

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

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CALLS FOR DEMOCRATISATION OF UN**

The new president of the General Assembly kicked off the 63rd session of the 192-member forum with a call to democratise the United Nations so that it can deal more effectively with the world's most pressing problems and ensure that the voices of a few do not overwhelm the views of the majority of others.

Miguel D'Escoto Brockmann, a former foreign minister of Nicaragua, pledged in his opening address to the session to dedicate his year as President to representing the interests of "the dispossessed of the world" and fostering solidarity between peoples and member states.

"I am aware of the great expectations which the vast majority of the dispossessed inhabitants of our threatened planet have placed in the United Nations to bring them peace, security and to defend their right to life and to full development," he said. "We must not fail them."

Mr D'Escoto told delegates that he had taken up the post "at this difficult time for humanity," citing a series of deep problems, including widespread hunger and poverty, the impact of climate change and unequal access to water.

"The central and overarching objective of this... [session] will be to democratise our United Nations. In so doing we will ensure that the United Nations maintains its place as the world's most important and indispensable organisation for achieving the levels of peace and security that our peoples are so rightly demanding of us."

Mr D'Escoto noted he would try to transform what he labelled "the prevailing exclusionary logic of selfishness" in the world, saying it had crippled the ability of the General Assembly to fulfil its mandate.

"The state of our world today is deplorable, inexcusable and, therefore, shameful. What Tolstoy denounced as 'mad selfishness' explains why, as trillions of dollars are spent on wars of aggression, more than half the world's people languish in hunger and destitution. Our priorities, sisters and brothers, could hardly be more confused."

The president said assembly members would focus during this session on examining the root causes of major problems, such as the current crisis caused by soaring prices of many basic foods, and its effect on hunger and poverty.

He also said a high-level dialogue will be held during the next year on the subject of democratising the UN. The event will be split into three sessions that consider the Bretton Woods and other international finance institutions, the role of the General Assembly, and the size and format of the Security Council.

### **MIGUEL D'ESCOTO**

Father Miguel d'Escoto, a former Nicaraguan foreign minister, has taken over as the new president of the UN General Assembly.

Father Miguel d'Escoto stopped saying Mass 23 years ago when the Vatican suspended his priestly functions for refusing to quit Nicaragua's revolutionary government. But he never stopped preaching, the Los Angeles Times reports (16/9/08).

From university lecterns, slum soup kitchens and diplomatic forums, he has voiced moral wrath over the plight of the poor and the might of wealthy nations, particularly the US. But his sermons these days convey a mixed message.

After decades of rhetorical combat, the 75-year-old priest is trying to adjust to a more diplomatic role. Since his election in June, he has taken oblique swipes at American policy while promising not to use his new position to bash it head-on.

REPORT:[http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-father16-2008sep16\\_0,1263714.story](http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-father16-2008sep16_0,1263714.story)

D'Escoto is currently backing a proposal to increase UN influence over World Bank and IMF policy. [Los Angeles Times](#) (16/9/08).

### **PROGRESS ON UN REFORM 'BREATH-TAKING'**

The consensus achieved by member states on the issue of Security Council reform was nothing less than a "breakthrough" and marked a dramatic finish to the 62nd session of the General Assembly, former president Srgjan Kerim said this week.

Mr Kerim brought the session to a **close** after the assembly adopted a decision to begin intergovernmental negotiations on council reform in informal plenary during its sixty-third session, but not later than February 28 2009.

Speaking to reporters in New York, Mr. Kerim noted that council reform was the most difficult issue of the 62nd session.

"Member states for 15 years could not reach an agreement on Security Council reform in terms of starting negotiations. And then last night we had this breakthrough," he stated.

It was agreed that "whatever be the outcome of such negotiations, the solution must be one which will garner the widest possible political acceptance by the membership," he added.

Mr Kerim also noted that council reform "cannot be an aim by itself; it must be a part of an overall, [all] encompassing and profound institutional reform of the United Nations."

While council reform was the most difficult issue of the session, the former president said the most dearest to his heart were climate change and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the anti-poverty targets world leaders have pledged to achieve by 2015.

On climate change, he said the assembly had managed "to make a turn around in the political climate," noting the commitments now by member states to negotiate within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to fix the common goals for future greenhouse gas emission targets after the Kyoto Protocol expires.

He said an important concept that was introduced into the discussion was the importance of public-private partnerships to tackle climate change. "Climate change cannot be resolved, dealt with exclusively based on intergovernmental negotiations. It is much more than that."

Turning to the MDGs, he said the assembly, through its various thematic debates, had "prepared the ground" for the high-level event to be held on 25 September, at which world leaders will be joined by representatives from the private sector, foundations and civil society organizations to commit to further actions to achieve the Goals on time.

He said two other "last minute" resolutions adopted last night were on UN system-wide coherence and on the organisation's mandate review.

"I believe these were also breakthroughs which were for years blocking cooperation and even testing the mutual trust among member states in very important areas," he said.

Among the other highlights of the just-concluded session were the adoption of a report on the revitalisation of the assembly, the first-ever thematic debates on human security and human trafficking, and the establishment of a close working relationship between the assembly and the Secretary-General, said the former president.

### **UN DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM SUMMIT PLANNED**

Kermal Dervis, Administrator, United Nations Development Program, writes, 'It is a great pleasure for the United Nations Development Program to co-organise the Business for Millennium Development Summit and the Call to Action to Australian businesses to contribute

to reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) - our common vision for building a better world in the 21st century.'

As United Nations Day on October 24 approaches, he says, 'More than halfway to the target year of 2015, the track record in achieving the eight Millennium MDGs is mixed. Though considerable progress has been achieved, it is uneven and many countries are falling behind. An urgent and renewed global push is needed.'

'This September, government, business and civil society leaders will have the opportunity at the United Nations High-Level Event on the MDGs to join forces and commit to concrete measures that will propel efforts to meet these goals. Given the importance of its creativity, technology and expertise, business has a central role to play in this mission.'

'By including the poor in their core strategies, business can find financial gains while furthering human development. UNDP has recently launched a report of its Growing Inclusive Markets initiative - *Creating Value for All: Strategies for the Doing Business with the Poor*. The report shows the challenges of conducting business where markets suffer from a lack of information, infrastructure and institutions. But it also demonstrates the effectiveness - both for human progress and for wealth creation - of business models that include the world's poor as employees, producers, and consumers. The case studies in this report provide excellent examples of firms that are generating profits, creating new growth potential and improving poor people's lives.'

'This year can be a turning point in the fight against poverty. The business sector in Australia, with all its dynamism and experience, can play a significant role in making that happen.'

'Building on the results of the UN High-Level Event on the MDGs, the Business for Millennium Development Summit and Call to Action are a vital part in further helping to bring the full force of the private sector's vitality to bear in our collective effort to achieve these goals. Working together, we can make this a year of unprecedented progress in promoting a better, more prosperous future for all.'

'The UN Secretary General has declared 2008 as a critical year to make progress on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). It is half-way towards the international community's objective of achieving the Goals by 2015.'

Mark Ingram, Executive Director, Business for Millennium Development, added on behalf Business for Millennium Development and partner companies that he welcomed more participants to the inaugural B4MD Summit at the Park Hyatt Melbourne on October 24, saying this was not about philanthropy. The summit would challenge companies to find new business in a way that both contributes to commercial success and to the Millennium Development Goals and poverty alleviation. .

Among speakers will be Adrian Hodges, Managing Director, International Business Leadership Forum; Bob McMullan, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance; Geoff Wilson, CEO KPMG Australia, Tim Costello, Chief Executive of World Vision Australia; James Wolfensohn, former president of the World Bank (via live video conference), Jeffrey Sachs, Special Advisor to the United Nations (via pre-recorded video) and Jenny Brockie, host of 'Insight', SBS TV.

**DETAILS OF EVENTS:** EMG is managing the Business for Millennium Development Summit 2008 on behalf of B4MD on +61 3 9866 7182; F +61 3 9866 7183; [b4mdregistrations@emgevents.com.au](mailto:b4mdregistrations@emgevents.com.au)

#### **17 NATIONS AGREE ON CONTROL OF PRIVATE MILITARY/SECURITY COMPANIES**

State experts representing 17 countries have agreed on a new set of recommendations to enhance state control over private military and security companies. They have also reaffirmed the obligations of states to ensure that these private contractors abide by international humanitarian law (18/9/08).

The document was finalised by governmental and other experts who had been meeting since September 15 in Montreux, Switzerland, at the invitation of the Swiss Government. This was the fourth intergovernmental meeting under the initiative on private military and security companies launched by the Swiss foreign ministry in early 2006. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has been associated with the initiative since the beginning.

"The Montreux document will enhance the protection of people affected by armed conflict," said Philip Spoerri, the ICRC's director for international law.

"The document clearly reaffirms the fact that military and security contractors dispatched to war zones must comply with international law, and that states have a particular responsibility for ensuring compliance.

"It is now very important that states take concrete measures to prevent violations from occurring and to hold contractors to account for unlawful behaviour".

The Montreux document, which is not legally binding, outlines for the first time ever detailed and practical measures to help states enhance compliance with international humanitarian law and ensure respect for human rights. The measures are relevant when a state hires a private military/security company, when these companies are operating in its territory, or when a company is based in the territory of a state and provides military and security services abroad.

The recommendations contained in the Montreux document include introducing appropriate regulation and licensing regimes to control private military and security companies and enhance their accountability. The document underlines that it is essential to have a staff vetting procedure, to train personnel in humanitarian and human rights law, to draw up standard operating procedures and rules of engagement that comply with the law and to set up internal procedures to discipline personnel who break the law. If serious violations of the law occur, the state concerned has an obligation to prosecute those responsible.

The 17 participating countries included Afghanistan, Angola, Australia, Austria, Canada, China, France, Germany, Iraq, Poland, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine, the UK and the US.

**DETAILS:** Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific  
Pauline Wall on 61(0)293889039/61(0)2418485120; <http://www.icrc.org>

### **NATIONS SHOULD 'GIVE ONE DAY OF ARMS COSTS TO PEACEFUL AID'**

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is calling on governments to allocate one day of their military expenditures – totalling \$US3,668,493,151 – towards addressing a real security threat, such as catastrophic climate change.

"We must have a paradigm shift in resource allocation," WILPF said to mark International Day of Peace. "We can meet this challenge, but only if we are prepared to face the fact that bombs, guns, cluster bombs and land mines will not deter or remove the threat of a tsunami, a hurricane, a flood, a virus, or a water shortage."

WILPF rejects the idea that the military industry and the weapons trade bring jobs, prosperity or security. The arms trade has turned people into mercenaries and parts of our planet into cemeteries.

"Misusing words such as 'safety' and 'protection', military security concepts and weapons profiteers develop machines that threaten and violate the human right to life and freedom," it says. "This year, 2008 marks the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and in order that all peoples enjoy all human rights military and national security concepts that rely on weaponisation and militarisation must shift towards a holistic human security concept that recognises people not profits, sustainability not strife, multilateralism not militarism."

