

# UNITY

## THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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

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## FOR 2008 UNAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE BRISBANE – SEE OTHER NEWS

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

#### UN FACES ITS OWN TERROR WAR

Attacks on aid workers over the last several years have increased in both ferocity and frequency, demonstrating that militants are increasingly holding humanitarian workers responsible for political decisions over which they have no say, Samantha Power writes in the New York Times. She argues for more spending on UN security by member nations as well as for high-level information sharing between member nations and UN security officials. (19/8/08). [REPORT:](#)

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/opinion/19power.html?\\_r=3&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/19/opinion/19power.html?_r=3&oref=slogin&oref=slogin&oref=slogin)

#### COMPOSER DEDICATES WORK TO SLAIN UN STAFF MEMBER

The writer of a classical work composed in honour of the UN staff members killed in the 2003 Baghdad bombing said the music was a gift to the UN family. Officials, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, later commemorated the fifth anniversary of the attack.

The Emmy Award-winning composer Steve Heitzeg told UN News he was inspired to compose *Song Without Borders* after hearing of the “senseless act” at the Canal Hotel, Baghdad, on August 19 2003. Being a pacifist and a believer in the work of the UN, Mr Heitzeg said it was “extremely emotional” for him to write the piece of music.

“Even though these people’s lives were taken, their spirit and what they have worked their entire lives for will never be killed,” he said. *Song without Borders* premiered at the UN Headquarters ceremony in New York. Some survivors were invited to attend.

#### UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS

To access major United Nations websites, go to:

[United Nations.](#)

[Secretary-General.](#)

[UN News Centre.](#)

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

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

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

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

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

UNAA ACT [unaaact@cyberone.com.au](mailto:unaaact@cyberone.com.au) on 02 6247 4499 .

UNAA NSW [office@unaansw.org.au](mailto:office@unaansw.org.au) 02 9212 0998;f 02 9280 0137 .

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UNAA SA [unaasa@picknowl.com.au](mailto:unaasa@picknowl.com.au) on 08 8226 4141.

UNAA Tas. [secretary@UNAATasmania.org](mailto:secretary@UNAATasmania.org) on 03 6229 4269 <http://www.unaatasmania.org/>.

UNAA Vic [info@unaavictoria.org.au](mailto:info@unaavictoria.org.au) on(03) 9670 7878 Website:

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

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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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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## B. CLIMATE CHANGE

### **BAN TO SET UP CLIMATE CHANGE CENTRE FOR PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES**

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has announced that the UN and Samoa plan to establish an Inter-Agency Climate Change Centre to help coordinate support to Pacific Island countries to combat the impact of global warming in their region.

Given the direct impact of climate change on vulnerable states in the region, the new agency will focus its support on the mitigation, adaptation and reduction of the risk of disaster facing the islands, Mr Ban said in a **message** to the Pacific Islands Forum Summit meeting in Alofi, Niue.

"I am very heartened that the Pacific island countries are making their voices heard on the subject of climate change," Mr Ban said. "Climate change is not science fiction. As your countries know all too well, it is real and present."

His statement was delivered by Noeleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). Several UN agencies already collaborate with the Pacific Island Forum assisting on a number of issues ranging from farming and fisheries to urbanisation and disability.

Mr Ban also expressed his condolences on the death last week of Greg Urwin, Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum, stating that "he inspired us all with his vision of a cohesive and prosperous Pacific region."

### **PACIFIC ISLANDERS URGE CLIMATE CHANGE RESETTLEMENT PLAN**

There has been an urgent call for Australia and New Zealand to tailor their immigration programs to help Pacific Islanders displaced by climate change, the ABC reported (16/8/08).

Over 100 NGOs from across the Asia-Pacific region sent a letter to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and NZ Prime Minister Helen Clark ahead of the Pacific Islands Leadership Forum. The letter calls for reduced carbon emissions, resources for resettlement and increased permanent migration.

Damien Lawson from Friends of the Earth Australia said Australia needed to introduce a new category of migration to deal with those who are forced to resettle.

"Ultimately there needs to be recognition in our immigration program that there are people already in the Pacific being displaced because of climate change, people having to leave small atolls and islands because of sea level rises," he said. "We think there needs to be a special category in our humanitarian program that recognises the displacement caused by climate change." Both countries needed concrete plans for resettlement and migration.

"Australia and New Zealand need to be putting resources and planning into how the displacement can be coped with and how that resettlement can take place," he said. "But alongside of that, there needs to be more permanent migration put in place from the Pacific to Australia and New Zealand to help build a resource base."

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/17/2337705.htm>

### **THOUSANDS OF WATERFRONT HOMES IN DANGER: SCIENTISTS**

The speed at which the climate is changing has been significantly underestimated, with thousands of Australian homes potentially at risk from rising sea levels, a conference has heard, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (20/8/08).

Speaking on the first day of the Coast to Coast '08 conference in Darwin, Will Steffen, of the Australian National University, said there could be devastating effects on many low-lying areas in coastal Australia within the next century.

"The evidence over the past 12 to 18 months suggests that we have underestimated how fast this aspect of the earth's system can change," he said. "We see things happening much faster than we thought."

Professor Steffen, who is an adviser to the Federal Government, said climate change was the "most complex and difficult challenge we have faced as a species".

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/19/1218911717529.html>

### **PREPARE BUFFER ZONE FOR COASTAL FLOODING, SCIENTISTS URGE**

The Federal Government was urged to declare a buffer zone along Australia's coastline to ensure a safe approach is taken to future coastal development, the ABC reported (21/8/08). Concerns about a lack of planning to combat the threats of climate change have been raised at an environmental conference in Darwin.

Scientists at this week's Coast to Coast Collaboration Conference in Darwin have painted a dark future for the vast majority of Australians living along the coastline. Barbara Norman from RMIT University's Global Cities Research Institute told delegates there is a drastic need for an inter-government approach to the management of coastal development.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/21/2341936.htm>

### **HOW WILL THE KYOTO PROTOCOL IMPACT ON THE NT?**

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee scheduled public hearings in Darwin on August 19/20 to hear evidence on the government's implementation of the Kyoto Protocol on the reduction of greenhouse gases. The hearing focussed on climate change and greenhouse gas emissions issues in the Northern Territory.

"The Northern Territory faces a unique set of challenges in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adjusting to climate change," Committee Chairman Kelvin Thomson said.

"The committee is keen to ensure that the government takes these unique challenges into account when implementing the Kyoto Protocol and considering the position Australia takes to future international negotiations concerning the period beyond 2012."

Evidence from Territory experts included reducing emissions from savannah burning, which makes NT the biggest per capita emitter of greenhouse gases in the developed world; designing and building urban spaces and houses better suited to the NT climate to reduce reliance on air conditioning; and preparing the NT for the extremes of climate change, such as hotter, drier dry seasons and wetter, more intense cyclones during the wet.

DETAILS: [www.apf.gov.au/jsct](http://www.apf.gov.au/jsct)

BACKGROUND: Committee Secretary on 02 6277 4002 or 0413 085 766

### **TOYOTA JOINS UN CLIMATE NEUTRAL NETWORK**

The European branch of the world's largest car maker, Toyota, has become one of six companies to join the Climate Neutral Network (CN Net), a UN Environment Program (UNEP) initiative bringing together organisations pledging to significantly reduce gas emissions.

Toyota Motor Europe is the first car manufacturer to join CN Net, a web-based network pooling the resources of governments, local authorities, private companies and individuals to make large cuts to their carbon footprints or even neutralize them.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27727&Cr=unep&Cr1=>

### **GREENHOUSE GAS STORAGE**

The House of Representatives Primary Industries and Resources Committee tabled its report into the *Draft Offshore Petroleum Amendment (Greenhouse Gas Storage) Bill 2008 (15/8/08)*, which provides for carbon dioxide sequestration in offshore Australian waters.

The report's key recommendations are that the Bill be amended to establish a formal process to transfer long-term liability from the greenhouse gas (GHG) operator to the government, and that the responsible Federal Minister be endowed with the authority to direct parties to negotiate in good faith where there is overlapping greenhouse gas storage and petroleum titles, and to direct an outcome in such negotiations.

Committee Chairman Dick Adams said, "Australia has some of the best sites for carbon dioxide storage in the world. This legislation provides an enabling framework to establish a commercial greenhouse gas storage industry in Australia". Mr Adams stressed the need for mitigation strategies for Australia's carbon dioxide emissions.

"Carbon capture and storage (CCS) could be a vital element in Australia's response to climate change. This new technology allows for the continued exploitation of our vast coal reserves, while also making deep cuts to our CO<sub>2</sub> emissions," he said.

The report's 19 recommendations include:

- The inclusion of an objects clause within the legislation
- A transparent and systematic process for short-listing possible GHG storage acreage
- The provision for a renewal of the GHG assessment permit for a maximum of 3 years
- Delaying the passage of the legislation until such time as the supporting regulations and guidelines are released
- Offering incumbent petroleum operators a one-off opportunity to incorporate a GHG storage title over their current licence area
- Preferential consideration for GHG acreage bids with a readily available CO<sub>2</sub> stream
- Financial incentives to promote the uptake of commercial CCS
- The publication of formal site closure criteria
- That no suitable GHG storage acreage be excluded on the grounds of pre-existing petroleum activities
- That injection and storage rights currently held by petroleum title holders under S.137 be preserved. REPORT: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/pir/exposedraft/report.htm> ; or committee secretariat on 02 6277 4500; [pir.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:pir.reps@aph.gov.au)

### **WONG DUCKS DEFORESTATION HYPOCRISY - GREENS**

The Minister for Climate Change, Penny Wong, has ignored Australia's logging and burning of native forests as a critical contribution to global warming, in a Sydney speech to loggers, Australian Greens leader Bob Brown said (19/8/08).

"The latest Australian National University research shows that such logging may produce up to 25 per cent of Australia's carbon pollution of the atmosphere. But Minister Wong, while outlining the Rudd Government's overseas aid to stop logging in Indonesia and Papua New Guinea, ducked Australia's need to stop logging here," Senator Brown said.

"Senator Wong's promise to the loggers to fund reforestation activities is crazy when she backs public funding of a pulp mill which entails deforestation of 200,000 hectares.

"Senator Wong advocates carbon sinks as "practical action" while also backing destruction of Australia's biggest carbon sinks - its native forests. This is bad economic, environmental and forest policy," he said. DETAILS: Ebony Bennett 0409 164 603.

## **S-E NSW BIOMASS POWER IS NO SOLUTION TO CLIMATE CHALLENGES**

Developing wood-fired power stations based on so-called wastes from native forestry in NSW's South-East would weaken Australia's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, according to Greens NSW MP John Kaye (19/8/08).

"We will be working hard to stop biomass electricity generation from native forestry feed-stocks being included in renewable energy targets," Dr Kaye said.

