HUNGER REALLY MEANS**

Last November by the UN World Food Program (WFP) called on students, would-be filmmakers and others interested in the web universe to put their creativity towards raising awareness about global hunger, through an international competition : Hungerbytes, hosted on YouTube. ([www.youtube.com/hungerbytes](http://www.youtube.com/hungerbytes) and [www.wfp.org/hungerbytes](http://www.wfp.org/hungerbytes)).

The goal is to create a top-rated viral video which creates buzz, and gets people to talk and learn more about hunger. About 70 videos have been entered, including those from Brazil, Canada, China, the Czech Republic, France, Greece, Italy, Lithuania, Poland, and the US.

The creator of the video viewed most often by October 16 - World Food Day - will win a trip to shoot a video at a relief operation in one of the hot-spots where WFP is locked in a feverish struggle to slow starvation and save lives.

A blue-ribbon panel of leaders in film, web and humanitarian aid have now voted on the five finalist videos. Juror Edward Zwick, director of ‘Blood Diamond’ and ‘The Last Samurai’, has applauded the talent represented in several entries, noting that leading submissions “not only demonstrated a strong graphic sense as well as a strong theatrical sense, they also were able to present a simple idea clearly and – perhaps just as important – with wit and power.”

The finalist-videos are on view for two months of voting at [www.youtube.com/hungerbytes](http://www.youtube.com/hungerbytes). Competitors can increase their chances of winning by sharing the link with friends and online communities such as Facebook, MySpace and through blogs.

Other jurors in the competition are Oscar-winning producer Cathy Schulman (‘Crash’, ‘Darfur Now’, ‘The Illusionist’, Steve Grove, head of YouTube News and Politics Slate executive producer Bill Smee.