On 30 November 1981, the United Nations General Assembly, in resolution A/RES/36/67, declared an international day of peace. This resolution recognised that "the promotion of

peace, both at an international and a national level, is among the main purposes of the United Nations, in conformity with its Charter". Since 1915, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) has worked to promote peace by non-violent means, promoting political, economic and social justice for all.

World military expenditures are estimated to have been USD 1,339 billion in 2007, or about 202 spent for every person on earth.[1] Article 26 of the UN Charter obliges the UN Security Council to "promote the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security with the least diversion for armaments of the world's human and economic resources", and the Security Council has failed to meet this obligation.

"You get what you pay for, and when governments of the world decide to prioritise peace building through education, health care, strengthening public infrastructures, and sustainable development over the purchase of arms, then these governments will begin walking down the path towards peace and break the military spending- poverty cycle."

WILPF says in the name of "democracy" powerful actors make profits at the expense of our planet, its finite resources and the rights of future generations to exist. In the name of "increasing women's role in peace and security", more women are militarised and sent to war zones, which is a distorted application of the UN Security Council resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security. WILPF believes that the concepts of safety and security must shift so that they include the full enjoyment of all human rights for all, away from military and national security concepts.

Peace is more than the absence of war. On this International Day of Peace, WILPF calls for the peoples of the world to lay down their arms and raise their voices for peace and freedom, for there cannot be one without the other.

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) is the oldest women's peace organisation in the world, established in 1915 to oppose the war raging in Europe. It has been working ever since to study, make known, and abolish the causes of war, and to support human rights and general and complete disarmament.

**DETAILS:** Susi Snyder, 1 rue de Varembe C, Postale 28, 1211 Geneva 20. Switzerland; on +41.22.919.7080;

Skype: susi\_snyder; [www.WILPF.ch](http://www.WILPF.ch); [www.PeaceWomen.org](http://www.PeaceWomen.org); [www.ReachingCriticalWill.org](http://www.ReachingCriticalWill.org)

### **AUSTRALIA CONDEMNS BOMBINGS IN NEW DELHI**

Australia condemns the bombings in the Indian capital, New Delhi, on September 13 and offers its deepest sympathies to the victims of the attacks, their families and the people of India, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said (15/9/08).

The September 13 attacks occurred in three busy shopping centres, including in the central business district. The attacks were clearly intended to inflict maximum casualties on innocent civilians, he said. They killed 24 people and wounded over 150 more.

**DETAILS:** Mr Smith's office on 0262 777500; department on 0262611555; [www.smarttraveller.gov.au](http://www.smarttraveller.gov.au).

### **2008 UNAA MEDIA PEACE AWARDS – DEADLINE EXTENDED**

The nominations deadline for the United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Awards was extended to 5pm, **September 19**.

**DETAILS:** on 0396707878; [office@unaavictoria.org.au](mailto:office@unaavictoria.org.au); [www.unaavictoria.org.au](http://www.unaavictoria.org.au)

### **NGO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE IN NOVEMBER**

A call has gone out for NGO people to participate in an International Conference of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations) in London, UK, from November 10/20, where as many as 200 participants from across the world are expected. They will include health practitioners, professionals in relevant fields, lawyers, psychologists, women and youth development groups, government officials, donor agencies and participating NGOs who will meet to discuss issues pertaining to the welfare of NGOs ... and meet others to learn, teach, inspire and be inspired.

This event will be exploring the potential of a practical approach that will unleash and nurture the human capacity to create, collaborate and change positively, the world at large.

What are the objectives of this meeting? The meeting will provide a medium where participating individuals and NGOs will convene to address and discuss ways of improving key Humanitarian issues and topics with much emphasis on human rights, gender equality, peace and security, social and economic development, youth and children, health education, ethics and value and environmental protection.

**DETAILS:** Rev Dr George Solomon: [richarddolls01@live.com](mailto:richarddolls01@live.com)

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **GLOBAL NETWORK NECESSARY TO CONFRONT CLIMATE CHANGE CRISIS: BAN**

With media interest in climate change waning since last year, cooperation from all sectors of society was essential to tackle the crisis that it poses, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said (15/9/08).

Global warming "is less in the news than last year," Mr Ban **said** at a service held at the Holy Family Church, New York. "Yet the evidence is all around that the problem is worse than most projections."

The phenomenon is also spurring humanitarian crises, such as Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar and hunger in Haiti and the Horn of Africa, he said. On the eve of the start of the 63<sup>rd</sup> session of the General Assembly, Mr Ban said any solution to climate change had to be truly global, with the UN working in tandem with member states.

"But we realise that governments cannot do the job alone," he said, stressing the role of the faith community, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the private sector and others. "We need all of our partners in this monumental effort to address the global challenges of our time."

### **PERMAFROST CARBON ESTIMATES DOUBLED**

A new study by a team of international scientists has revealed the amount of carbon frozen in the world's permafrost is double what was previously thought, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (12/9/08).

The three-year study concluded that the amount of carbon locked up in the world's permafrost is at least 1,500 billion tonnes more than double previous estimates and the equivalent of twice the current amount of Co2 in the world's atmosphere. Permafrost is frozen soil found at high latitudes, close to the north or south poles, and contains the remains of plants and animals which due to the extreme cold do not decompose, trapping carbon in the soil.

This is the most accurate assessment yet of the amount of carbon contained in worldwide permafrost but the actual amount may well be higher, says CSIRO scientist and study team member Dr Pep Canadell. The level of carbon contained in the world's permafrost is of particular significance to climate change as once the carbon it contains begins to be released it is believed there is no way to stop it.

**REPORT:** <http://news.smh.com.au/national/permafrost-carbon-estimates-doubled-20080912-4fhh.html>

### **'GET REAL' AND MOVE BEYOND MITIGATION: ACADEMIC**

If you want to 'get real' on climate change, more work needs to be done on practical and sensible adaptation measures that will help the public plan for an uncertain future, according to an ANU academic (12/9/08).

Dr Leo Dobes, a Visiting Fellow at the ANU Crawford School of Economics and Government, warns that although a lot of attention has been given to reducing greenhouse emissions, little has been done on practical measures to adapt to climate change.

He proposes that to help people deal with uncertainties about the future of the climate, the concept of 'real options' should be applied - creative and flexible solutions that avoid the full up-front cost of adaptation until better information becomes available about the actual nature and timing of climate change.

Dr Dobes said that by approaching adaptation measures in this way, costly mistakes could be avoided.

"An example might be that it's cheaper to build a flimsy non-climate proofed house now, and rebuild it, if necessary, once the true extent and timing of any climate change becomes more certain. And in that case, would it not be better to minimise expenditure on housing, in case cities need to be redesigned to take account of mitigation measures that reduce transport needs and increase housing density?" he said. By focusing on the potential impact of worst case scenarios there was a significant risk that public money would be squandered on unnecessary measures.

"Inflexible planning in the face of uncertainty about the detail of climate change poses the risk of serious misallocation of society's resources. It may not always be easy to identify appropriate 'real options' for measures designed to adapt to climate change. But unless an effort is made to do so, governments will be tempted to spend too much, too soon," he said.

His paper *Getting real about adapting to climate change: using 'real options' to address the uncertainties* is published in the upcoming issue of *Agenda: A Journal of Policy Analysis and Reform*, is at: <http://www.crawford.anu.edu.au/staff/ldobes.php>  
**DETAILS:** Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office, on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

#### **MORE FUNDS HELP GREAT BARRIER REEF RESCUE**

The Great Barrier Reef will benefit from an additional \$7.5 million in funding through the Australian Government's Caring for our Country initiative, Environment Minister Peter Garrett and Agriculture Minister Tony Burke said this week (15/9/08).

The sum of \$7.5 million in funding was on top of the \$23 million announced last month for Reef Rescue, and would provide a further boost to protect the health of the reef, particularly as it battles the impacts of a changing climate," Mr Garrett said in Cairns.

Mr Garrett said up to \$4.5 million would go towards monitoring water quality in rivers and wetlands, monitoring and encouraging improvements in land management and land condition throughout the catchment, and looking at marine water quality and ecosystem health.

A further \$2 million would try out new technologies to improve water quality in the catchment and for developing and applying new water quality monitoring techniques for nutrients, chemicals and sediments, he said.

"Partnerships with traditional owners will see up to \$1 million over this financial year go towards improving sea country management, helping to conserve such species as turtle and dugong," Mr Garrett said.

Minister Burke said the government was working to improve the quality of water flowing into the reef lagoon which was critical to its capacity to resist coral bleaching.

"Farmers are already leading the way in sustainable land management across Australia and this funding will help to continue that good work," he said. "Works to be funded in the reef catchment range from improving nutrient and chemical application on farms (to) using controlled traffic farming and machinery conversions, fencing off waterways, and improving management and community understanding of habitats on the coast and in the waters of the reef lagoon."

"We've asked the regional Natural Resource Management groups, in partnership with agricultural industry groups and the World Wildlife Fund in the reef catchment, to come up

with projects for the current financial year based on an indicative budget for their region. We'll be considering these projects in the next month."

The funding will benefit the Mackay Whitsunday region, Terrain region, Burdekin Dry Tropics region, Fitzroy Basin region, Burnett region and Cape York region. The Federal Government had earmarked \$200 million for Reef Rescue, out of the \$2.25 billion committed over five years for Caring for our Country. **DETAILS:** [www.nrm.gov.au](http://www.nrm.gov.au)

### **EMERGENCY PLANNING FOR COASTAL CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS**

Emergency planning for climate change impacts on coastal areas as well as for the territories administered by the Attorney-General's Department was on the agenda of a public hearing in Canberra on September 18 by the House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee as part of its inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on Australia's coastal zone.

"Emergency Management Australia will have a crucial role to play in disaster prevention, response and recovery in the face of projected climate change impacts on coastal areas of Australia, particularly in response to projected sea level rise", Committee Chairperson George said earlier.

"Australia's territories of Ashmore and Cartier Islands, Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, the Coral Sea Islands, Jervis Bay, and Norfolk Island territories may all be vulnerable to the impact of climate change, and there could be major consequences for the biodiversity, community and infrastructure of Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands and Jervis Bay", she said.

The terms of reference provide for the committee to inquire into climate change and environmental pressures experienced by Australian coastal areas, with particular regard to:

- existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, taking in the catchment-coast-ocean continuum
  - the environmental impacts of coastal population growth and mechanisms to promote sustainable use of coastal resources
  - the impact of climate change on coastal areas and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation, particularly in response to projected sea level rise
  - mechanisms to promote sustainable coastal communities
- governance and institutional arrangements for the coastal zone.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/ccwea>.

**BACKGROUND:** Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4580; [ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au).

### **EMISSIONS TRADING HANDOUTS 'COST EARTH'**

Industry handouts to help cope with the introduction of an emissions trading scheme would cost half the Federal Government budget for infrastructure and transport, modelling submitted to Canberra shows.