"Recent research from the ANU massively increased estimates of carbon locked up in the native forests. This moves these biomass power stations from the green side of the ledger to the brown team. They should sit alongside coal-fired generators as major contributors to global warming.

"In a climate change-constrained world, continued wood-chipping of native forests will inevitably be recognised as an irresponsible and unnecessary release of greenhouse gases.

"Developing power plants based on biomass from these forests would not only create new economic dependencies on a high emission activity. It would actually increase greenhouse gas emissions.

"Professor Mackey's research, released two weeks ago, shows that ending the exploitation of Eastern Australia's native forests and allowing them to regrow would take about 24 per cent of Australia's current annual greenhouse gas emissions out of the atmosphere for each of the next 100 years.

"That would be a massive and welcome 136 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> annual contribution to repairing the climate. With figures like these there is little hope of generating sustainable electricity based on products coming from an industry that is a major emitter.

"Wood-chips would inevitably end up in the furnaces and biomass would drive the continued expansion of an unsustainable industry," he said. [DETAILS](#): John Kaye 0407 195 455.

## **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **KEVIN RUDD URGED TO RESTORE AUSTRALIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS CREDENTIALS**

Australia's leading human rights and development organisations have called on Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to adopt a package of human rights initiatives to put human rights back at the centre of Australian government concerns, nationally and internationally.

The package, advocated as part of Australia's commemoration of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, would address human rights gaps at home and restore Australia's image as a world leader in human rights.

The package sent to the prime minister includes recommendations for better legal protection of human rights, human rights education and training, institutional reform, public support for human rights work, and a human rights audit of federal legislation. It also calls for a review of the recommendations to Australia made by the United Nations and a public endorsement of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Speaking for the Human Rights Council of Australia Chris Sidoti noted that Australia had played a leading role in drafting and adopting the Universal Declaration. It was one of the eight states that drafted the declaration and Australia's Minister for External Affairs Dr HV Evatt, was President of the United Nations General Assembly when it adopted the Declaration. "We should lead the world again now in commemorating this important anniversary by reaffirming our commitment to human rights through practical action", he said.

"There have already been important steps taken by the government this year. We welcome Australia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the National Apology to Indigenous Australians, the commitment to ratify the Optional Protocol on the Convention Against Torture and other international human rights treaties, and the

changes in refugee policy and practice,. However, a lot more needs to be done to re-establish Australia's human rights credentials.”

The package of initiatives was prepared by the Human Rights Council of Australia and endorsed by the foremost Australian human rights and development organisations, including A Just Australia, Amnesty International, Australian Lawyers for Human Rights, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Edmund Rice Centre, Evatt Foundation, GetUp, Human Rights Law Resource Centre, Oxfam Australia, Public Interest Advocacy Centre, Rights Australia and World Vision. **DETAILS:** Chris Sidoti, HRCA spokesperson on 04 1446 7784 and Andre Frankovits, International Project Director, on 04 3981 3702.

## **60<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS A PACKAGE OF INITIATIVES FOR THE AUSTRALIAN OBSERVANCE**

**Introduction:** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December 1948. Dr HV Evatt, Australia's Minister for External Affairs in the Chifley Labor Government, was the President of the General Assembly and chaired the session at which the UDHR was passed. Australia had been one of the eight States given responsibility for drafting the Declaration and so it was fitting that its Minister chaired the session that adopted it.

In 2008, the United Nations is observing a 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary year that will culminate with the anniversary itself on 10 December 2008. The High Commissioner for Human Rights has called on states to undertake their own programs of activities to mark the anniversary. The Rudd Labor Government could adopt a package of important human rights initiatives for Australia's observance. This short paper proposes elements for that package.

### **Respecting and promoting all human rights**

A package of initiatives for the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary will contribute towards the observance of the anniversary. More importantly, it will assist in restoring Australia's leadership in international human rights. Most fundamentally, however, it will contribute to advancing the protection and promotion of human rights in Australia and beyond. The rights recognised in the Declaration are universal and indivisible. Protection and promotion of these rights are the best means to counter terrorism, build greater security and ensure prosperity. This was recognised by Dr Evatt in 1945 when, in the aftermath of World War II and in the days prior to the adoption of the UN Charter, he prophetically stated,

So we are on the eve of San Francisco. The nations must not fumble this second chance to create a system of international cooperation within which they can live together as friends. While security is the first task, it is not enough to plan for security alone; economic and social conditions are potential factors in international relations. Poverty and unemployment are the worst menace to peace.

We must observe the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration – and do so in ways that are meaningful – not just because of Australia's significant role in its drafting and adoption but so that Australians and others can enjoy the rights that belong to all.

### **Restoring our traditional leadership in international human rights**

The Howard Government moved Australia into an oppositional role in relation to almost all the major international human rights institutions and initiatives. This first confused and then alienated many traditional allies in positive human rights work that were accustomed to a strong Australian commitment to the international human rights system. The damage done to our international standing has been immense but it can be restored. That work has already begun with significant steps have been taken in the months since the Rudd Labor Government was elected.

→ Australia was one of the first 30 states to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the third Western State to do so.

→The government has stated its intention to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination Against Women and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as soon as possible. The actual ratifications, however, remain to be completed.

→Australia has also played a more positive role in the negotiation of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

→The examination of Australia's performance of its obligations under the Convention Against Torture was seen as far more constructive than any Australian appearance before a treaty monitoring committee since 2000.

→The government has announced that it will make a standing invitation to the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council to make official visits to Australia.

The package of initiatives to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the declaration can build on these good beginnings. It should include the following.

### **Outstanding treaty ratifications**

→Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture

→Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

→Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities

→Convention on Enforced Disappearances

→Migrant Workers Convention

### **Support for the negotiation of new international standards**

→Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### **Engagement with international human rights mechanisms**

→Review all treaty body Concluding Observations, Recommendations and Opinions concerning Australia and respond positively and constructively

→Update and revise Australia's "Common Core Document" report to treaty bodies, in light of comments from non-government organisations and changes in government policy

→Issue an invitation to the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to make an official visit to Australia for discussions on how to strengthen the work of her Office, including Australia's cooperation with the growing OHCHR field presences in the Asia Pacific region.

### **Support for international initiatives on indigenous rights**

→Publicly endorse the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in an appropriate UN forum

→Revive consideration of and consultation on Australian ratification of the International Labor Organisation Convention 169 on indigenous populations

### **Support for international human rights work**

→Ensure that the Australian aid program is based on a human rights approach to development and provides direct support to human rights initiatives

→Establish a fund to provide grants to Australian and international human rights non-government organisations for international work on human rights, especially at global and regional levels where Australian funding is not presently available

→Explore the establishment of a centre to promote research, dialogue and cooperation on human rights in the Asia Pacific region

→Provide qualified Australian secondments to the UN Junior Professional Officers scheme, enabling young Australians to join young professionals from 23 countries who are sponsored by their governments to work and learn in the UN human rights system

→Increase appropriate support for Australian nationals currently in the UN system or seeking to contribute to it

→Provide official public recognition of Australians who make a significant contribution to human rights through the UN system (including contributions through treaty bodies and special procedures) and other organisations

→Provide support to enable strengthened civil society engagement both with government and the multilateral system

→Contribute to, and provide leadership on, the development of an international regulatory framework on business and human rights, building on the work undertaken by Harvard

University Professor John Ruggie during the first term of his mandate as the Special Representative to the Secretary-General on business and human rights

### **Building a human rights system in Australia – Bringing Rights Home**

Domestically too, the new Rudd Labor Government has acted quickly to address some longstanding injustices and other serious human rights situations inherited from the Howard Government that breached both international standards and Australian values.

- Most significantly the government issued the long awaited national apology to Australia's Indigenous people. The government was applauded for the breadth and generosity of the apology. No single act has done more to enhance Australia's international reputation as a leader in human rights.
- The so-called Pacific Solution for asylum seekers has been ended and Temporary Protection Visas discontinued;
- Parliament's Joint Standing Committee on Migration has begun an inquiry into immigration detention.
- The Work Choices scheme is being repealed and protection of workers' rights restored.
- The Senate Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs is reviewing the Sex Discrimination Act.
- The government has commenced a legislative program to repeal provisions in laws that discriminate against same-sex couples.
- The Productivity Commission is undertaking an inquiry into paid maternity leave in Australia.
- For the first time, the government will fund the participation of an expert advisor from the community sector and an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander woman to be part of the Australian delegation to the next session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women

These and other initiatives are very welcome but only the start of what needs to be done. Australia has ratified most of the core international human rights treaties and ratification of the outstanding ones will be addressed under this package. However, most of these international obligations are not adequately incorporated into Australian domestic law, as the treaty monitoring bodies regularly point out. Australia needs to draw from international human rights law and the best international practice and develop its own indigenous system for the promotion and protection of human rights in Australian law and institutions.

The Labor Party's National Platform commits the government to a national process to examine better protection and promotion of human rights in Australian law and this was strongly supported at the Australia 2020 Summit. This should be the lynchpin to the domestic side of the package, an initiative for "bringing rights home".

### **Better legal protection of human rights**

- Launch the national process for consideration of better protection and promotion of human rights in Australian law, including through an Australian bill or charter of rights. This process should include a national program for community consultation including the use of community education packages to assist public debate
- Enact national legislation for a criminal offence of torture with domestic and extra-territorial application
- Enact national legislation to prohibit the re-introduction of the death penalty in any Australian jurisdiction

### **Human rights education and training**

- Ensure the incorporation of human rights education into school curricula through its inclusion in the national education framework
- Undertake a limited public education program to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights
- Commence a program of training on human rights within the Australian Public Service so that managers and administrators are aware of their human rights responsibilities and of best practice in public administration in the implementation of human rights obligations

### **Institutional renewal**

During the Howard decade, the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission was systematically diminished and sidelined. Its budget was cut by 40% in 1998 as punishment for its politically unacceptable report *Bringing them home*. It spent the decade under the constant threat of re-structuring, with legislation in parliament but not passed and key leadership positions unfilled. The commission is now more than 20 years old and it is timely to review its structure, functions and resources as part of its renewal and restoration to a central position in Australian national governance as the principal expert on human rights. It is also timely to increase parliament's role in monitoring human rights performance and in ensuring that laws, policies and practices comply with human rights obligations.

→Establish an independent public review of the structure, functions, powers and resources of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission to ensure that it is truly renewed and restored

Parliament and parliamentarians, have a very special role in the promotion and protection of human rights. Developments during the Howard years highlighted the absence in parliament of a dedicated committee with a focus on, and expertise in, human rights. There is a need for a dedicated committee able to scrutinise legislation, review and monitor the implementation of human rights commitments.

→Up-grade the Human Rights Sub-committee of the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade to a full Joint Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights whose tasks would include contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights nationally and internationally, and monitoring and reporting on Australia's implementation of the recommendations of UN treaty bodies and the Special Procedures of the UN Human Rights Council

### **Support for human rights work**

→Provide public support for human rights non-government organisations for their work in Australia, through core and project funding

→Extend tax deductibility for donations to human rights non-government organisations for their work in Australia

### **Law reform**

There are several areas of law that give rise to significant questions about compliance with human rights standards. These have been highlighted in judicial decisions, including in the High Court, in reports of the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and in other areas. The government should launch a "human rights audit" of legislation, beginning with areas where there has already been authoritative criticism and proposals for reform. It could be undertaken within government (the Attorney-General's Department) or through an appropriate statutory authority (the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission or the Australian Law Reform Commission) or by the recommended Joint Standing Committee on Human Rights. The best approach might be to divide the task among several agencies to ensure that it proceeds as quickly as possible. The audit will need to be complemented with a legislative program to "make right" areas of deficiency that are identified.

→Launch a "human rights audit" of federal legislation

→Undertake as a priority reviews of counter-terrorism legislation and asylum seeker legislation for compliance with human rights standards

→Continue the legislative program to amend federal laws to remove discrimination on the basis of same sex relationships

This package of initiatives is a means to equip Australia better to meet the human rights challenges of this century and to cement Australia's place and leadership role internationally and within the Asia Pacific region in protecting and promoting human rights.

### **SOCIAL INCLUSION VITAL FOR MIGRANTS**

Addressing the Unity in Diversity Conference in Townsville, Voula Messimeri, Chairperson of the Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia, said if there was any theme that

was critical to successful multiculturalism, to successful models of social inclusion, then it was unity in diversity.

“Unity in diversity acknowledges that communities can be diverse, in fact very diverse, but can also be united and strong, under the right leadership.”

She said that the Federal Government has already begun work on social inclusion with important priorities around homelessness, disability, mental health, closing the gap for Indigenous Australians and universal access to pre-school.

“At present the challenge for the multicultural sector remains to ensure that our issues get a seat at the social inclusion policy table,” she said.

“We know that migrants, and particularly our refugee and humanitarian component, have sometimes profound disadvantage in comparison with the more established community. In Victoria we know that Somali born Australians have recorded unemployment rates approaching 50 per cent and Sudanese Australians in the municipality of Greater Dandenong have home ownership levels of 2 per cent against a municipal wide average of 69 per cent.

“While this is perhaps not unexpected for people facing the significant challenge of establishing their new lives in a foreign land, these figures do indicate that some culturally and linguistically diverse Australians have again profound levels of disadvantage that must be addressed if these communities are not to be left behind.

“Communities with miniscule home ownership rates and large unemployment rates must form a key part of the social inclusion agenda.

“We would argue that the social inclusion agenda should have a stand-alone theme of *Social Inclusion for CALD communities*, given Australia’s large migrant population and the fact that our immigration program is now at its highest level in decades.

“The easy thing for government to say is that “of course we are including CALD communities *social inclusion* by its very nature includes everybody”. We’ve actually heard that from some government MPs. But that is slightly disingenuous.

You wouldn’t get away with saying that about Indigenous people or disabled people, and nor should migrant Australians be treated as a group of people who do not have special needs and particular challenges that must be carefully and thoughtfully addressed as part of the social inclusion agenda.

The recent Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and Victorian Multicultural Commission Report, *Harnessing Diversity*, found employment discrimination is a significant issue for many CALD community members and that there was evidence of racial and religious discrimination in employment.

Clearly if we are to reach our potential both as individuals but also as a nation with significant skills and ageing challenges then we need to introduce further measures to alleviate employment discrimination.

“Housing is another big ticket item for recently arrived migrants and refugees. While migrants and refugees are often blamed for housing affordability and availability crises the irony is that migrants and refugees are the ones most likely to suffer in such crises due to being last in the queue and often having little market knowledge or purchasing power.

“Also important in any multicultural social inclusion agenda is ensuring that multiculturalism again becomes a key policy instrument of government. Our multicultural policy has not been fully updated since 1999 and our most recent policy technically only covered the period up until late 2006. But multiculturalism is a critical policy framework to manage, celebrate and draw social and economic strength from Australia’s great cultural diversity.”

[DETAILS](#): Voula Messimeri on 0414 532 529; FECCA: 02 6282 5755.

## **PROTECTING WHISTLEBLOWERS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC SECTOR**

The House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee scheduled its first public hearing for its inquiry into whistle-blowing protections within the federal government public sector in Melbourne on August 21.

Committee Chairman Mark Dreyfus said, "More effective and comprehensive protection for whistleblowers is needed in the federal government public sector. The inquiry's public hearing program will play an important role in collecting evidence to aid the committee in assessing effective legislation for this area".

Representatives from the Australian Institute of Professional Investigators, Post Office Agents Association Limited, Australian Services Union—Taxation Officers' Branch, Transparency International—Australia, Uniting Church in Australia—Synod of Victoria and Tasmania, lawyer Peter Bartlett and Professor Ronald Francis met to discuss some of the issues, challenges and best practices, surrounding whistle-blowing protections within the federal government public sector.

**DETAILS:** [www.aph.gov.au/laca](http://www.aph.gov.au/laca); background information [www.aph.gov.au/laca](http://www.aph.gov.au/laca) or secretariat on 02 6277 2358 or 0413 483 133.

## **INSIDE THE CHRISTMAS ISLAND DETENTION CENTRE**

Sophie Black writes that Crikey [published a letter](#) addressed to Immigration Minister Chris Evans and signed by a group of NGOs and refugee rights groups after their escorted visit to the completed \$400 million Christmas Island detention facility.

Pamela Curr, campaign coordinator for the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, was one of the group of 'stakeholders' who recently toured the newly completed Christmas Island detention facility, equipped to accommodate up to 800 people.

According to Ms Curr, a group of around 40 to 50 people spent five hours flying to the island, four hours on the ground and then five hours flying back. They were given an unprecedented level of access to the new facility and were told that, as there are currently no detainees in the facility, they were permitted to freely take photos and take mobile phones inside.

A long time campaigner for refugee rights, Ms Curr confirmed that there seems to be a "new openness" under Senator Evans. "I have to say I could never imagine it happening under the previous government," she said. But she and fellow representatives shared serious reservations about the new facility, as outlined in [their letter](#).

**PHOTO:** [entry-ea585267-04e8-4a76-9c46-4d0e504b8733.jpg](http://entry-ea585267-04e8-4a76-9c46-4d0e504b8733.jpg)

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **EVIDENCE ON NUCLEAR COOPERATION WITH RUSSIA**

The Federal Parliament's Treaties Committee will hear evidence on four treaties tabled on 14 May, 17 June and 25 June 2008 including an agreement with the Russian Federation on cooperation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. The treaty will allow Australian uranium to be used in approved Russian nuclear power plants, subject to strict safeguards conditions.

It will also promote cooperation between the two countries for the peaceful use of nuclear technology. The final hearing on the agreement will hear evidence from the Medical Association for Prevention of War who state in their submission that they have grave concerns regarding the proposed sale of uranium to Russia.

The committee will also consider an agreement to enhance bilateral defence engagement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) by facilitating cooperation in a range of mutually agreed fields including, but not limited to, military training and education, joint military exercises, defence material and equipment, security and defence policy and protection from weapons of mass destruction.

Australia's interest in cooperation with the UAE stems from Australian involvement in the Middle East and the developing potential for defence material cooperation.

PUBLIC HEARING PROGRAM 9am-11.30 pm, on August 25 in Committee Room 2R1, 2nd floor, Parliament House, Canberra; 9:00am Agreement with the Russian Federation on Cooperation in the Use of Nuclear Energy for Peaceful Purposes; 10:10am Headquarters Agreement between Australia and the Secretariat to the Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels; 10:50am Agreement with the UAE on Defence Cooperation.

The public hearing will be broadcast on the House Monitoring Service, radio and webcast live on the Parliament House website at: <http://webcast.aph.gov.au/livebroadcasting/>.

DETAILS: [www.aph.gov.au/jsct](http://www.aph.gov.au/jsct)

### **RUDD SAYS FIJI'S BAINIMARAMA 'CHICKENED OUT' OF FORUM**

Fiji's interim prime minister, Frank Bainimarama, boycotted the week's Pacific Island Forum in Niue, Radio Australia reported (19/8/08). Fiji's move to democracy was expected to be on the agenda at the leaders' summit.

Australia and New Zealand have been pressuring Commodore Bainimarama to honour his promise to hold democratic elections by March next year. Frank Bainimarama, who seized power in a bloodless coup in 2006, said he had local political issues to focus on.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2338906.htm?tab=latest>

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has accused Fiji's self-declared interim Prime Minister, Frank Bainimarama, of chickening out of this year's Pacific Islands Forum, the ABC reported (20/8/08).

Mr Rudd was reported as saying Commodore Bainimarama had made a grave error by not coming to the summit and did not believe the Commodore had any support from other Pacific countries at the summit.

"A person of substance would have presented himself to his fellow leaders among the Pacific Island countries to account for the undertaking he gave to them," Mr Rudd said.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/20/2340734.htm?section=australia>

### **FIJI LABOUR PARTY TO END ITS PARTICIPATION IN INTERIM GOVERNMENT**

Fiji's Interim Finance Minister Mahendra Chaudhry, interim Labour Minister Lekh Ram Vayeshnoi and interim Tourism and Communications Minister Tom Ricketts are resigning from the interim government, Radio Australia reported (18/8/08).

This followed a decision by the Fiji Labour Party's National Council in Nadi. This development ends recent speculation about Mr Chaudhry's future in the interim Cabinet.

Party President Jokapeci Koroi said it was in the best interests of the party to disengage from the interim government so that it can effectively engage with the population on the draft People's Charter as well as prepare for the next general election.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2338027.htm?tab=latest>

## **GEORGIA**

### **UN ARRIVES WITH AID FOR DISPLACED PEOPLE**

The top UN refugee official arrived in the Georgian capital, Tbilisi, to assess humanitarian operations and meet some of the people displaced by last week's fighting – now estimated to be around 158,700 (19/8/08).

The four-day visit of UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres also takes him to Russia, where some of those uprooted by the conflict in Georgia's South Ossetia region have fled.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that 158,700 people have been displaced by the conflict – which began when heavy fighting broke out in South Ossetia between Georgian and South Ossetian forces – based on figures provided by the Georgian and Russian governments.

The ensuing hostilities, in which Russian forces also became involved, has displaced up to 30,000 people within South Ossetia, UNHCR said. In addition, some 98,000 people are displaced in other areas of Georgia, including most of the population of the town of Gori. Russian officials in North Ossetia indicate some 30,000 people from South Ossetia are still in Russia.

“The High Commissioner will again press for the protection of the civilian population, especially those newly displaced, and for safe and unhindered access by humanitarian organisations to the areas of displacement,” UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic said in Geneva.