The Sydney Morning Herald (18/9/08) says a submission published this week by the Climate Institute criticises work done by the Business Council of Australia warning that companies would move overseas because of a trading system.

"We need a laser-like focus on driving clean investment and opportunities in the low-carbon economy, not 'loser-lite' strategies that shield polluters with unjustified claims and inaction," the chief executive of the Climate Institute, John Connor, said.

A report by McLennan Magasanik Associates on behalf of the institute found the number of free permits the government was proposing to give away would deprive it of between \$3 billion and \$6 billion in revenue. That is roughly half the amount the government spends on big ticket areas such as transport and about a third of what it spends on education.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/17/1221330929891.html>

## C. HUMAN RIGHTS

### **LAW MINISTER RESIGNS OVER SECURITY ARRESTS**

As Opposition leader Anwar Ibrahim moved closer to a showdown of parliamentary strength, Malaysia's embattled Government had another blow when its law minister resigned over the use by police of the powers to detain without trial, the Sydney Morning Herald (16/9/08).

Zaid Ibrahim, a minister assisting the Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi for legal affairs, resigned over last week's arrest of two journalists and an opposition member of parliament under the Internal Security Act.

This came as Mr Anwar was convening a meeting in a Kuala Lumpur sports stadium to protest against the arrests, on the eve of his national day deadline, when he has said enough MPs of the ruling Barisan Nasional or National Front will cross to his People's Alliance coalition for him to form government.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/15/1221330749040.html>

### **CLIMATE CHANGE SECRETARIAT EXCLUDES PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES**

Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes has criticised the Garnaut Climate Change Review secretariat for not providing the latest draft report, released on September 5, in formats that are accessible to people with disabilities (12/9/08).

"I recently said that, if things did not start to improve, the Australian Human Rights Commission would have to start naming government publishers that are not taking the effort to make their documents sufficiently accessible for people with disability," said Commissioner Innes.

"The Garnaut Review Supplementary Draft Report, Targets and trajectories, was released a week ago, but many people with disabilities still can't access it because it is still only available in pdf format", said Commissioner Innes. "These sort of documents should be published in RTF or HTML as well as pdf so that they can be read by all Australians."

**DETAILS:** <http://www.humanrights.gov.au>

### **OMBUDSMAN ADDRESSES CRITERIA FOR IMMIGRATION DETENTION**

Federal Parliament's Joint Migration Committee was scheduled to examine the Ombudsman's review role in overseeing immigration detention decisions at a public hearing on September 17 in Canberra. The hearing is part of the committee's current inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

In reforms to immigration detention policy, announced earlier this year, the responsibility of the Commonwealth Ombudsman was enhanced to include review of all cases where a person has been detained for six months or more. Under these reforms, people will only be held in detention until they have passed a health check, had their identity established and been deemed not to be a risk to the Australian community.

The Ombudsman has proposed that, under the new detention values, unless there is a reasonable suspicion of risk to the community, then a person should be released into community detention.

Committee Chairperson Michael Danby said, "The inquiry aims to ensure that Australia has a humane and compassionate approach to immigration detention policy. The length of time any person spends in a detention centre should be kept to a minimum and controlled by stringent criteria.

"The Ombudsman has an essential role in oversight and in investigating cases where detainees are held for a substantial length of time. The committee is anxious to ascertain that review processes are effective and that the Ombudsman's office has the appropriate resources and powers to fulfil this important role".

The hearing is part of an inquiry into shaping Australia's immigration detention policy and infrastructure for the future. The committee will release its first report before the end of the

year. The second and third reports will address issues of transparency and service provision available in immigration detention, and options for expanding community and alternative forms of detention.

**BACKGROUND:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/reports.htm>

**DETAILS:** Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4560; [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au).

#### **4 CORNERS PROGRAM 'CONFIRMS NEED FOR ROYAL COMMISSION'**

The ABC's 4 Corners report last Monday demonstrated Australia's refugee policy could not be swept under the carpet with a few cosmetic changes, Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator of Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, this week.

"The Howard detention policies infringed the most basic and minimal of human rights," she said. "No where is this more clearly demonstrated than in the film footage of the brutal removal of Cornelia Rau from Baxter."

She said Australia needed a royal commission as a reminder of "what happened under this brutal regime but to show conclusively why Mandatory Detention legislation must be repealed. Imprisoning people without charge, without the oversight of a judicial process, indefinitely and arbitrarily must stop."

**DETAILS:** Pamela Curr, Campaign coordinator, Asylum Seeker Resource Centre on 03 93266006; [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au).

#### **ORTHODOX BISHOP IN DELEGATION FOR DETAINED SERB**

The Bishop of the Serbian Orthodox Church in Australia and New Zealand, Bishop Irinej was due to accompany a delegation from the 'Serbs for Justice' advocacy group to Parliament House in Canberra to meet several parliamentarians this week (17/9/08).

The delegation was concerned to clarify the circumstances of an Australian citizen, Daniel Snedden, whom they said had been detained during the time of the Howard Government. Serbs for Justice claimed in a media release Mr Snedden was being held as a result of an extradition request by Croatia. Mr Snedden is challenging his extradition on grounds that he cannot receive a fair trial in the Balkan nation because of his former fame in Serbia.

**DETAILS:** Delegation Co-coordinator: Jack H Smit, Project SafeCom Inc. on 08 9881-5651; 'Serbs for Justice': Ilija Glisic, Nada Lukich-Bruce on mobile 0422 054 468.

#### **PAY EQUITY: PART ANSWER TO SKILLS SHORTAGE**

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations was to appear before the House Employment and Workplace Relations Committee (18/9/08) to discuss recent trends in pay equity, state and territory, occupation and industry comparisons, international comparisons, the adequacy of current data collections and possible priority areas.

"The committee is keen to assess the current situation and make recommendations that will ensure women have equal opportunities in pursuing their chosen employment. Pay equity is a complex and ongoing issue and the current skills shortage makes it essential that Australia address this as soon as possible. Australia has the opportunity to lead the way in what is currently a global challenge," a committee spokesperson said.

The committee is enquiring into the causes of any potential disadvantages in relation to women's participation in the workforce including, but not limited to:

The adequacy of current data to reliably monitor employment changes that may impact on pay equity issues;

- The need for education and information among employers, employees and trade unions in relation to pay equity issues;
- Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women;
- The adequacy of recent and current equal remuneration provisions in state and federal workplace relations legislation;
- The adequacy of current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have taken maternity leave and/or returned to work part time and/or sought flexible work hours; and

The need for further legislative reform to address pay equity in Australia.

The committee will commence the interstate hearings on September 26 and interested persons and organisations are invited to make written submissions.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr>; [ewr.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:ewr.reps@aph.gov.au).

**BACKGROUND:** Committee Secretary on 02 6277 4162.

### **RELIGION AND HUMAN RIGHTS IN AUSTRALIA**

The Race Discrimination Commissioner, Tom Calma, called for as many Australians as possible to become involved in a discussion about the current state of freedom of religion and belief in Australia when he launched the Australian Human Rights Commission's Freedom of religion and belief in the 21st century Discussion Paper in Canberra (17/9/08).

"The fundamental human right of freedom of religion and belief is protected by a number of international treaties and declarations," said Commissioner Calma. "It encompasses freedom of thought on all matters and the freedom to demonstrate and express our religion and belief individually, with others, in private or in public."

"The intent of this discussion paper is to examine and report upon the extent to which this right can be enjoyed in Australia today by drawing from practical everyday experiences and observations," he said. "This is easy for some, while others feel religion and human rights don't mix, like oil and water."

Calling for submissions from the public, the commissioner said the intersection of religion and belief with human rights was illustrated daily in our news headlines.

"The involvement of religious institutions in school curriculums and practices, religious and ethical concerns about scientific research, the status of Muslim communities in society since the events of September 11 2001, the involvement of religion in debates about homosexuality or abortion, and our politicians declaring their faith on the campaign trail – these are just some of the stories that involve us every day at the intersection of religion and belief with human rights," said Commissioner Calma.

"Given that these issues are continually in the headlines, it is timely that they be comprehensively evaluated in terms of their impacts on the practice, expression and perception of religion and spirituality in Australia," said Mr Calma. "A better understanding of these issues and the way they influence, and are influenced by, our attitudes and laws will assist us as to advance our nation's social and cultural prosperity."

He emphasised that gaining a comprehensive understanding of these issues could not be achieved merely by consultation with academics, religious institutions and government.

"To achieve the intention of our discussion paper, we need to hear from as many people as possible, from as many walks of life, with as many different experiences to share as we can. To read the discussion paper and make submissions\*.

The Freedom of religion and belief in the 21st century project is being run in partnership with the Australian Multicultural Foundation, RMIT University and Monash University.

**SUBMISSIONS** by **January 31 2009**.

**ELECTRONIC SUBMISSIONS:** [www.humanrights.gov.au/frb](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/frb); [frb@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:frb@humanrights.gov.au)

Submissions can also be posted to Race Discrimination Unit: Education and Partnerships Section, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001. **DETAILS:** 02 9284 9600 / 1800 620 241.

### **PUBLIC HEARING TO DISCUSS REWARDS FOR WHISTLEBLOWERS**

At a hearing in Canberra, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs were to hear details of a US reward scheme that encourages public servants to report improper practices of government agencies (18/9/08).

Associate Professor Thomas Faunce was scheduled as the main witness before the committee at its hearing into whistle blower protections. Professor Faunce is an advocate of the US model of 'Qui Tam' legislation that financially rewards whistleblowers who expose major government or corporate fraud with a proportion of the public funds recovered.

Committee Chairperson Mark Dreyfus QC said the committee was interested in exploring a range of options to encourage and better support public servants who speak out about wrongdoing in the workplace. Evidence before the committee indicated that the current protections available for whistleblowers were inadequate.

"The committee has an important role to play in developing protections for employees who speak out about any illegal, immoral or illegitimate practices in the public sector" Mr Dreyfus said. "The inquiry also presents a valuable opportunity to assist public agencies to be more responsive to the concerns of their employees.

"Better support for people who speak out would help entrench a culture of trust in the public service and further build transparency, accountability and public confidence in government administration – essential principles of a strong democratic society".

**BACKGROUND:** [www.aph.gov.au/laca](http://www.aph.gov.au/laca); Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 2358.

### **WEBWATCH BLACK LIST**

The Australian Human Rights Commission has, this week, added a publicly available WebWatch list on its website where government websites that post material that is inaccessible to people with disabilities will be named as they come to the commission's attention.

"Last month I said publicly that government departments and agencies needed to lift their game in providing equal access to public information for people with disability," said Human Rights Commissioner and Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes.

The Australian Human Rights Commission welcomed the passage by the Senate of a motion drawing attention to the need for ensuring non-discriminatory access to parliamentary documents.