Personnel from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) were on their way to the capital of South Ossetia, Tskhinvali, to assess the need for humanitarian aid arising from the recent armed conflict on Thursday (21/8/08). The ICRC president, Jakob Kellenberger, who has just returned from a three-day visit to Georgia and the Russian Federation, said “Obtaining access for the ICRC to South Ossetia was one of the main objectives of my visit. We have indications that there are important needs in the region that still have to be addressed.”

The ICRC president added that the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Lavrov, had told him in Moscow on Tuesday that Russia supported the idea of the ICRC carrying out humanitarian work in South Ossetia.

#### **SUPPLIES FLOWN TO MORE THAN 50,000**

As part of the \$58.6 million humanitarian appeal launched by the UN and its aid partners, UNHCR is seeking \$16 million to cover its protection, shelter and assistance programs for the newly displaced in the Caucasus region.

Mr Mahecic reported that the agency had flown aid supplies for more than 50,000 people to Tbilisi but road convoys cannot reach western Georgia, where some 15,000 displaced were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance.

The first humanitarian flight to Batumi in western Georgia included 200 tents, 15,000 blankets, 3,000 kitchen sets and 6,000 jerry cans.

“UNHCR, which has six offices in Georgia working on behalf of some 220,000 previously displaced people, is rapidly moving ahead with distribution of aid items,” Mr Mahecic said.

UNHCR’s 13 teams were gathering some 40 staff and 13 trucks distributed humanitarian assistance to some 11,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs). Another 10 teams visited 50 collective centres accommodating some of the newly displaced population to assess the numbers of displaced, their needs and living conditions.

A joint UNHCR and World Food Program (WFP) convoy reached Gori on Sunday, the first time since the outbreak of the conflict that UN agencies were given access to the city.

In a related development, the head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) has spoken out against the killing of at least three journalists in the recent conflict and urged respect for the safety of media professionals.

In a statement issued in Paris, UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura referred to the killing of Dutch cameraman Stan Storimans, of RTL television; Alexander Klimchuk, a Georgian photojournalist working for Russian news agency Itar-Tass; and Grigol Chikhladze, a Georgian working for Russian Newsweek.

"In such times, it is essential that the authorities abide by international law which affirms the civilian status of war reporters," said Mr. Matsuura. "I call on the authorities to investigate these cases and take appropriate action."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27740&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=>  
SEE ALSO HEALTH & MEANS PAGE

### **UN APPEALS FOR \$59M TO HELP GEORGIAN CONFLICT VICTIMS**

The United Nations and its humanitarian partners have appealed for \$58.6 million to meet the needs for the next six months of almost 130,000 people affected by the recent crisis in Georgia, the UN News reported (18/8/08).

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has spent the past several days conferring with his top advisers regarding the situation in Georgia, as well as with the President of the Security Council, the body's five permanent members and the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the UN. He also met with the United Kingdom's Ambassador to the UN.

"I hope the international community will show itself fully ready, capable and willing to help provide critically-needed assistance to the people of Georgia," said Catherine Bragg, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator.

According to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**), donors have already pledged \$23 million towards the appeal, which will support the aid efforts of nine UN agencies and 16 non-governmental and international organisations.

Food, health and nutrition, protection, shelter and non-food items, as well as water, sanitation and hygiene are among the most urgent needs for the victims of the conflict, where heavy fighting broke out in South Ossetia between Georgian and South Ossetian forces.

The ensuing hostilities, in which Russian forces also became involved, uprooted close to 118,000 people from their homes, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

There have also been reports of property destruction, looting of assets and civilians traumatised by the conflict.

Limited access to the affected areas means that the airlifting of goods is still required, and it is the only way to get supplies to the western part of the country. On Sunday, a UN convoy of relief supplies managed to enter the town of Gori for the first time in the past two weeks, bringing with it high-energy biscuits, jerry cans, kitchen sets and blankets.

### **RUSSIA TO KEEP 'PEACEKEEPERS' IN GEORGIA**

The Kremlin has vowed to start pulling its combat troops from Georgia, but a plan to retain Russian "peacekeepers" in the embattled republic has sparked new tension (18/8/08).

Western allies of President Mikheil Saakashvili further upped the pressure on Moscow to get out of Georgia as Russian troops dug in less than half an hour's drive from the capital Tbilisi. German Chancellor Angela Merkel assured Saakashvili in Tbilisi that NATO remained ready to give membership to the ex-Soviet republic, despite the war with Russia. Separately, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a US television appearance that Russia's reputation was in "tatters".

President Dmitry Medvedev assured his French counterpart Nicolas Sarkozy that Russian regular forces would begin withdrawing on Monday. REPORT: <http://news.smh.com.au/world/russia-to-keep-peacekeepers-in-georgia-20080818-3x5m.html>

### **WFP SENDS MORE SUPPLIES TO GORI**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in New York met with his top advisers regarding the UN' approach to the current situation in Georgia (16/8/08).

Mr Ban was also speaking separately with the President of the Security Council, the council's five permanent members and Irakli Alasania, the Permanent Representative of Georgia to the UN.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) is responding to an urgent request from the Georgian Government by sending a truckload of food to Gori, which the agency had not been able to reach due to insecurity.

"We understand the food situation in Gori has now become desperate," said Lola Castro, WFP's Georgia Country Director. The agency is supplying high-energy biscuits (HEBs) and sugar, while World Vision International is sending canned meat, buckwheat, pasta and tea.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that close to 115,000 people have been uprooted from their homes since heavy fighting began in South Ossetia. Some 45,000 people have fled Gori and are heading towards the capital Tbilisi, according to the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27722&Cr=georgia&Cr1=>

### **RUSSIA WARNS POLAND AFTER WEAPONS PACT SIGNING**

Only 24 hours after the weapons agreement was signed, Russia's deputy chief of staff warned Poland "is exposing itself to a strike 100 per cent", the London Daily Telegraph (15/8/08).

It was reported that General Anatoly Nogovitsyn said that any new US assets in Europe could come under Russian nuclear attack with his forces targeting "the allies of countries having nuclear weapons".

He told Russia's Interfax news agency: "By hosting these, Poland is making itself a target. This is 100 per cent certain. It becomes a target for attack. Such targets are destroyed as a first priority."

Russia's nuclear rhetoric marks an intense new phase in the war of words over Georgia. The Caucasus conflict has spiralled into a Cold War style confrontation between Moscow and Washington in less than a week.

REPORT: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/europe/russia/2566005/Russia-threatens-nuclear-attack-on-Poland-over-US-missile-shield-deal.html>

## **ASIA**

### **PAKISTAN'S MUSHARRAF STEPS DOWN**

Pakistani President Pervez Musharraf, facing impeachment on charges drawn up by the governing coalition, has announced that he is resigning. He went on national TV to say that while he was confident the charges would not stand, this was not the time for more confrontation, the BBC (18/8/08).

He is accused of violation of the constitution and gross misconduct.

The Speaker of the Pakistani Senate, Muhammad Mian Sumroo, automatically took over as caretaker president. Mr Musharraf has been a key ally of the US in its "war on terror" since he took power in a bloodless coup in 1999.

Reaction in Pakistan is overwhelmingly one of relief that a bruising and lengthy impeachment battle has been avoided. The key issue now is whether the ruling coalition, which had pushed for Mr Musharraf's exit since winning the February election, can stay united and deliver on its promises. REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7567451.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7567451.stm)

### **MUSHARRAF'S EXIT HEIGHTENS UNCERTAINTY**

Pakistani politicians are locked in debate over whom to support as the country's next president, while the international community waits to see what effects Pervez Musharraf's Monday resignation will have on stability in the region and Pakistan's already shaky security situation. Politicians who united in the drive to remove Musharraf will now need to overcome

serious divisions if the ruling coalition is to survive and begin addressing Pakistan's many pressing needs. [The New York Times](#) (19/8/08), [The Economist](#) (18/8/08).

### **GUERRILLA CHIEF TO HEAD GOVERNMENT IN NEPAL**

The leader of the decade-long Maoist rebellion in Nepal was finally elected prime minister after four months of political wrangling, the New York Times reported (15/8/08). His victory sets the stage for the former rebels' toughest challenge: how to uplift the lives of 27 million people in one of the poorest countries in the world, at a time of soaring food and fuel prices.

Pushpa Kamal Dahal, 54, who goes by the *nom de guerre* Prachanda, or "the fierce one" in Nepali, won more than two-thirds of 577 votes cast in the Constituent Assembly.

The election of the prime minister opens the way to establish a democratically elected government in Nepal. That will be a milestone in resolving the decade-long civil war, a conflict that claimed the lives of an estimated 13,000 people before it ended with a peace accord in 2006. The end of 239 years of Hindu monarchy ended in May.

REPORT: <http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/08/15/asia/nepal.php>

### **SOUTH EAST ASIA**

#### **BAN APPEALS FOR RESTRAINT IN SOUTHERN 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 UN readiness to support the efforts of the Philippines Government.

The UN World Food Program (WFP) has 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.

"WFP fully understands that the situation remains fluid, and we will continue to work closely with all concerned to further assess the total number of affected persons and adjust our response accordingly," said Stephen Anderson, WFP's new Country Director in the Philippines.

"WFP remains concerned over the growing number of persons displaced by the violence between the armed forces and the MILF. Many of the affected population are women and children, and we are concerned for their well-being and stand ready to support humanitarian needs," he said.

According to government officials, almost 130,000 people have been displaced from 42 villages in North Cotabato province since the fighting began last week. They will be provided with food support in some 43 evacuation centres in the province.

WFP's response, which comes at the request of the provincial government of North Cotabato, aims to support the Mindanao peace process by providing food aid to meet urgent needs, as an immediate "peace dividend" for conflict-affected communities.

### **PEACE TALKS IN PERIL: PHILIPPINES**

Philippine troops were pursuing Muslim separatist rebels who took part in an attack on two towns in the south of the country that left 38 people dead and threw peace negotiations into chaos, Radio Australia reported (20/8/08).

President Gloria Arroyo's spokesman Jesus Dureza has called for calm, but admits peace talks with the MILF are now in peril.

Hundreds of Moro Islamic Liberation Front rebels attacked towns in Lanao del Norte province, looting businesses, burning houses and taking dozens of people hostage. MILF spokesman, Mohaqher Iqbal, said the rebel leadership still believed in the peace process.

He said the guerrillas involved were frustrated with a Supreme Court decision to halt an agreement with the government that included an expanded Muslim autonomous zone.  
REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2340871.htm?tab=latest>

### **UN PRAISES 'FRAGILE' EAST TIMOR**

The Security Council has commended Timor-Leste's Government and public institutions for their quick and effective response in the wake of the February attempts on the lives of the nation leaders. The UN helped shepherd the country to independence in 2002.

In a statement read out by Ambassador Jan Grauls of Belgium, which holds the rotating council presidency this month, the 15-member body lauded the country for the "rapid, firm and responsible manner" respecting constitutional procedures in which they reacted to the attempted assassination.

In two separate attacks on February 11, President José Ramos-Horta sustained serious injuries, while Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão escaped unscathed.

But the council cautioned that in spite of progress in boosting Timor-Leste's security situation since the violent 2006 clashes, the "political, security, social and humanitarian situation in the country remains fragile."

The statement also stressed the need to continue taking action to achieve justice and accountability and emphasised the need to put into practice the recommendations made by a UN panel set up to examine the 2006 clashes.

Addressing today's **meeting**, Atul Khare, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, who also heads the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT), noted that an effective judiciary is key to ensure that culture of impunity does not become entrenched.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27753&Cr=timor&Cr1=>

### **REPORT CLAIMS MILITARY BEHIND TEACHERS' DEATHS IN INDONESIA**

A new report accuses the Indonesian military of being behind the murder of two US school teachers and an Indonesian colleague in Papua province in 2002, Radio Australia reported (19/8/08).

Seven pro-independence Papuans were jailed for the attack, but human rights groups have long accused the military of involvement. The new report accuses a member of the regional parliament of setting up the attacks, and it says the military's role was covered up at the highest level of the US Government.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200808/s2339159.htm?tab=latest>

## **AFRICA**

### **UN CONDEMNS OVERTHROW OF MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT**

The UN Security Council condemned the recent overthrow of the Mauritanian Government by the country's military and demanded the immediate release from detention of the national president and the restoration of democratic institutions (19/8/08).

The council “opposes any attempts to change governments through unconstitutional means,” Ambassador Jan Grauls of Belgium, which holds the rotating council presidency this month, said.

Mr Grauls called for “the immediate release of President Sidi Mohamed Ould Cheikh Abdallahi and the restoration of the legitimate, constitutional, democratic institutions,” adding that the 15-member panel condemned the actions of the state council to seize the powers of the presidency after the *coup d'état*.

The statement noted the important role played by the African Union and the efforts of Said Djinnit, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for West Africa, to try to help restore constitutional order in Mauritania.

### **PEACE DEAL SIGNED IN SOMALIA**

Somalia's Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and an opposition group have formally agreed to end all armed confrontation between them in a peace deal mediated by the top UN envoy to the war-ravaged Horn of Africa nation (19/8/08).

The TFG and the Alliance for the Re-liberation of Somalia, meeting in neighbouring Djibouti, also decided to cease making inflammatory statements and to take steps to ensure the agreement goes into effect.

The Djibouti Agreement, initialed by the sides in June, was brokered by Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, which, since Muhammad Siad Barre's regime was toppled in 1991, has not had a functioning national government and has been riven by factional fighting.

The UN Political Office for Somalia (UNPOS), headed by Mr Ould-Abdallah, said that participants also discussed how to make the agreement a reality.

The Security Council unanimously voted to extend by six months the mandate of the AU-led mission in Somalia (AMISOM), which has been helping the country achieve national reconciliation and is facilitating the delivery of humanitarian aid.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27746&Cr=Somali&Cr1=>

### **ETHIOPIANS BRING ENGINEERING SKILLS**

Ethiopian forces are joining with the joint UN-African Union peacekeeping mission in Darfur (UNAMID), bringing their engineering skills on water installation and erecting tents and electric power lines, the UN News reported (15/8/08).

The advance party of the first Ethiopian Infantry Battalion to join UNAMID – which seeks to quell the deadly fighting and humanitarian suffering that has raged in the Sudanese region since 2003 – was scheduled to arrive in El Fasher, the capital of North Darfur state and the headquarters of the mission. UNAMID said the contingent will be deployed in Kulbus and Silea, both located in West Darfur.

An estimated 300,000 people have been killed in Darfur since 2003, either through direct combat, disease and malnutrition. Another 2.7 million people have fled.

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

#### **FARMERS' SUICIDE RATES DOUBLE NATIONAL AVERAGE: STUDY**

A study by the Australian Institute for Suicide Research and Prevention has found the rate of suicide among farm workers, including farm owners and employees aged between 15 and 65, is more than double than that of the rest of the population, the ABC reported (19/8/08).

"We found that the workers were significantly above the male suicide rate for Queensland in the active population," said Jacinta Hawgood, the institute's deputy director. "The male suicide rate in the active population is 17.74 per 100,000 compared to 36.58 for the agricultural male workers." The study used data from the Queensland Suicide Register between 1990 and 2004.

Ms Hawgood says the study proves the problem of suicide in farming communities is real, and needs to be addressed.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/19/2340243.htm?section=australia>

### **FLOODS IN WEST AFRICA RAISE MAJOR HEALTH RISKS**

Rising flood waters across West Africa are intensifying health risks for millions of people, and adding to the impact of the food price crisis, WHO reported (19/8/08). International aid is needed as heavy rains forecast to last until September could exacerbate health threats for conditions, including malaria, diarrhea and other potentially fatal communicable diseases.

"West Africa's annual floods bring with them not only the threat of vector-borne and communicable diseases, but it further endangers the lives of people already malnourished by the food price crisis," said Dr Eric Laroche, Assistant Director-General of the World Health Organisation's Health Action in Crises Cluster.

Benin, Togo, Niger, Mali, Mauritania and Burkina Faso need urgent assistance. Flooding has caused widespread damage to bridges, roads, railway lines and other infrastructure vital for delivering health services and humanitarian supplies. Seasonal rains have also caused damage in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea-Bissau .

WHO is responding by providing essential medicines, assessing the health status of the vulnerable populations - particularly children, women and the elderly - and helping raise badly needed humanitarian funding. Some US\$ 418 million was requested for West Africa in 2008's revised Consolidated Appeal for the region, of which US\$ 76 million was needed for emergency health care. To date, only 22 per cent of the health funding needs have been met.

**DETAILS:** Paul Garwood, Health Action in Crises, WHO, Geneva, on :+4122 791 3462/ +41 794 755546; [garwoodp@who.int](mailto:garwoodp@who.int); [www.who.int/disasters](http://www.who.int/disasters)

### **INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS**

#### **ICRC PRESIDENT VISITS CONFLICT-AFFECTED AREAS**

The president of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Jakob Kellenberger, was due to travel to Georgia and the Russian Federation starting on August 17 to assess the impact in humanitarian terms of the armed conflict involving Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian troops.

Mr Kellenberger was to be in the Georgian capital Tbilisi for talks with President Mikheil Saakashvili. He was also expected to meet senior officials of the Russian Federation, including Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, in Moscow. He was also travelling to Vladikavkaz in the Russian Federation and Tskhinvali in South Ossetia to meet officials.

Mr Kellenberger planned to stress the ICRC's ability to come to the aid of the most vulnerable on all sides, especially those who have been forced to flee their homes due to the fighting or who remain isolated and in need of help. He would also underscore the importance of ensuring that all those affected by the conflict – especially civilians and people captured or arrested in connection with the hostilities – are protected in accordance with international humanitarian law.

#### **PHILIPPINES: OPERATION AIDS 80,000 DISPLACED PEOPLE IN MINDANAO**

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Philippine National Red Cross have jointly begun bringing aid to the more than 80,000 people displaced in the southern Philippines by recent hostilities between the armed forces and fighters of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) (15/8/08).

According to the authorities, 130,000 people fled their homes in North Cotabato Province to seek shelter along the Mindanao highway in Libungan, Midsayap, Aleosan, Pikit and Tulunan.

"Many displaced people have found shelter in evacuation centres near their homes. They mainly need food and basic shelter items such as tarpaulins, water containers and mosquito nets," said Felipe Donoso, the ICRC's head of delegation in the Philippines. In response to

those needs, the ICRC and the Philippine Red Cross have provided emergency equipment to boost the capacity of evacuation centres to provide adequate help for the displaced.

### **ICRC ASSISTS CIVILIANS AS SRI LANKAN CONFLICT ESCALATES**

Tens of thousands of people have fled areas affected by fighting in the Mannar and Kilinochchi districts following an escalation of hostilities between government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in northern Sri Lanka. Among those displaced – most of whom headed towards Kilinochchi – are people who have had to abandon their homes several times in recent months (15/8/08).

Access to food, shelter, sanitation and clean water is an urgent priority. Although health facilities in the area are struggling to cope with the increased demand, they have so far been able to meet the population's basic needs.

In the Vanni – where it works closely with the Sri Lanka Red Cross Society – the ICRC has distributed relief items to those most recently displaced, providing over 16,500 people in Thunukkai, Karachchi, Oddusuddan, Puthukkudiyirippu and Pooneryn with approximately 4,300 family-sized hygiene kits, 1,480 baby-care parcels and 860 emergency household kits containing bed linen, towels, sleeping mats and mosquito nets. Temporary shelter materials, including cadjans, timber frames and wooden poles, were also distributed to the displaced, including those living with host families to help them accommodate their relatives.

**DETAILS:** INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE RED CROSS (ICRC)

SYDNEY SUPPORT OFFICE TO THE REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR THE PACIFIC  
on 61 2 9388 9039; [sydney.syd@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.syd@icrc.org)

### **UNICEF STRESSES IMPORTANCE OF SANITATION IN SCHOOLS**

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has stressed the importance of sanitation and hygiene in schools as events are held around the globe to mark World Water Week, the UN News reported (18/8/08).

Over 170 organisations have converged in Stockholm, Sweden, to discuss issues surrounding this year's theme, 'Progress and Prospects on Water: For a Clean and Health World.'

UNICEF convened two seminars: one on the impact of hygiene interventions for children, and the other on the necessity of clean water in schools. Over 5,000 children under the age of five die every day due to diarrhoeal diseases, resulting in part from unsafe water and lack of access to basic sanitation facilities, according to the agency.

UNICEF stressed that simple behavioural changes, such as using soap when washing hands, can slash mortality rates related to diarrhoea by half. Further, the lack of proper sanitation facilities in schools impedes access to education, with many girls' attendance falling when they hit puberty, the agency said.

### **CARING FOR ELDERLY PEOPLE INTO THE FUTURE**

The importance of providing adequate and appropriate care for an ageing population was a topic for discussion at a public hearing in Brisbane (20/8/08). This will be a particular challenge for government, as the rise in the number of older persons requiring care is predicted to outstrip the supply of people likely to be their carers.

National Seniors Australia, the Australian Association of Gerontology and the Office of the Public Advocate were due to address the House of Representatives Family and Community Committee as part of the committee's inquiry into better support for carers.

Committee Chairperson Annette Ellis said many older people preferred to remain and be cared for in their own homes.

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

### **OXFAM'S EXPERIENCE OF POVERTY**

*FROM POVERTY TO POWER*, by Duncan Green, Head of Research, Oxfam Great Britain,

analyses world poverty reflected in the experience of Oxfam International in more than 70 countries, plus extensive discussions with numerous development professionals. The book highlights the urgency of leaders, organisations and individuals acting now to build a secure, fair and sustainable world before climate change makes it impossible. [DETAILS: www.frompovertytopower.org](#); published by Oxfam Publishing.