The Senate agreed to the following motion, put by Tasmania's Senator Stephen Parry at the request of Shadow Parliamentary Secretary for Families and Community Services, Senator Cory Bernardi:

That the Senate:

- (a) notes the difficulties experienced by people with a disability, particularly people with vision impairment, in accessing some formats of Senate documents online; and
- (b) calls on the government and the Department of the Senate to ensure all Hansard and Senate committee documents are made accessible via the Internet to people with a disability as soon as they become public.

**DETAILS:** **WebWatch** can be accessed at [www.humanrights.gov.au/disability\\_rights/webaccess/webwatch.htm](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/disability_rights/webaccess/webwatch.htm)

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **ASIA**

#### **PAKISTAN TRIBAL CHIEFS WARN US ON RAIDS**

Leaders of an estimated 500,000 tribesmen who have so far remained largely neutral over the conflict in Afghanistan warned last night they were poised to support al-Qa'ida and the Taliban unless US forces retreated from their strategy of attacking targets inside Pakistan, The Australian reported (17/9/08).

In a major jolt to Washington's new policy of allowing cross-border raids in defiance of the government in Islamabad, key tribal elders were reported to have met and warned that they were also prepared to raise an army to fight coalition forces in Afghanistan.

"If America doesn't stop attacks in the tribal areas, we will prepare a lashkar (army) to attack US forces in Afghanistan," Pashtun tribal chief Malik Nasrullah Khan was reported as saying in Miranshah, which has been the target of repeated US attacks in the past week.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24357623-2703,00.html>

## **GEORGIA**

### **RUSSIA SIGNS UP ABKHAZIA AND SOUTH OSSETIA**

Russia has signed friendship treaties with Abkhazia and South Ossetia, sealing diplomatic ties with the breakaway Georgian regions, the BBC reported (18/9/08). The accords include a pledge of military assistance from Russia.

Georgia's President Mikhail Saakashvili told the BBC he was "deeply troubled" by the treaties, calling Russia's move "classic invasion and annexation". Russian troops ousted Georgian forces from both regions during intense fighting which erupted on 7 August.

The treaties grant Russia the right to build and improve military bases in Abkhazia and South Ossetia, the Itar-Tass news agency reports.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7620972.stm>

### **UN AGENCIES HEAD FOR SOUTH OSSETIA**

A team comprising representatives of key United Nations agencies is heading to South Ossetia and other areas affected by the recent conflict in Georgia, the world body announced, adding that a broader fact-finding mission to the region is also being planned (16/9/08).

The objective of the mission "is to gain first-hand knowledge of the humanitarian and human rights situations and needs on the ground, including the position of those displaced by the conflict and other vulnerable groups," according to a statement issued by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's spokesperson.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates some 192,000 people were forced to flee their homes during the conflict that began on August 8 and involved Georgia, South Ossetian and Russian forces.

The upcoming mission, coordinated with the Russian and Georgian authorities, were to visit Moscow, South Ossetia and Tbilisi. The results will feed into the revision of the nearly \$59 million humanitarian flash appeal launched by the UN and its partners in August to aid victims of the conflict.

Led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the team includes representatives from UNHCR, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), the UN Development Program (UNDP), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the World Food Program (WFP), as well as the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). The mandate of the UN Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) is set to expire on October 15, the same day as an international conference regarding the Caucasus nation is to be held in Geneva.

UNHCR has reported that its teams have now entered the so-called "buffer zone" north of the Georgian town of Gori, where thousands uprooted by last month's fighting have taken shelter, after having been unable to access the Russian-controlled area for weeks due to insecurity.

UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler said the agency plans to conduct regular assessment missions to the buffer zone between Gori and the breakaway region of South Ossetia.

"There is still a great deal of fear among the people currently residing in these villages," he said. "Beatings, looting and arson by marauding militias have created an atmosphere of fear and insecurity."

Villagers informed the agency that 70 to 80 per cent of this year's harvest in the visited areas was gone. In addition, there are still a lot of mines and unexploded ordnance, preventing people from going into their fields. Villagers now rely on firewood for cooking and heating, since the local gas pipeline was no longer functioning. There were also no health services inside the buffer zone, and the population depended on medical aid and assistance from Gori. [REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28066&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28066&Cr=Georgia&Cr1=)

#### **ICRC AIDS WESTERN GEORGIA**

In the month leading up to the withdrawal of Abkhaz forces from the villages of Khurcha and Ganmukhuri on September 9, ICRC delegates and field officers from the sub-delegation in Zugdidi visited both villages almost daily to provide humanitarian assistance, the IRIC reported (17/9/08).

In addition to meeting regularly with representatives from the authorities and the Russian forces, the team distributed food to 690 residents and displaced families in Ganmukhuri, and to 150 residents in Khurcha. ICRC also distributed food and non-food items (blankets, buckets, hygiene kits and jerrycans) to 41 displaced families staying at two collective centres in Zugdidi. The organisation also helped to restore the water supply and improve living conditions at these centres.

ICRC escorted the Zugdidi health service ambulance to villages where security was poor, to ensure that people needing an ambulance could get to hospital.

**DETAILS:** Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific  
Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, on 61 (0)2 9388 9039/Mobile 61 (O)2 418 485 120.

#### **CRIMEA PASSPORTS CLAIM BY UKRAINE**

A Crimean Peninsula port used by Russia to house navy ships is complicating tensions that have flared in Ukraine since Russia's occupation of Georgia. Ukraine has accused Russia of distributing Russian passports in Crimea, where there is a strong Russian population, as they did in South Ossetia. Ukraine could refuse Russia access to the base when its lease expires in 2017. Ukraine fears that Russia hopes to ignite separatist fervor in Crimea. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (16/9/08).

#### **MIDDLE EAST**

##### **YEMEN BOMBING CONDEMNED**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the Security Council have strongly condemned the terrorist bombing outside the United States embassy in the Yemeni capital, Sana'a, which killed at least 16 people and wounded many others (17/9/08).

"Attacks on diplomatic facilities and personnel worldwide are against international law and are totally unacceptable," Mr Ban's spokesperson said in a **statement**. "The Secretary-General calls on the Yemeni authorities to spare no effort in bringing those responsible to justice."

Mr Ban offered his condolences to the families of the victims and wished the injured a full recovery. Ambassador Michel Kafando of Burkina Faso, which holds the rotating council presidency this month, read out a **statement** in which the 15-member panel also strongly condemned the attack.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28084&Cr=Ki-Moon&Cr1=Error>

##### **'FOREIGN PARTNER' HELPED DESTROY SYRIAN NUCLEAR REACTOR: CIA**

The destruction of a suspected Syrian nuclear reactor last year was the result of an intelligence collaboration that included a 'foreign partner' who first identified the facility's purpose, CIA director general Michael Hayden said, the ABC reported (18/9/08).

The reactor at the desert outpost of Al-Kibar was flattened in an air strike on September 6, 2007. Senior US intelligence officials had said the raid was carried out by Israel on its own initiative.

"Our foreign partnerships ... were critical to the final outcome," Mr Hayden said in a speech for delivery to the World Affairs Council of Los Angeles. A US intelligence official declined to specify the partner Mr Hayden referred to or to say whether it was Israel.

He said there had been no signs that Syria was trying to replace the destroyed reactor.  
**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/18/2367642.htm?section=world>

### **SETTLERS ATTACK PALESTINIAN VILLAGE**

Scores of Jewish settlers rampaged through the West Bank on the weekend after a nine-year-old Jewish boy was stabbed by a Palestinian intruder, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (15/9/08). The boy suffered light injuries.

A Palestinian youth was killed and eight Palestinians were injured in the violence which erupted after a Palestinian man infiltrated the Jewish settlement of Shalhevet Yam, which is within the West Bank near the city of Nablus and is classified as an illegal outpost under Israeli law. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/14/1221330653198.html>

### **HEZBOLLAH ARMS BARRIER TO LEBANON RECONCILIATION**

Hezbollah and its arsenal remain the central obstacles to efforts to reconcile Lebanon's political divisions, in particular the Hezbollah-led minority coalition and the western-backed parliamentary majority. In a 2006 resolution that ended fighting, the UN mandated that Hezbollah be disarmed -- a call that the group has resisted. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (16/9/08).

### **MALIKI CONSOLIDATES POWER**

Having consolidated political authority, and with Iraq's military and police security forces gaining increased autonomy, President Nouri al-Maliki is exercising more control over Iraq's political calendar and sharply limiting the likely future role of a U.S. presence in Iraq. [Los Angeles Times](#) (free registration) (9/16)

## **AFRICA**

### **ZIMBABWE: SEE ARTICLES IN FOCUS PAGE**

### **UN CALLS PEACE MEETING OVER SOMALIA**

A United Nations-chaired international group of countries and organisations supporting the consolidation of peace in conflict-wracked Somalia has met in neighbouring Djibouti to discuss how to put a recent reconciliation agreement by the Horn of Africa nation's warring political groups into practice.

The International Contact Group (ICG), led by Ahmedou Ould-Abdallah, the Secretary-General's Special Representative, met to confer on how best to implement the so-called Djibouti Agreement signed between the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the rebel group known as the Alliance for the Re-Liberation of Somalia (ARS) last month.

Somalia has not had a functioning national government since 1991, and the country was further plunged into violence when the TFG, backed by Ethiopian forces, dislodged the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) from Mogadishu and much of the country last December.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28096&Cr=somalia&Cr1=>

### **FRANCE CALLS ON WORLD OVER SOMALI PIRATES**

French President Nicolas Sarkozy called on the global community to address the piracy crisis in the Gulf of Aden, where commercial shippers are under constant threat of hijacking and kidnapping. French commandos led a raid on Somali pirates, freeing a French couple that had been taken hostage. [Bloomberg](#) (9/16)

### **BAN RECOMMENDS 6000 TROOPS FOR CHAD**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon proposed that the Security Council consider sending 6,000 UN troops to replace a European Union force in eastern Chad and north-eastern Central

African Republic (CAR), which have both been wracked by violence and civilian displacement in recent years (17/9/08).

The mandate of the EU's military force, known as EUFOR, is set to expire on March 15 2009, and currently comprises 3,300 troops.

The blue helmets who would take their place will require an "over the horizon" capability to be able to deploy quickly "should the security situation rise to levels beyond the capacity of a UN force," especially during the transition period, Mr Ban wrote in his latest **report** on the nascent UN Mission in CAR and Chad (MINURCAT).

The Secretary-General said the council should leave any resolution authorising this new force in draft form until the world body has firm guarantees on troop contributions and other support from member states.

He also noted that while insecurity and instability in the two nations are spurred by many factors, positive steps have been taken towards bolstering peace and stability.

"Regional and local tensions, poverty, weak institutions and poor infrastructure compound the difficulties faced by local authorities in finding peaceful and sustainable mechanisms to address the causes and consequences of insecurity and violence," Mr Ban wrote.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28090&Cr=chad&Cr1=minurcat>

## SOUTH AMERICA

### **BOLIVIA MOVES TOWARDS PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT**

Leaders of Bolivia's rebellious provinces -- Beni, Chuquisaca, Santa Cruz, Tarija and Pando -- met with Bolivia's vice president and made strides toward a peaceful curtailment to a conflict that has recently threatened widespread violence. The governors want a return to a regional, not federal, tax on natural gas and want to stop President Evo Morales's constitutional reform process. The parties agreed to discuss the matter when Morales returned from a conference with leaders of most other South American countries. [The Christian Science Monitor/Associated Press](#) (16/9/08).

President Evo Morales and opposition governors from rich eastern regions have agreed on steps to resolve the country's political crisis. The governor of the natural gas-rich Tarija province said he would sign a deal on issues to be discussed, on behalf of other rebel governors, the BBC reported (17/9/08).

They agreed to the talks despite the arrest of a northern governor. Wealthy eastern areas have opposed Mr Morales' left-wing reforms, sparking violent anti-government protests. Last week, Mr Morales declared a state of emergency in the northern region of Pando, where at least 16 people have been killed in anti-government protests. Pando governor Leopoldo Fernandez was arrested on Tuesday. He is accused of hiring the hitmen who killed at least 16 farmers on their way to a pro-government rally. He denies the charge.

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7619853.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7619853.stm)

## E. HEALTH & MEANS

### **MORE BABIES FALL ILL**

Anxious parents queued with their babies at hospitals across China as another 21 infant formula manufacturers, including the country's biggest dairy producer Mengniu, Beijing Olympic Games supplier Yili, and a China-Australia joint venture company, tested positive for contaminated baby milk powder, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (18/9/08).

China's health minister, Chen Zhu, and its top quality chief, Li Changjiang, said 6244 babies, five times more than previously announced, had fallen ill after being fed melamine-laced infant formula. Of those, 1327 babies remained in hospital, 158 with acute renal failure. Three have died. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/17/1221330927680.html>

### **INFANTS' DEATHS REKINDLE ANGER OVER FOOD SAFETY**

A tainted-milk scandal in China has killed two babies and sickened more than 1,250 others, triggering a new wave of public anger over food safety in a country that had pledged to clean up its food industry, the Canadian Globe and Mail reported (15/9/08).

The public outrage was heightened by revelations that Chinese local authorities had known of the toxic milk and had refused to order a recall of the tainted formula, even after complaints in early August from a minority shareholder in the company that produced it. [REPORT: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080915.wmilk0916/BNStory/International/home](http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20080915.wmilk0916/BNStory/International/home)

### **MALARIA SITUATION 'STILL ENORMOUS': WHO**

A new WHO report released this week finds that the global burden of malaria remains enormous, but that access to malaria control interventions, especially bed nets in Africa, increased sharply between 2004 and 2006, the period covered in the report.

"With dramatic increases in funding and intense momentum towards reducing the malaria burden in recent years, we have a greater need for reliable information and analysis," said WHO Director General Margaret Chan. "This report begins to answer that need. Progress in malaria control has accelerated dramatically since 2006, especially in the wake of the UN Secretary General's call for universal malaria control coverage by the end of 2010. We expect these expanded efforts to be reflected in future reports."

The *WHO's World Malaria Report 2008*, which draws upon data collected through 2006, paints a complex picture. Some highlights are:

- New methods\* estimate the number of malaria cases is 247 million for 2006;
- Small children remain by far the most likely to die of the disease;
- Malaria deaths have declined in several countries, and a few nations in Africa have managed to cut malaria deaths in half by following recommended measures;
- As of 2006, increases in funding resulted in accelerated access of malaria interventions including bed nets and effective medicines; and
- Access in Africa to artemisinin-based combination therapy (ACT), which is recommended by WHO, reached only 3% of children in need.

The report finds that recent increases in malaria funding were beginning to translate to coverage of key malaria interventions, especially bed nets, by 2006. The percentage of children protected by insecticide-treated nets increased almost eightfold, from 3% in 2001 to 23% in the 18 African countries with surveys in 2006. Procurement of antimalarial medicines also increased sharply between 2001 and 2006. Approximately 100 million persons were protected by indoor spraying of insecticide, including 22 million in Africa.

However, much more work remains to be done. In Africa only 125 million people were protected by bed nets in 2007, while 650 million are at risk.

"Malaria is a primary cause of child mortality, said Ann M. Veneman, Executive Director of UNICEF. "If the availability of bed nets and other key interventions can be increased, lives can be saved."

For the first time, three African countries reported dramatic reductions in malaria deaths by 50% or more nationwide - Eritrea, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe achieved this result between 2000 and 2006/2007 through a mix of bed net distribution, indoor spraying, improved access to treatment and advances in disease surveillance. Furthermore, significant improvements were observed in other African countries and areas such as Madagascar, Zambia, and Zanzibar (United Republic of Tanzania).

An additional six countries showed that the numbers of malaria deaths had fallen nationwide by 2006: Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, the Philippines, Suriname, Thailand and Vietnam.

"We know that malaria control interventions work and that we can make rapid progress towards ending malaria deaths," said Ray Chambers, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Malaria. "Now is the time to expand these results to all of Africa and the rest of the world."

**DETAILS:** Dick Thompson on +4122 791 1492; +4179 475 5534; [thompsond@who.int](mailto:thompsond@who.int).

Fact sheets and other WHO media material: at [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific

Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, on 61 (0)2 9388 9039/Mobile 61 (0)2 418 485 120.

### **SECURITY 'WORSENERD IN PAST 18 MONTHS' SAYS ICRC**

The security situation in Afghanistan has worsened over the last year and a half, and the armed conflict has remained intense in 2008, ICRC reports (17/9/08). Regular fighting between armed groups and national and international forces has continued in more than half of the country. Even in provinces not affected by open combat, roadside bombs and suicide bombings are regular occurrences.

Early this year, fighting in the west of Afghanistan became as intense as it had been in the south, south east and east. Hostilities continue to claim the lives of Afghans, international aid workers and foreigners. Access to remote areas remains a major problem in most parts of the country.

The ICRC continued to respond to the needs of people affected by the armed conflict, though security constraints still hamper humanitarian operations in many areas. The organisation continued to support selected hospitals and six physical rehabilitation centres that mainly work with landmine victims.

The ICRC also continued to renovate water and sanitation services in rural and urban areas and in places of detention. Visits to people detained by the Afghan authorities, the International Security and Assistance Force or the United States-led coalition remain a top priority, along with efforts to restore or maintain contact between members of families separated by years of armed conflict.

The food shortage in the north has become an issue of great concern. Afghanistan was already suffering a food crisis due to the severe drought that has gripped the country since 2001. Unless the next harvest is a good one, the situation will demand an emergency response. The ICRC and the Afghan Red Crescent Society have launched a joint appeal to assist four provinces in northern Afghanistan in the coming months.

Afghanistan is one of the ICRC's biggest operations. From its main delegation in Kabul and other offices countrywide, the organisation visits detainees, restores links between dispersed families and runs health and rehabilitation projects. An overview of the latest activities.

**DETAILS:** Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific

Pauline Wall, Communications Officer, on 61 (0)2 9388 9039; [sydney.syd@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.syd@icrc.org).

### **WARNING ON AIDS IN ASIA-PACIFIC**

Australia must act to prevent HIV epidemics in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly in Papua New Guinea, from worsening and creeping onto its shores, the head of the Red Cross global HIV program says, The Age reported (18/9/08).

Dr Bernard Gardiner, an Australian based in the Red Cross' Geneva headquarters, said a recent cluster of infections among heterosexual Australian men who had visited PNG, reinforced why Australia could not be complacent about neighbouring epidemics.

Dr Gardiner's warning came as the Federal Government's chief HIV adviser, former health minister Michael Wooldridge, said the cluster of infections should be assessed and the implications for Australia considered.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theage.com.au/national/warning-on-aids-in-asiapacific-20080917-4jp4.html>

## **SOMALIA: ICRC DELIVERS FOOD, WATER, HEALTH AND HOPE**

The situation in Somalia continues to deteriorate and is among the worst in the world in humanitarian terms. A growing number of towns and cities in the centre and south of the country have seen armed clashes. Fighting in the capital Mogadishu remains particularly intense, the ICRC reported (17/9/08).

Large numbers of civilians have been killed or wounded in crossfire and hundreds of thousands of people have had to flee their homes. Chronic drought is making their problems worse. Meanwhile, the cost of living has soared, leaving many unable to buy food and other essentials. ICRC assessment teams report that in several regions many displaced families are surviving on less than one meal a day and spend more and more of their meagre income on drinking water. Many resident communities are struggling to give refuge to the increasing numbers of families fleeing the fighting.

The failure of the major mid-year rains led the ICRC to launch a second major drought relief operation this year. During the 35-day water distribution program due to end in mid-October, the organisation aims to provide 70 million litres of water survival rations to 500 locations.

**DETAILS:** Pedram Yazdi, ICRC Somalia, on + 254 20 272 3963 or +254 722 518 142.

## **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **ANNA BLIGH 'MUST ACT TO PROTECT FREE SPEECH'**

At a time when freedom of speech and the right to know are under serious threat, Kevin Rudd's consideration of options to strengthen protection for journalists and their sources in reporting the news, if enacted, will be good for Australian democracy (12/9/08).

In the same spirit, Queensland Premier Anna Bligh should withdraw legislative amendments before parliament stipulating that witnesses in Queensland's Crime and Misconduct Commission hearings will not have the right to remain silent or refuse to answer questions.

The Queensland Government has asked its Law Reform Commission to consider so-called shield laws for journalists - something the commission failed to act on three years ago. But so far, the Government is standing firm on the legislation, under which journalists who refuse to reveal confidential sources - a longstanding ethic - would be liable for criminal prosecution, a \$6375 fine or a year in jail.

The CMC was created to protect society. Time and again, in Queensland and elsewhere, crime and misconduct has come to light only through the work of journalists and the courage of their confidential sources.

As Greg Baxter, News Limited's director of corporate affairs, wrote to Ms Bligh on behalf of Australia's Right to Know coalition of print and electronic media, the CMC might not even exist if not for members of the media. Strangling their ability to do their job effectively will help nobody but wrongdoers

**EDITORIAL:** [theaustralian.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx?](http://theaustralian.newspaperdirect.com/epaper/viewer.aspx?)

### **AL JAZEERA AIRS VIDEO OF KIDNAPPED AUSTRALIAN**

Al Jazeera television has aired a video showing an Australian journalist kidnapped in Somalia last month, the ABC reported (17/9/08). The video showed Australian photographer Nigel Brennan alongside his Canadian colleague Amanda Lindhout, who was also kidnapped.

The station said the pair appealed to their governments to work towards gaining their release. Mr Brennan, Ms Lindhout and Somali reporter Abdifatah Mohammed Elmi, who was working as their translator, were seized on August 23 by gunmen near Mogadishu.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/17/2366592.htm>

## **AUSTRALIAN WRITER DETAINED IN THAILAND**

Australian writer Harry Nicolaidis was detained on August 31 as he was about to board a flight to Australia and has been held in a remand centre in Bangkok to await trial, according to news reports (12/9/08).