## **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **GEORGIAN CONFLICT KILLS THREE**

In a statement issued in Paris, UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura referred to the killing of Dutch cameraman Stan Storimans, of RTL television; Alexander Klimchuk, a Georgian photojournalist working for Russian news agency Itar-Tass; and Grigol Chikhladze, a Georgian working for Russian Newsweek.

“In such times, it is essential that the authorities abide by international law which affirms the civilian status of war reporters,” said Mr. Matsuura. “I call on the authorities to investigate these cases and take appropriate action.” [SEE ALSO PEACE & SECURITY PAGE REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=27740&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=](#)

### **TOP UN OFFICIAL DEPLORES MURDER OF FILIPINO BROADCASTER**

The head of the United Nations agency tasked with defending freedom of expression and press freedom has condemned the murder of a radio broadcaster who was shot dead on his way home in Roxas City, in the Philippines (19/8/08).

Martin Roxas, a 32-year-old radio broadcaster and program director of dyKR-Radio Mindanao Network (RMN), was murdered on August 7.

He had just finished his show, *Targetanay sa Ugto (Targeting at Noon)*, and was on his way home when he was shot by a gunman on a motorcycle.

“The perpetrators of such crimes are undermining the fundamental human right of freedom of expression, which is a cornerstone of democracy,” said UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura. “I trust the Philippines authorities will spare no effort in tracking the murderers of Mr Roxas and bringing them to trial,” he said.

According to the Manila-based Centre for Media Freedom and Responsibility (CMFR), Mr. Roxas – who had been investigating irregularity in local government – was the fourth journalist killed this year in the country.

### **NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING FOR MEDIA**

On August 20 journalists in the Philippines marked a National Day of Mourning for Media in recognition of fallen colleagues. Short ceremonies paying tribute to killed journalists were held in metropolitan Manila as well as Baguio, Olongapo, Pampanga, Sorsogon, Iloilo, Capiz, Zamboanga, Davao, Quezon, Bukidnon, Kidapawan, Ozamiz, General Santos and Jolo.

The murders of two Radio Mindanao Network (RMN) journalists earlier this month contributed to a newly sombre outlook for the safety and protection of the media in the Philippines, following a period of optimism when violence against the media appeared to decrease and the Philippines courts began to take action to investigate the killings of journalists. Five journalists in the Philippines have lost their lives in the course of their work since the beginning of 2008.

### **CHINA: NO PROMISES ON MEDIA FREEDOM**

The Beijing Olympic committee vice-president, Wang Wei, fired a fierce broadside at foreign media, saying China did not make any promises about media freedoms when it won the Olympic Games in 2001 and that the global press was nitpicking, writes Jacquelin Magnay in the Sydney Morning Herald (15/8/08).

[REPORT: http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/fiery-confrontation-with-media/2008/08/14/1218307118836.html](#)

### **APPEAL AND MEDICAL TREATMENT SOUGHT**

Authorities in Nanjing, China, have been sought to immediately allow an appeal to proceed in open court and arrange for proper medical treatment for jailed Chinese journalist Sun Lin.

Mr Sun, a journalist for US-based website *Boxun News* under the pen name Jie Mu, was sentenced to four years' jail on June 26 for "disturbing the social order" and "concealing a weapon", the IFJ reported (19/8/08).

He has worked for newspapers including Nanjing's *Business Today* and many of his articles concerned civil rights violations in Nanjing and other regions of China.

Mo Shaoping, his lawyer, told the IFJ that Mr Sun's health is deteriorating while in detention.

"Sun requested to go to the hospital but the prison still has not honoured their promise to take him," Mr Mo told the IFJ, also stating that inmates in the prison were kept in cells without ventilation and inmates had to buy ice cubes to help cool themselves.

Mr Mo has sought an open hearing for the appeal after fresh evidence emerged indicating Mr Sun's innocence and flaws of due process in the initial hearing.

### **INDONESIA: DECISION TO UPHOLD CRIMINAL DEFAMATION**

The Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) has expressed deep frustration at the decision of an Indonesian court to uphold articles of the Criminal Code that treat defamation as a criminal offence, the IFJ reported (18/8/08).

On August 15, Indonesia's Constitutional Court dismissed a judicial review seeking to abolish articles in the code that refer to defamation.

Backed by AJI, the review filed by journalist Risang Bima Wijaya and columnist Bersihar Lubis had argued the articles contravene a constitutional guarantee to freedom of the press.

Risang, a former general manager and editor-in-chief of *Radar Jogja* and a journalist with *Jawa Pos* newspaper, was released from jail on June 7 after serving six months for defaming a businessman. Mr Bersihar was jailed for one month for defaming a state prosecutor.

"The Constitutional Court's decision shows inequality under the law and overturned the public's expectation of law reform in Indonesia," AJI said in a statement.

In 2006, the Constitutional Court abolished Criminal Code articles referring to defamation of the president and "showing hatred against the government". At that time, the court ruled the articles contradicted the constitution.

However, Friday's decision permits state officials to maintain privileges and wield the threat of prison sentences as punishment for any citizen charged with defamation under the Criminal Code, AJI said. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

### **NEPAL: POLICE ARREST JOURNALISTS IN NEPAL 1 PROTEST**

Police in Nepal arrested 15 journalists participating in a peaceful rally to protest against threats by Nepal 1 Television to enforce mass sackings at its office in Kathmandu.

According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), the journalists - including FNJ central committee member Diwakar Bagchand, FNJ Nepal 1 chapter president Rajkumar Regmi and FNJ Bardiya branch president Shreeram Sigdel - were detained outside the Indian Embassy at Lainchaur on August 19. They were released after a short time.

The IFJ calls on authorities in Nepal to ensure that Nepal 1 Television abides by its obligations under a 2007 workplace agreement to provide appointment letters to all staff, insurance cover, holiday leave and a provident fund.

New Delhi-based Nepal 1 Television threatened mass sackings on July 14 if journalists and media workers at its Kathmandu office continued to campaign for implementation of the agreement. Nepal 1's management signed the agreement on May 7, 2007, ending a three-week strike by employees demanding implementation of a collective agreement and improved working conditions.

According to the FNJ, the signing of the agreement was witnessed by the Labour and Transportation Ministry's general secretary, Bishnu Lamsal, and the Information and Communication Ministry's joint-secretary, Narayan Prasad Regmi.

#### **SRI LANKA: CALL TO RESPECT PRESS FREEDOM - Tissainayagam concern**

Sri Lankan authorities were taking the unprecedented step of applying the country's draconian anti-terrorism law concerning senior journalist J.S. Tissainayagam for pursuing his profession, IFJ reported (20/8/08).

After being held for five months without charge, Mr Tissainayagam has been formally indicted by the High Court of Sri Lanka under the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) (1979), according to the Free Media Movement.

The indictment reportedly refers to the printing, publishing and distribution of the *North Eastern Monthly* between June 1, 2006, and June 1, 2007; alleged offences to do with bringing the government into disrepute; and the violation of 2006 Emergency Regulations with regard to allegations of aiding and abetting terrorist organisations through raising money for the magazine.

In the almost 30 years since the PTA was adopted as a "temporary" measure, no individual journalist or media entity has been charged under the PTA.

The FMM said that the 2006 Emergency Regulations contravene fundamental rights guaranteed under Sri Lanka's constitution and international law. "With the indictment of Mr Tissainayagam this week on what is factually an extremely weak foundation, our worst fears with regard to the dangers of such authoritarian and unconscionable legislation have been confirmed," it said.

Mr Tissainayagam was arrested on March 7 after checking with police on the welfare of N. Jesiharan, the owner of E-Kwality Printing Press, and Jesiharan's partner, Valamarthi, who were arrested previously and continue to be held by the Terrorist Investigation Department (TID). Mr Tissainayagam was then held for five months without charge under the custody of the TID. He had been editor of newly founded website [www.outreachsl.com](http://www.outreachsl.com).

#### **THREAT TO BBC'S REPRESENTATIVE**

The Free Media Movement (FMM) said it had received reports that Thakshila Jayasena, of the BBC's Sandeshaya Sinhala Service, received the threat on August 15 after covering a protest campaign by the United National Party, Sri Lanka's main opposition party.

Ms Jayasena lodged a complaint with police in Polonnaruwa, reporting that a motorcyclist had blocked her taxi as she returned to her office and said he intended not to leave anyone alive. She reported she recognised him from a press conference held by Mangalam Master, the TMVP candidate for the Polonnaruwa provincial council election.

The FMM said that several threats had been made against journalists in recent months by members of TMVP, a paramilitary and political group which is contesting the provincial elections.

"If these threats are not addressed at the outset, the FMM is deeply concerned the TMVP will treat media in much the same manner as the government treats media in the South, which is to say that they will violently clamp down on all dissent and independent reporting," the FMM stated. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

#### **FIFTH SAMSN MEETING TO FORGE SOLIDARITY**

The fifth SAMSN meeting of International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) affiliates and other key organisations committed to press freedom from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka is to be held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on September 5/6. The meeting will include a capacity-building workshop for media rights monitoring and networking.

The workshop will re-assess the 2007 action plan agreed in September 2007, reflect on successes and setbacks, and develop actions for joint strategies in the region. With frequent reports of violence and attacks on independent media from all parts of South Asia, the meeting of journalists' leaders from throughout the region is regarded as an important step in devising new methods to defend press freedom collectively and is sponsored by Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) with financial and organisational support.

The August e-bulletin of the South Asia Media Solidarity Network (SAMSN) ALSO includes:

- The War On Journalists Continues in Sri Lanka
- Violence on the Rise Against Journalists in Nepal
- Pakistan Journalists Back Code of Ethics and Complaints Commission
- Professional Ethics Also on the Table in India
- Union-Building Workshops in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- Fears for Journalists' Safety in Jammu and Kashmir
- Police Attack Journalists in India
- Bangladesh Handbook on Conflict-Sensitive Journalism and Safety Released

CONTRIBUTIONS TO: [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org)

DETAILS: [www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html](http://www.ifj-asia.org/page/samsn.html); <http://asiapacific.ifj.org>

LINKS:

<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-deplores-military-commanders-justification-of-attacks-on-media>

<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/army-commander-attempts-to-silence-defence-reporting-in-sri-lanka>.

<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/minister-lashes-out-at-sri-lanka-media-again>.

<http://asiapacific.ifj.org/en/articles/ifj-demands-sri-lankan-president-end-minister-s-anti-media-campaign>

### **ABC TV'S MEDIA WATCH LOOKS AT PRIVACY**

*What Price Privacy?* was the subject of ABC TV's Media Watch this week, introduced by Jonathan Holmes. The program discussed the new Australian Law Reform Commission report, *For Your Information*, with Professor David Weisbrot, President, Australian Law Reform Commission, Sam North, Managing Editor, Sydney Morning Herald and Sun-Herald, Fairfax Media, and Richard Walsh, former CEO ACP magazines.

Senator John Faulkner, the minister responsible, has indicated the government would not start to tackle the issue for 18 months.

*Media Watch* program references included:

*The Australian*, 'Real news will be at risk,' (12/8/08).

*The Age*, 'Overkill in defence of privacy', (13/8/08).

*Daily Telegraph online*, (12/7/08).

*ABC, Media Watch*, (23/4/07).

[Visit the Media Watch video page](#) to watch the extended version of Media Watch's interview with Professor David Weisbrot.

[Read Part K of The Australian Law Reform Commission's report 'For Your Information'.](#)

[Visit the Media Watch video page](#) to watch the extended version of Media Watch's interview with Sam North.

[Read The Right To Know Coalition's response to the Australian Law Reform Commission's report, 'For Your Information'.](#)

[Visit the Media Watch video page](#) to watch the extended version of Media Watch's interview with Richard Walsh.

*Media Watch* link: <http://www.abc.net.au/mediawatch/transcripts/s2338955.htm>

### **HOW WILL WE CATCH SCOUNDRELS?**

The most interesting stories in the newspaper invariably are those someone doesn't want published. Philandering, state secrets, incompetence, venality, greed, hubris, double standards. You name it. These are the things that lie at the heart of the most sparkling bits of news, writes Richard Ackland in the Sydney Morning Herald (15/8/08).

Invariably they are followed by much tutt-tutting from offended gatekeepers, but without upsetting someone's inflated view of themselves the rest of the information fodder would largely be composed of distillations of press releases and media conferences or a careful recounting of who got a ball or a nose over a line first. Gripping stuff.

So it's little wonder that the media is a bit tetchy about the latest sweeping reorganisation of its turf proposed by the Australian Law Reform Commission, in step with the law reformers in NSW. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/14/1218307112472.html>

## **G. OTHER NEWS**

### **UNAA NATIONAL CONFERENCE BRISBANE**

August 21/23

#### **RIGHT TO INTERVENE OVER GENOCIDE 'A NECESSARY MEANS'**

The entrenchment of UN principle R2P that incorporates a right to intervene when governments engage in genocide was a necessary means to enable future action to prevent genocide, National President John Langmore said at a Socratic Forum during the UNAA National Conference at Brisbane Parliament House (21/8/08).

The conference was organised by the Queensland UNAA Committee.

The forum was discussing: *That the responsibility to protect must override national sovereignty.* A professor at Melbourne University, he reminded the audience that on April 6 1994 Hutu militias began slaughtering all Tutsis and moderate Hutus in a well planned attempt to kill them all. UN member states and the UN Secretariat failed to respond to the desperate pleas for support from the Canadian commander of the tiny UN peacekeeping unit. Other governments did nothing as about 800,000 people were killed.

The global revulsion over Rwanda, the horror at the butchery in the Balkans and slaughter in East Timor had motivated an anguished search for lessons, he said. A commission, established by the Canadian Government, co-chaired by Gareth Evans, subsequently recommended the adoption of a new global principle of responsibility to protect.

"R2P is the principle that not only do 'sovereign states have a very explicit responsibility to protect their own people from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, but (also that) when they manifestly fail in the responsibility - as a result of either incapacity or ill will - the responsibility falls on the wider international community to take whatever action appropriate, including in the last resort, and if the Security Council agrees, military action,'" Professor Langmore said.

After Kofi Annan, then UN Secretary General, commended the principle to all UN member states in 2005, the 150 heads of state and government present unanimously agreed. But R2P had proved difficult to entrench, he said.

Citing recent events in Darfur, Iraq and Myanmar after the recent cyclone, Professor Langmore said, "R2P is about much more than military intervention. It includes all preventive action to forestall crimes against humanity as well as intervention when there is collective agreement that a humanitarian disaster is occurring."

Reluctance to endorse R2P was partly the result of weaker countries' fears of the powerful. Clear constraints should therefore limit use to only cataclysmic human disasters and only with international agreement.

"The world said never again after the holocaust. Entrenching R2P is a necessary means of enabling future action to prevent genocide," he said.

Later in the conference Professor Kevin Clements, of the University of Queensland, outlined the processes and necessary space required to approach peace resolution, in an address on *Peace, Conflict & Resolution*. He said the principle of non-interference was rapidly becoming a 20<sup>th</sup> century anachronism and it was time to recapture the original UN vision, to ensure that the US played a positive role under a new president and to focus more on peoples' emotional security (rather than state security). He believed that (the West) needed to understand better those cultures where relationships were more important than individual success.

#### **JERUSALEM - WORKING 'WITH WORLD AS IT IS'**

Robert Dan, who has worked for the UN for 12 years and is currently a UN official based in Jerusalem, described the work of the UN "with the world as it is." He said his office embodied a place where Arab/Israeli peace moves could be framed, as well as acting as coordinator for the vast number of UN programs towards peace building and state building. He gave Quartet's efforts as an example. The UN provided an umbrella for the fundamentals of peace to be achieved and a body where peoples in conflict could look for principles of how peace could be achieved. Recently the exchange of Arab and Israeli prisoners had come about under this UN umbrella, he said.

In Gaza the UN was the only organisation left there able to maintain channels of communication, to do "some work on the ground" and to influence society's development. This was at a time in the Arab/Israeli conflict when non-state actors were using violence.

He thought the role of the UN should sometimes be noisy, and sometimes go quietly, keeping communications open. He concluded that while the UN made a practical and real difference, people who worked for the UN needed more support.

#### **BALANCING HUMAN RIGHTS WHEN WITNESSES CAN BE INTIMIDATED**

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey, speaking on *Human Rights*, said the contemporary situation was becoming increasingly vicious with a mixture of criminology, violence and drugs, and this was leading to a focus on revisiting people's rights.

He was discussing the right to a fair trial, the rights of the accused and the rights of witnesses not to be intimidated. Citing changes in the UK regarding witnesses being permitted by judges to remain anonymous, he said some witnesses could be reluctant to be identified in case of reprisals against themselves or their families. Some people felt that anonymity was necessary; others that it had gone too far. It was a challenge to balance competing rights.

Giving an example of an extreme case, he said that it had been alleged as a result of the Bosnian conflict that 30 men had been killed, including a witness' own father. However, the 'dead' father was subsequently produced in court very much alive.

#### **REGION 'NEEDS MORE WOMEN IN PARLIAMENT'**

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullen, said it was a disgrace in this region that five out of ten countries had no women in Parliament. He suggested a start should be made by encouraging women to be elected at local and regional levels.

He commented that in the 2007 election Papua New Guinea, separate gender booths were provided so women could vote as they wished. He praised Prime Minister Sir Michael Somare for his call to PGN men to stop violence against women. Men had to stop the violence, to speak up and to challenge perpetrators.

Gender equality was essential for sustainability, he said. The situation in the Pacific was the worst in the world and for development, it was essential that women were empowered.

#### **AUSTRALIA 'SHOULD JOIN ASIAN GROUP'**

Dr Alison Broinowski, a Visiting Fellow at ANU and UNSW, and ANU Professor Hilary Charlesworth, Director of the Centre for International Governance and Justice, spoke at the conference dinner. Dr Broinowski said over the past ten years Australian representation at

the UN had not “lived up to what we would have of it.” Australia’s reputation had been “trashed”, she said. Although recently Australia’s aid funds had been increased, they had not reached the Millennium Development Goal of 0.7 per cent. Australia was still wavering over cluster bombs and had taken part in the Iraq war. “We now can sell uranium to India.”

She regretted that for the last decade Australia had not had an independent voice in the UN and although Australians regarded themselves as part of the West, she believed Australia should join the Asian group – “if Asia will have us,” she said.

### **GOVERNOR ADVISES ON ACHIEVING INFLUENCE**

A UNIFEM breakfast was held early on Thursday when Dr Jean D’Cunha, Program Director, UNIFEM, spoke powerfully about some of the dire situations women face. She has undertaken to write an account for UNity in a subsequent issue.

Queensland Premier Anna Blyth officially opened the national conference on Thursday.

Queensland’s new Governor Penelope Wensley, began her address by outlining her own work and experiences with the UN over 12 years.

Acknowledging that the UN needed reform, she said that although it failed in some areas, the UN works. Based on her experience she offered ways in which individuals could *Make a Difference*, the conference theme.

She advocated that people should position themselves, “get inside the tent rather than throw rocks from the outside” so they could influence and shape decisions. People should observe who were the players in a group, get into it by working hard, being useful and having credibility; and to create alliances while remembering that profile was all important.

Emphasising the need for compromise, she gave instances where projects to assist people, such as those concerning HIV/AIDS, meant people had to be willing to give away some points to allow agreements to be made at all. She had experienced having to present a position to the UN General Assembly which, although flawed, had subsequently produced a good agreement, she said.

Governments could not achieve things on their own, they needed community support. She was particularly concerned that business should be drawn into UN activities.

The governor later presented UNAA awards to Kitty Knight, Professor Ken Wiltshire and Virginia Balmain.

### **CONFERENCE OF MANY ASPECTS**

The conference was held over two days and the first day included addresses on *Sustainability* by Professor Bob Miles and Dr Noel Preston; on *Long Life Education* by Professor Colin Power, former deputy director general of UNESCO (Education), on the UN Global Compact (for business) by Dr Leeora Black, Managing Director of the Australian Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility. UNESCO Memories of the World was presented by Professor Amareswar Galla (UQ) and youth discussed by Alex Rabfalowicz.

In addition, the processes and aims of *CEDAW the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women* were outlined by Dr Jean D’Cunha; the story and reach of *Mahobobu’s Promise*, was depicted in a screened ABCTV *Australian Story* about the work of ex- Afghan refugee Mahobobu Rawi, now an Australian citizen, who also spoke. *Governance* was undertaken by Professor Ken Wiltshire; of UQ and UNESCO, and Professor Langmore; and *Climate Change* was addressed by Professor Roger Stone, of University of Southern Queensland (USQ) and Director of the Australian Centre for Sustainable Catchments (ACSC), and student Tony McCarthy, who attended Al Gore climate change ambassador training in Melbourne. Jan Ferguson, managing director of Desert Knowledge Co-operative Research Centre, in Alice Springs, described the work of the centre, explaining the effects of how extreme distances: [www.desertknowledge.com.au](http://www.desertknowledge.com.au)

Aboriginal singer Maroochy Barambah sang the welcome to country and Clayfield Girls' College choir performed songs made famous by a group of nurses, women and children imprisoned in Sumatra.