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) said he was accused under Thailand's lese majeste laws of offending the country's monarchy in a novel released three years ago.

The IFJ reported Thailand's lese majeste laws are among the strictest in the world. The constitution dictates reverence for the king must not be violated, while the criminal code allows for a penalty of three to 15 years' jail for "defaming, insulting or threatening" the king, queen, heir-apparent or regent. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

**NEPAL:** The Nepalese Government released a report on minimum wages for journalists this week, after an application for public release was made through the country's Right to Information Act (12/9/08). The Minister for Information and Communication, Krishna Bahadur Mahara, directed his ministry to post the report on the ministry's website following a request by Ram Prasad Dahal, Secretary of the National Union of Journalists (Nepal).

**INDONESIA:** The Indonesian Alliance of Independent Journalists (AJI) is to review media laws in Indonesia after another guilty verdict in a media defamation case last week, the IFJ reported (16/9/08). The Central Jakarta District Court found *Tempo* magazine guilty in a defamation case concerning taxation allegations, ordering the magazine's publisher to pay 50 million rupiah (about \$US5,400) in damages and to publish apologies. In January journalist Risang Bima Wijaya was sentenced to six months' jail for criminal defamation over articles published in *Radar Jogja* in 2005 regarding sexual harassment allegations. Newspaper publisher Sumadi M. Wonohito. *Radar Jogja* was also fined US\$600,000 as a result of a defamation case. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**MALAYSIA** The arrest of two journalists under the Internal Security Act (ISA) on September 12 have created concern about a possible clampdown against the media, the IFJ reported, (15/9/08). Raja Petra Kamarudin, blogger and editor of the political website *Malaysia Today*, was being held without charge under the ISA, the IFJ reported. He had run the popular alternative political website for two years. Access to the *Malaysia Today* site had been reportedly blocked for a week. Tan Hoon Cheng, a reporter with the Chinese language daily *Sin Chew Daily*, was arrested for allegedly citing a racially insensitive statement made by a politician, according to the National Union of Journalists Malaysia (NUJ M). She was released the following day. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**AFGHANISTAN:** The IFJ has joined a call by fellow international press freedom organisations Article 19 and Reporters Without Borders for the President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, to intervene immediately in the case of Ahmed Ghous Zelmay (15/9/08). Mr Zelmay, a former journalist and spokesman for the attorney-general, was arrested by police on November 4 2007 for publishing a Dari translation of the Qur'an, a criminal act under Islamic law. On September 13, more than 10 months after his arrest, Mr Zelmay was sentenced by a Kabul court to 20 years in prison. His colleague Mullah Qari Mushtaq received the same sentence. According to a March 2008 report by the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA), the conditions of Mr Zelmay's prison cell were appalling. He was detained in a dark room with dozens of other prisoners and criminals, had no access to writing materials or books and was not permitted outside. Another journalist, Sayed Parwez Kambakhsh, was sentenced to death on January 22, 2008, on allegations of blasphemy for reportedly downloading articles related to women's rights under Islam from the Internet. Mr Kambakhsh is appealing the sentence. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

## **GOVERNOR'S THREAT FUELS FEAR**

A report has been received that the chief editor of a radio station in the northern Afghan province of Faryab has been threatened with possible closure of her station by the provincial governor, the IFJ reported (28/9/08). Rona Shirzai, the owner and chief editor of Radio Quyash, based in the provincial capital of Maymana, said she was threatened by Faryab's governor, Abdul Haq Shafaq, and warned to obey his orders if she did not want the station

closed and possibly risk her life, according to the Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA). Shafaq reportedly demanded that Ms Shirzai reinstate two employees who were dismissed for professional misconduct and the promotion of political agendas inconsistent with independent and ethical journalism. The governor has reportedly claimed a right to check that all programs were consistent with his political requirements. Ms Shirzai told the AIJA that he advised her to contact the police to ensure her safety and security.

**SRI LANKA:** Four senior editors resigned from the Sinhala-language *Siyatha* weekly on September 14. According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), they resigned due to management's disregard for the paper's policies on editorial independence. They claimed commercial considerations were overriding independent and accurate news coverage. The IFJ has joined the FMM in urging *Siyatha's* management to investigate the concerns and to establish a clear framework that guarantees editorial independence and the working rights of journalists. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

### **STOLEN GENERATIONS WILL RECORD THEIR STORIES**

The Australian Government will build on the National Library of Australia's oral history project and contribute \$100,000 to enable the Stolen Generations to share their stories of survival, struggle and healing, it was reported (16/9/08). The project will give Indigenous people the opportunity to tell their own stories through an online resource.

The *Bringing Them Home* report into the separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their families documented the strength and struggles of many thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. It highlighted how important it is for people affected by the past policies of removal to tell their individual stories. And sharing those stories with other Australians, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, was an important step in reconciliation. It was described as an essential part of the healing process and carries on traditional story-telling practices.

## **G. OTHER NEWS**

### **MYANMAR JUNTA EASES SOME RESTRICTIONS ON SUU KYI**

[Myanmar's](#) military junta will allow the pro-democracy leader [Daw Aung San Suu Kyi](#) to receive letters from her two sons as well as some foreign magazines, slightly easing her stringent house arrest, according to her lawyer, the New York Times reported (15/9/08).

The lawyer, U Kyi Win, also said over the weekend that the junta had promised to ease restrictions on her two housekeepers, whose movements have been restricted as well, according to wire service reports and exile groups in Thailand.

Agence France-Presse quoted the lawyer on Monday as saying that Aung San Suu Kyi was malnourished after refusing for a month to accept food supplies that are regularly left at her gate. He said she had subsisted on small stocks of food in her home.

"Although Daw Aung San Suu Kyi was not on a hunger strike, she was eating little because she hasn't accepted food supplies since August 16," he said. Aung San Suu Kyi, 63, whose party won an election in 1990 but was never allowed to take office, has been under house arrest for 13 of the last 19 years.

Since her latest detention began in May 2003 she has rarely been allowed to see visitors outside her gated, guarded compound in Yangon, the main city in Myanmar, formerly Burma. It was not clear why the junta had decided to ease the restrictions on her. But the lawyer said she would resume accepting food deliveries.

Her party, the National League for Democracy, has said her refusal of food supplies is intended "to denounce her continuing detention, which is unfair under the law."

In New York, the [United Nations](#) secretary general, [Ban Ki-moon](#), reiterated concerns last week that have been voiced over the years to the junta.

"I share the frustration many feel with the situation in Myanmar," he said. "We have not seen the political progress I had hoped for. We want to see the parties, in particular the government of Myanmar, take tangible steps toward establishing a credible and inclusive political process in the country, which of course must include progress on human rights." **REPORT:** [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/16/world/asia/16myanmar.html?\\_r=2&ref=world\\_n&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/16/world/asia/16myanmar.html?_r=2&ref=world_n&oref=slogin)

### **PM GIVES MORE POWER TO DEPUTY, MAY QUIT EARLY**

Under attack within and without his party, the Malaysian Prime Minister, Abdullah Badawi, ceded more power to his deputy and said he may step down earlier than June 2010, as had been previously agreed, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (18/9/08).

Mr Abdullah said he was swapping the key finance ministry for the lesser defence portfolio held by the Deputy Prime Minister, Najib Razak, his designated successor since a dramatic setback in elections in March. But depending on Mr Najib's performance, he might hand over power earlier.

The prime minister, however, has refused to meet the former deputy prime minister Anwar Ibrahim who claimed on Tuesday to have enough defections from government ranks to his People's Alliance opposition coalition to form a government.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/17/1221330927692.html>

### **PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ASIA-PACIFIC**

The parliamentary Human Right Sub-Committee is set to examine international and regional human rights mechanisms and models for the Asia-Pacific in its new inquiry.

Sub-committee Chairperson Kerry Rea welcomed this inquiry by the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade as a chance to examine the international and regional mechanisms used by groups working to tackle human rights violations around the world.

"By examining current tools for protecting and redressing human rights violations, we can build a picture of what is happening internationally and at regional levels," Ms Rea said. The focus on the Asia-Pacific is particularly important in helping to foster the promotion, prevention and redress of human rights violations in a region which is still in the development stage of a broad-based human rights mechanism.

"The sub-committee aims to draw on lessons from the United Nations human rights system and other mechanisms when considering possible models suited to the Asia-Pacific region. This inquiry is a chance for Australia to make a meaningful contribution to human rights resources in our neighbourhood," she said.

The committee welcomes submissions from anyone who would like to make a contribution on the issues covered in the terms of reference. In particular, the focus will be on:

- the United Nations human rights system;
- regional mechanisms;
- roles for parliament; and
- the distinctive characteristics of the Asia-Pacific and its human rights landscape.

**SUBMISSIONS:** By **November 20**.

**DETAILS:** Sub-Committee Secretary, Samantha Mannette, on 02 6277 2313; and: [http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/asia\\_pacific\\_hr/index.htm](http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/asia_pacific_hr/index.htm).

### **THAILAND GETS ANOTHER LEADER**

The brother-in-law of ousted Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra has won a parliamentary vote to become the country's new prime minister, the BBC reported (17/9/08).

Somchai Wongsawat, whose candidacy was supported by the governing People Power Party, won a simple majority of votes in Bangkok's lower house of parliament.

Mr Somchai became acting PM last week after a court forced his predecessor, Samak Sundaravej, to step down.

Protesters in Bangkok claim the present government is a proxy for Mr Thaksin.  
REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7620257.stm>

#### **LIVNI CLAIMS WIN IN ISRAELI VOTE**

Tzipi Livni has claimed victory in the contest to lead Israel's ruling Kadima party as exit polls suggest she won by a clear margin, the BBC reported (18/9/08). The foreign minister told supporters in a radio broadcast that "the good guys" had won after the ballot by members of the party. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is resigning amid corruption allegations.

Earlier, TV exit polls said Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni has won a clear victory in the party primary election to replace Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (18/9/08).

Livni is Israel's chief negotiator in peace talks with Palestinians. She favours diplomacy to solve Israel's problems, though she has said she would not hesitate to pull the trigger if necessary. REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/world/livni-wins-olmert-takeover-vote-tv-polls/2008/09/18/1221330966201.html>

#### **ATSIA COMMITTEE HEARS FROM AMERICA'S MINORITY COUNCIL**

The House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee has scheduled a public hearing in Canberra from two very different parts of the world to discuss ways in which local networking can be the foundation to build sustainable Indigenous businesses, and how global networking can open up big business opportunities at the local level (18/9/08).

Committee Chairperson Richard Marles said the committee was to hear from one of America's most powerful business women, Harriet R Michel, President of America's National Minority Supplier Diversity Council (NMSDC). Ms Michel is here to advocate for an Australian Indigenous Minority Supplier Council, which she says can lever Indigenous businesses into large corporate and multinational business networks.

The NMSDC was the world's first supplier diversity council. Formed in Chicago in 1974, the council now has a New York head office, 39 regional councils and a network of 3,500 corporate members. In 2006 NMSDC member corporations' purchases from its 15,000 minority-owned members were in excess of US \$100 billion.

Ms Michel leads the NMSDC mission which includes the national director of the US Federal Government Minority Development Agency, the chairman of the Canadian Aboriginal and Minority Supplier Council and ten other senior executives from major global organisations, including Cisco Systems, IBM, Pfizer, Coca Cola and Glaxo Smith Kline, with three minority business members.

The committee also heard from research and community partners who are incubating business locally in remote Anangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunyatjara (APY) lands. The project, called 'Tjunga' by community partners, is sponsored under an Australian Research Council Linkage Grant: 'Social and Cultural Factors in Indigenous Enterprise and Governance' and involves the universities of South Australia and Western Australia and Uniting Care Wesley.

Mr Marles said: "'Tjunga' provides a unique model of Indigenous empowerment. Community members are working in an 'action' research partnership on initiatives that both promote social and community well being and enhance economic self sufficiency. Under 'Tjunga' individuals, family groups and community councils lead the process to establish the type of businesses they are passionate about".

DETAILS: <http://www.aph.gov.au/atsia>.

BACKGROUND: Secretariat on 02 6277 4559; [atsia.reps@aph.gov.au](mailto:atsia.reps@aph.gov.au).

#### **UN: BRAZIL POLICE LINKED TO 1 IN 5 RIO MURDERS**

Brazilian police carried out a "significant proportion" of the 48,000 murders that swept Brazil last year, according to a UN report, released on Monday, casting doubt on the government's ability to curtail drug violence and reign in vigilante militias, Seattlepi.com reported.

The report by UN special envoy on extra-judicial killings Philip Alston said police murder three people a day on average in Rio de Janeiro, making them responsible for one in five killings in the city, which is plagued by drug-gang violence and roving militias of off-duty police.

Rio de Janeiro State Security Chief Jose Beltrame dismissed the findings, saying Alston spent less than two weeks in Brazil and did not fully understand what was happening.

"He is a person who comes from Australia ... (and) came up with a short-sighted report of police operations," Mr Beltrame said. "I want him to prove it." The UN report found that police were rarely punished for their involvement and many Brazilians were resigned to the violence, seeing no other way to fight the slum drug gangs.

[REPORT: http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1102ap\\_lt\\_brazil\\_police\\_killings.html](http://seattlepi.nwsource.com/national/1102ap_lt_brazil_police_killings.html)

### **STARS JOIN IN PAVAROTTI MEMORIAL CONCERT FOR AFGHAN REFUGEES**

A year after his death, Luciano Pavarotti's legacy of generosity lives on in a tribute charity concert and memorial ceremony to be held in Petra, Jordan on October 11 and 12. Under the patronage of HRH Princess Haya Bint al Hussein of Jordan, a UN Messenger of Peace, the concert at the renowned archeological site at Petra will generate funds for projects in Afghanistan by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN World Food Program (WFP).

The line-up of performers was announced in Milan by Nicoletta Mantovani, Pavarotti's widow. They include stars of classical and pop music, such as Sting, Andrea Bocelli, Jovanotti, Zucchero, Laura Pausini, Angela Gheorghiu, Andrea Griminelli, Cynthia Lawrence and Roberto Alagna; conducted by Eugene Kohn.

The event will be supported by the Italian Government, which announced a donation of Euro 2.1 million through the Italian Cooperation for Development for the joint UNHCR-WFP project in Afghanistan.

"With this contribution, we wish to honour the maestro's exceptional commitment to humanitarian activities and his dedication to fostering the development of other countries," said Elisabetta Belloni, Director General of Italian Cooperation. She said the initiative would provide concrete aid for thousands of Afghan refugees who have decided to go back to what remains of their home villages.

For over ten years, until his death in September 2007, Pavarotti actively supported UNHCR projects in Kosovo, Pakistan, Zambia, and Iraq. For his continuous commitment to refugee causes, Luciano Pavarotti received UNHCR's Nansen Refugee Award and was named a UN Messenger of Peace.

"UNHCR remembers the Maestro as a unique artist, an extremely generous man and a friend. Luciano Pavarotti was one of the greatest supporters of UNHCR's work, using his amazing talents to raise awareness of refugee issues around the world," said Radhouane Nouicer, UNHCR's Director of the Middle East and North Africa Office in Geneva.

[DETAILS: www.thepavarottitribute.com](http://www.thepavarottitribute.com).

## **H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

### **WALL STREET'S UNRAVELING**

[Wall Street](#) as we know it is kaput, Robert J Samuelson writes in the *Washington Post* (17/9/08). It is not just that Merrill Lynch agreed to be purchased by [Bank of America](#) or that the legendary investment bank [Lehman Brothers](#) filed for bankruptcy or that the insurance giant AIG is floundering. It is not even that these events followed the failure of the investment bank Bear Stearns or the government's takeover of [Fannie Mae](#) and [Freddie Mac](#), the largest mortgage lenders. What's really happened is that Wall Street's business model has collapsed. Greed and fear, which routinely govern financial markets, have seeded this global crisis. Just when it will end isn't clear. What is clear is that its origins lie in the ways that Wall Street - the giant investment houses, brokerage firms, hedge funds and "private equity" firms - has changed since 1980.

REPORT: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/16/AR2008091602877.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

### **ONCE ELECTED, PALIN HIRED FRIENDS AND LASHED FOES**

Governor [Sarah Palin](#) lives by the maxim that all politics is local, not to *mention personal*, write Jo Becker, Peter S. Goodman and Michael Powell in the New York Times (13/9/08). So when there was a vacancy at the top of the State Division of Agriculture, she appointed a high school classmate, Franci Havemeister, to the \$95,000-a-year directorship. A former real estate agent, Ms Havemeister cited her childhood love of cows as a qualification for running the roughly \$2 million agency. Ms Havemeister was one of at least five schoolmates Ms Palin hired, often at salaries far exceeding their private sector wages. When Ms. Palin had to cut her first state budget, she avoided the legion of frustrated legislators and mayors. Instead, she huddled with her budget director and her husband, Todd, an oil field worker who is not a state employee, and vetoed millions of dollars of legislative projects ... Ms Palin walks the national stage as a small-town foe of "good old boy" politics and a champion of ethics reform. The charismatic 44-year-old governor draws enthusiastic audiences and high approval ratings. And as the Republican vice-presidential nominee, she points to her management experience while deriding her Democratic rivals, Senators [Barack Obama](#) and [Joseph R. Biden Jr.](#), as speechmakers who never have run anything.

REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/14/us/politics/14palin.html?ei=5070&emc=eta1>

### **CAN ZIMBABWE'S SHOTGUN MARRIAGE WORK?**

Cheers and smiles erupted at Harare's Rainbow Towers on Monday as President Robert Mugabe appeared to relax his grip on power in Zimbabwe for the first time since the nation's independence in 1980, TIME Magazine reports (15/9/08). In an unprecedented ritual of unity following months of political violence directed at opposition supporters, Mugabe shook hands with opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) leader Morgan Tsvangirai and Arthur Mutambara, the leader of a rival faction within the opposition, as they signed a deal under which, although Mugabe remains President, the MDC will take the lead in the day-to-day running of the government, led by Tsvangirai, who will become Prime Minister. It was a compromise deal neither side wanted but neither side had the leverage to resist.

REPORT: <http://www.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1841286,00.html>

### **ZIMBABWE: 'THERE'S AN INHERENT SUSPICION OF MUGABE. BUT HE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT THE FUTURE IS NOT IN THE HANDS OF ROBERT MUGABE'**

Zimbabwe's new prime minister, Morgan Tsvangirai, described Robert Mugabe as "giving up" and said that he would seek to govern by sidelining the beleaguered president whose own party is "moving on" without him, Chris McGreal writes in the London Guardian (17/9/08). But, in an interview with the Guardian, Tsvangirai acknowledged that a climate of suspicion and mistrust between his own Movement for Democratic Change and Mugabe's Zanu-PF party would test his political skills as prime minister at the head of a coalition government of former opponents - some of whom are responsible for overseeing a vicious campaign of violence against other members of the new administration. That suspicion will not be eased by a warning from Tsvangirai that while Mugabe is unlikely to be called to account for his crimes, others in the Zanu-PF leadership - including some who may sit in the new cabinet - could face trial ... Tsvangirai acknowledged that working in the Cabinet would be testing

REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/sep/17/zimbabwe>

### **THE SECRET HISTORY OF KIM JONG II**

"I first met Kim Jong Il in October 1959, writes Kim Hyun Sik W in the current issue of Foreign Policy magazine . He was a senior at the elite Namsan Senior High School, and I was a 27-year-old professor of Russian at the Pyongyang University of Education. I also happened to have been chosen as a private tutor for the family of North Korean President Kim Il Sung. One day, the Great Leader remarked that he found his son's Russian to be very poor and told me to go to his school and evaluate both Kim Jong Il's proficiency and the quality of Russian education there. Handpicked by Joseph Stalin to rule over North Korea and a fluent Russian speaker himself, Kim Il Sung deemed study of the language essential to relations with the Soviet Union, North Korea's biggest political, economic, and military patron. At the school, I attended every Russian class, made evaluations, and then summoned the 17-year-old Kim

Jong Il into the principal's office. The principal, one of the school's Russian teachers, and I, in accordance with Kim Il Sung's orders, jointly administered an oral Russian exam for Kim Jong Il. Just a young student at the time, the examinee appeared to ... "

ARTICLE:

[http://www.foreignpolicy.com/users/login.php?story\\_id=4427&URL=http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story\\_id=4427#](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/users/login.php?story_id=4427&URL=http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=4427#)

### **IS IT TOO DANGEROUS TO DOWNGRADE TERRORIST THREAT?**

Is terrorism still a significant threat to Australian society? This might seem a strange question, especially when seven Melbourne men have just been convicted of terrorism-related offences writes Daniel Flitton in *The Age* (18/9/08). But such is the careful and slow-moving justice system in this country that offences committed several years ago have only now been through trial. Much has happened in the intervening years to change our perception of the threat. 'Home-grown' terrorism was an emerging security nightmare when Abdul Nacer Benbrika and his followers were charged. The 2005 arrests in Australia seemed part of a pattern, following the experience in Britain in which young Muslim men shocked their communities by carrying out suicide attacks on London's transport system.