**PAPERS/REPORTS/POWER POINT TEXTS:** A reminder that conference speakers are invited to forward speeches/papers/notes to UNity – a short introduction with links would be particularly appreciated – so the information and ideas can be made widely available.  
To: [judycnnn@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judycnnn@yahoo.com.au)

## H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### PERVEZ MUSHARRAF'S MIXED LEGACY

For nearly a decade Pervez Musharraf was the most powerful man in Pakistan, writes Chris Morris for the BBC (18/8/08). His resignation marks the end of an era for a country facing enormous economic and security challenges. He will be remembered for many things. He overthrew an elected government in a military coup. He took Pakistan to the brink of war with India, only to launch a sustained peace process a few years later. In the aftermath of the 11 September attacks in New York and Washington he declared his full support for the United States and became a key player in the American-led war on terror. He was also responsible for modernising many sections of Pakistani society. But he brooked no opposition, and weakened important state institutions. And in the end he has fallen victim to hubris, the feeling that he was indispensable and he could do no wrong.

ARTICLE: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7567592.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7567592.stm)

### AL QAEDA AT 20 DEAD OR ALIVE?

Two decades after al-Qaeda was founded in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar by Osama bin Laden and a handful of veterans of the war against the Soviets in Afghanistan, the group is more famous and feared than ever, Peter Bergen writes in the Washington Post (17/8/06). But its grand project -- to transform the Muslim world into a militant Islamist caliphate -- has been, by any measure, a resounding failure. In large part, that's because [Osama bin Laden's](#) strategy for arriving at this Promised Land is a fantasy. [Al-Qaeda's](#) leader prides himself on being a big-think strategist, but for all his brains, leadership skills and charisma, he has fastened on an overall strategy that is self-defeating. Bin Laden's main goal is to bring about regime change in the Middle East and to replace the governments in Cairo and Riyadh with [Taliban](#)-style theocracies. He believes that the way to accomplish this is to attack the "far enemy" (the US), then watch as the supposedly impious, US-backed Muslim regimes he calls the "near enemy" crumble.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/08/15/AR2008081502981.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newslette>  
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### CRUNCH TIME AS FAMILY FIGHTS TO KEEP HOME FROM JEWISH SETTLERS

Khalil Hanun's 35-year legal fight to prevent a Jewish settler group from taking possession of his home in disputed East Jerusalem will enter a critical phase this week when an Israeli court decides whether to keep him in jail for disobeying orders to vacate the property. Mr Hanun's wife Nadia said her husband was imprisoned without warning 11 days ago ... the Jewish settler association Nahalat Shimon is recognised as the legal owner and wants to demolish the Hanuns' home, and the homes of around 40 neighbouring Palestinian families, to build apartments for 200 Jewish families. Hatem Abd El-Qader, the East Jerusalem adviser to the Palestinian President, Mahmoud Abbas, told the *Herald* that this would create continuous Jewish settlement between that area, Sheikh Jarrah, and Palestinian neighbourhoods to the north. "The case of the Hanun family has the backing of the US, the EU, and many other nations - we have even asked the Australian Government to join the petition," he said. In one of the longest-running legal battles in Jerusalem, the Hanun family, who were made refugees by the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, were granted possession of the home in 1956 by the UN Relief and Works Agency.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/17/1218911461024.html>

### A DEVASTATING REPORT ON FRANCE'S ROLE

Is the defendant's dock at the International Criminal Court reserved for leaders of small and

poor countries that defy the West? Not if Rwanda has its way. It wants to charge some of France's most celebrated leaders of the 1990s as collaborators in genocide, writes Stephen Kinzer in the *International Herald Tribune* (15/8/08). Last week the government of Rwanda issued a damning 500-page report documenting France's participation in the 1994 Rwandan genocide. This marks a remarkable turnaround in the deeply politicized world of human rights reporting. Usually, such reporting takes the form of governments or human rights groups based in the West condemning poor countries for having political or social systems that do not meet Western standards. Now a wretched African country has turned the table. All who study the Rwandan genocide, as I did while researching a book about that ill-fated country, come away stunned by what they learn about French support of mass murder. France was so eager to defend a client regime against English-speaking rebels that, as the new report asserts, it gave that regime "political, military, diplomatic and logistic support" and "directly assisted" its genocidal campaign.

ARTICLE: <http://www.ihf.com/articles/2008/08/15/opinion/edkinzer.php>

### **TRIGGER HAPPY AND OIL MAD**

Georgia overplayed its hand this week, and Russia got to build its trumps, writes Paul McGeough in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (16/8/08). Dig deep enough and you come to oil and gas. The war this week between Russia and the headstrong former Soviet republic of Georgia prompted hand-wringing about another awkward demonstration of the limits of American power. But what sounded like a stiff breeze in the capitals of Europe was a collective sigh of relief as leaders recalled their own good sense in resisting an American push back in April for the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation to clasp Georgia to its ample bosom. Were Georgia a member of NATO, as are more than half a dozen other former Soviet republics and satellites, the US and Canada and their 24 European allies now would be, technically at least, at war with Russia. In the NATO charter, a strike at one is a strike at all. Put to one side European squeamishness about war. In Afghanistan the German, Italian, French and Spanish contingents refuse to actually fight. But much of the gas that heats their homes, the oil that fuels their factories and the petrol that drives their cars are delivered through a spaghetti-like tangle of pipelines controlled by Moscow.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/15/1218307228054.html>

### **BOUNDARY ISSUES**

On a bright September day in 1993, not long before he ended his two decades in exile, Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn delivered a rare public address in Vaduz, the capital of Liechtenstein, writes David Remnick in the *New Yorker* (25/8/08). Although Solzhenitsyn was energetic at the lectern, he was all but finished with his epic work as the chronicler of Soviet cruelty. With *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, *Cancer Ward*, *The First Circle*, and, above all, *The Gulag Archipelago*, Solzhenitsyn had not only exposed the secrets of Soviet oppression and ruin; he had also presaged the collapse of Communist ideology and Moscow's empire.

But, in Vaduz, Solzhenitsyn, a principled conservative, ... was deeply aware that the costs of ideology, violence, and empire had not been paid in full ... 'We were recently entertained by a naïve fable of the happy arrival at the "end of history," of the overflowing triumph of an all-democratic bliss; the ultimate global arrangement had supposedly been attained. But we all see and sense that something very different is coming, something new, and perhaps quite stern. No, tranquility does not promise to descend on our planet, and will not be granted us so easily.' Solzhenitsyn died on August 3<sup>rd</sup> ... Vladimir Putin, the former KGB operative and Russia's de-facto president, unabashed by irony, paid tribute to Solzhenitsyn's service to "the ideals of freedom, justice, and humanism." Later that week, while attending the opening ceremony of the Olympic Games in Beijing, Putin discussed with his seatmates and fellow heads of state a non-sporting matter: he had ordered his tanks and troop trucks into South Ossetia, in the Caucasus.

ARTICLE: [http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2008/08/25/080825taco\\_talk\\_remnick](http://www.newyorker.com/talk/comment/2008/08/25/080825taco_talk_remnick)

### **TRADE OR WARFARE: TRIBAL WAYS RULE**

In the 19th century, the French economist Frederic Bastiat expressed a principle applicable in the 21st century: 'Where goods do not cross frontiers, armies will.' In the modern world, economic sanctions are among the first steps taken by one nation against another when diplomacy fails, Michael Shermer writes in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (19/8/08). The US enforced sanctions on Japan after it invaded China in the 1930s. More recently, economic

sanctions have been imposed by the US on Cuba, Iran, and North Korea. In a like manner, Australia has targeted sanctions against Zimbabwe, the former Yugoslavia and North Korea. Economic sanctions send this message: 'if you do not change your behaviour we will no longer trade with you.' And by Bastiat's principle, where our goods do not cross your frontiers, our armies will. Not inevitably, of course, but often enough in history that principle retains its veracity. Economic sanctions are not a necessary or sufficient cause of war, but they are almost always a prelude.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/18/1218911554587.html>

### **STRUGGLING WITH INDIA'S GENDER BIAS**

The number of female foetuses being aborted in India is rising, as ultrasound is increasingly used to predict the sex of babies, Steve Bradshaw, BBC Executive Producer, Life on the Edge, writes (19/8/08). What would you do if your husband's family did not want you to have daughters - and insisted you took steps to make sure it did not happen? ... Vaijanti is an Indian woman who says she faces this dilemma. She lives in the city of Agra, home to the Taj Mahal, perhaps the world's most famous monument to a woman, the wife of a Mughal emperor. "I had a lot of dreams in my heart," Vaijanti says, "just like in the movies... but now I think of love as a betrayal." Vaijanti has taken her husband to court, saying he and his family insisted she have an abortion because a scan showed she was expecting a girl. Having already had one daughter, she says the pressure to abort the second child was intense. So she moved out of the marital home and now lives apart from her husband - with her two girls.

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7570192.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7570192.stm)

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **HOT ROCK INDUSTRY STAKES A CLAIM**

Using just one per cent of Australia's so-called "hot rocks" supply could produce 26,000 times the amount of energy that is now used each year, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (20/8/08).

The figures, compiled by Geoscience Australia, were such a surprise to the office of the Minister for Resources, Martin Ferguson, that staff had them checked six times before releasing them.

"The potential of the geothermal industry in Australia is truly staggering ... It provides clean base-load power and is potentially a very important contributor to Australia's energy mix in a carbon-constrained world," Mr Ferguson said.

Although its potential has been identified, the geothermal industry needs more funding to start large-scale production. At the first conference of the industry - in Melbourne - the Australian Geothermal Energy Association was releasing modelling showing it could produce 5 per cent of all of Australia's energy by 2020. REPORT:

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/19/1218911717520.html><http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/08/19/1218911717520.html>

### **DROUGHT BRINGS COTTON INDUSTRY TO ITS KNEES**

At this time of year cotton farmers would normally be planting next year's crop. Australia's cotton industry, though, is on the brink of collapse because of the drought and many growers have turned to other farming options, the ABC reported (16/8/08).

Angus O'Brien's family has been farming cotton at Warren in north-west NSW since the early 1980s and he says cotton gives a better return per hectare than any other crop. But cotton farming is a water intensive endeavour and the relentless drought had forced growers to switch to other crops. REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/16/2337406.htm>

### **PENGUIN POWER: NORWEGIAN REGIMENT HONOURS PINT-SIZED CHIEF**

A penguin called Nils has waddled into the history books when he was knighted by a visiting royal Norwegian regiment in Scotland, the ABC reported. The king penguin - full name Nils Olav - became the first black-and-white pint-sized Norwegian Sir with wings after inspecting the Norwegian King's Guard, which is visiting Edinburgh for the annual Military Tattoo.

"We have a long-standing history with the Norwegian King's Guard and it is something we are extremely proud of," said David Windmill, head of the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland, the owners of Edinburgh Zoo where Nils lives.

The bird first became an honorary member of the Norwegian regiment in the 1970s, when a lieutenant called Nils Egeliien visited the Scottish Zoo. Norway's head of state was then King Olav V. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/08/16/2337646.htm>