REPORT: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/is-it-too-dangerous-to-downgrade-terrorist-threat-20080917-4iky.html>

### **FACING UP TO THAT OLD 'ALLY' ISLAMABAD**

An excellent article by Fraser Nelson in London's *Spectator* in July put it as succinctly as I have seen it: "At a recent dinner party in the British embassy in Kabul, one of the guests referred to 'the Afghan-Pakistan war'. The rest of the table fell silent. This is the truth that dare not speak its name, Christopher Hitchens writes in *The Australian* (18/9/08). "Even mentioning it in private in the Afghan capital's green zone is enough to solicit murmurs of disapproval. Few want to accept that the war is widening; that it now involves Pakistan, a country with an unstable government and nuclear weapons ... When discussing the deepening crisis in Afghanistan, most people seem deliberately to avoid telling phrases such as Pakistani aggression or - more accurate still - Pakistani colonialism. The truth is that the Taliban and their al-Qa'ida guests were originally imposed on Afghanistan from without as a projection of Pakistani state power.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24362386-7583,00.html>

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **UN AGENCY AT 'DEAD END' AS IRAN REJECTS QUERIES ON NUCLEAR RESEARCH**

The [UN](#) nuclear watchdog said that it had reached an impasse with [Iran](#) over the country's refusal to account for past military research which US officials think was part of a secret bomb-building program, the *Washington Post* reported (16/9/08).

The apparent standoff was detailed in a report that also described substantial gains by Tehran in its efforts to make enriched uranium, the fuel used in commercial nuclear reactors and nuclear weapons. Both developments suggested a further hardening of Iran's resolve to build its nuclear infrastructure in defiance of international sanctions.

"We seem to be at a dead end," said a senior official with the UN in a telephone briefing for journalists. The official discussed the [International Atomic Energy Agency's](#) report on the condition of anonymity because of the diplomatic sensitivities involved.

In Washington, five former secretaries of state called yesterday on the winner of November's election to break with current US policy and engage directly with Iran on stopping its nuclear development. [Colin L. Powell](#), [Madeleine K. Albright](#), Warren Christopher, [James A. Baker III](#) and [Henry Kissinger](#) agreed on the need for talks during a forum at [George Washington University](#), broadcast later on [CNN](#).

REPORT: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/15/AR2008091503036.html>

### **RAMOS-HORTA CALLS ON AUSTRALIA TO HELP REPEL TOADS**

Australia must help East Timor deal with an exploding cane toad population, President Jose

Ramos-Horta said (13/9/08).

Australian troops have been accused of introducing the cane toad into East Timor when they arrived in 1999 to stop the violence triggered by a vote for independence from Indonesia.

Known in East Timor as the "INTERFET frog", the toads are believed to have hitched a ride Australia must help East Timor deal with an exploding cane toad population, President Jose Ramos-Horta said.

"It is a problem that we don't need," Mr Ramos-Horta said. "We didn't have it [before]." Earlier this year Mr Ramos-Horta referred to cane toads as "beautiful" and "harmless" during a mock parliamentary debate about eradication legislation at a Darwin school, but he does not feel the same faced with the issue in real life.

### **HELPING OUT IN HAITI**

The United Nations mission in Haiti said today it was encouraged by the solidarity shown by politicians, the private sector, the diaspora and others in supporting the relief effort to the hurricane-ravaged country, as two international stars, Wyclef Jean and Matt Damon, joined blue helmets in handing out food to flood victims.

The Haitian-born musician Mr. Jean and Mr. Damon, the US actor, helped the mission (known as MINUSTAH) at the weekend to distribute food in Gonaïves and Cabaret, two of the towns hit hardest by the recent series of storms. The bags given out contained rice, ground maize, milk, sardines and cooking oil, enough to feed a family of six for five to six days.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28078&Cr=haiti&Cr1=minustah>

### **WFP TRIPLES AID DELIVERIES IN STORM-RAVAGED HAITI**

The amount of food being sent to tens of thousands of people on the storm-ravaged island of Haiti has tripled over the past week as the UN World Food Program (WFP) has accelerated its hurricane response.

"Despite challenging conditions that mean we can only transport supplies by air or sea, we have increased the amount of food we are getting to people who are in desperate need," said WFP Country Director Myrta Kaulard, adding that logistical support from the US, Canada, and Spain and a US\$1 million donation from ECHO - the funding arm of the European Commission - had helped to get the emergency operation underway.

Working alongside its sister agencies, UNICEF and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), as well as MINUSTAH, the UN's stabilisation force in Haiti, WFP has ramped up aid deliveries since September 14, with 1000 tons of rice, beans, cooking oil, fresh water and other supplies delivered across the country. The increase means that WFP has supplied enough food to feed 217,000 people since the relief operation was launched. **DETAILS:** <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999> ; Myrta Kaulard WFP/Haiti on +509 2229 1668 to 1675.

### **PLANTING THE SEEDS TO MEET OUR NEEDS: CONFERENCE**

With world food supplies under threat, prices for produce escalating rapidly and an increased demand for biofuels, a three day conference starting at the Australian National University aimed to address how we increase plant energy and water productivity.

The conference – *Plant Energy and Water Productivity: From Genes to Environment* – brought together leading researchers from around the world for a multi-disciplinary forum looking at how to meet current and future global needs from agriculture and counter the impact of climate change. The conference was jointly organised by the ARC Centre of Excellence in Plant Energy Biology at ANU and CSIRO.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.plantenergy.uwa.edu.au/conferences/> ; Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

## **WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE: INDONESIA UPDATE '08**

The challenges of governing Indonesia – the world's largest archipelagic state – will be explored at the Australian National University (18/9/08).

Diplomats, academics, public servants and NGO representatives from around the world will meet at ANU on Friday and Saturday (19/20) for the 26<sup>th</sup> annual Indonesia Update conference.

Working on the theme '*Indonesia beyond the water's edge: Managing an archipelagic state*', conference participants will examine Indonesia's efforts in marine areas to manage the allocation of marine resources, to guard national security and to provide human services to those at sea.

"More than half Indonesia's share of the earth's surface is sea, and the marine frontier presents the nation with economic opportunity and political and strategic challenges," said organiser Dr Robert Cribb from the ANU Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies.

"Indonesia has been affected more than most countries in the world by a slow revolution in the management of the seas. Whereas Indonesia's seas were once conceived administratively as little more than the empty space between islands, successive governments have become aware that this view is outmoded. The effective transfer to the seas of regulatory regimes that took shape on land, such as territoriality, has been an enduring challenge to Indonesian governments."

**DETAILS:** <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/economics/ip/IU08/>; Simon Couper on 02 6125 4171, 0416 249 241; <http://news.anu.edu.au>.

## **STATION PURCHASE HELPS BALANCE LAKE VICTORIA WATER STORAGE AND INDIGENOUS HERITAGE**

Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) announced the purchase of a 48,000 hectare grazing property in New South Wales to help manage Indigenous cultural heritage sites on the shores of Lake Victoria and to ensure its future as a major water storage (17/9/08).

Acting Chief Executive David Dreverman said that the \$5 million purchase of Nulla Station was made on behalf of the participating governments in the Murray-Darling Basin Commission by the NSW Department of Water and Energy (DWE).

"There are no irrigation water entitlements on the property," Mr Dreverman said. "This is a strategic purchase from a willing seller that allows us to operate the Lake Victoria water storage in accordance with the conditions under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974."

"Under that arrangement, the MDBC is required to manage the water levels and grazing pressures on the lake foreshore to maximise native vegetation and to reduce erosion. This protects significant numbers of Aboriginal burials and artefacts discovered when the lake water level was lowered in 1996."

Mr Dreverman said Lake Victoria is essential to ensure efficient management of water downstream of the Barmah Choke (near Echuca) including South Australian irrigation and urban water needs.

To achieve the balance between water supply and cultural conservation, the MDBC developed the Lake Victoria Cultural Landscape Plan of Management with representatives of the local Indigenous community, landholders, and NSW and SA government agencies.

"Vegetation around parts of the lake shore has suffered badly over time because of river regulation and stock grazing," Mr Dreverman said. "The MDBC has spent more than \$10 million on conservation projects to balance the needs of water users, the protection of cultural heritage and minimising negative impacts on the lake shores natural environment."

Nulla Station is the third and largest Lake Victoria property the Commission has bought since 2002. All properties were bought through the NSW DWE.

“Removing the stock grazing impacts on the two previously purchased properties in conjunction with other improvements have led to a spectacular vegetation response, particularly given the prevailing drought conditions,” Mr Dreverman said. “Nulla Station was the last remaining area of the lake where we did not have such a stock grazing management strategy.”

Mr Dreverman said most of the Nulla Station land did not front Lake Victoria and much of it would not be required to protect the cultural heritage of the lake foreshore. The MDBC will eventually dispose of those portions not required after consultation with stakeholders.”

[DETAILS](#): Sam Leone on 0407 006 332.

### **REPORT ON SALE OF URANIUM TO RUSSIA**

In its 94<sup>th</sup> report, the Federal Parliament’s Treaties Committee reports on an agreement with the Russian Federation on cooperation in the use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. This agreement will, for the first time, allow Australia to provide uranium for use in Russia’s nuclear power plants.

Long standing Australian Government policy has only allowed Australian uranium and nuclear material derived from it to be exported to countries with which Australia has concluded a safeguards agreement. The key objective of safeguards agreements is to ensure that no material is ever used for, or diverted to, any military purpose.

Australia’s safeguards agreements are designed to complement the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) safeguards system. The committee heard a range of evidence at its public hearings in Melbourne and Canberra that drew into question the adequacy of the inspections regime for nuclear weapons states such as Russia.

The committee considered that it is essential that the highest possible standards and safeguards be applied in the supply of Australian uranium for nuclear purposes. The committee has therefore recommended that ratification of this agreement does not proceed until:

- (a) Russia’s reform process to clearly separate its civilian nuclear and military nuclear facilities is completed and independently verified;
- (b) IAEA inspections are implemented for Russian facilities that will handle Australian Obligated Nuclear Materials;
- (c) The government is satisfied that the Russian Federation is complying with its obligations under the *Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons* (NPT) noting that this treaty is scheduled for review in 2010;
- (d) The government is satisfied that Russia will not subsequently abandon this treaty or other nuclear treaties;
- (e) Further consideration is given to the potential ramifications for this agreement of recent political events affecting Russia;
- (f) Further consideration is given to Article IX of the Agreements, ‘State Secrets’, and the government is confident that this article will not undermine the intent of this agreement;
- (g) Further consideration is given to the justification for secrecy of ‘Material Unaccounted For’; and
- (h) The Australian Government discusses with the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Canada and Japan, whether the problems of the past in relation to Russian nuclear material being stolen, have now been addressed satisfactorily.

The committee has also reiterated a previous committee recommendation that the Australian Government lobbies the IAEA and the five declared nuclear weapons states under the NPT to make the safeguarding of all conversion facilities mandatory. The committee also considered that Australian efforts to strengthen the resourcing of the IAEA should be continued.

In its report, the committee also recommended that binding treaty action be taken in relation to a defence trade cooperation agreement with the United States. This agreement signifies a significant step forward in Australia's long-standing defence cooperation relationship with the United States and will facilitate greater access and sharing of defence equipment, technology, information and services between Australia and the United States.

The agreement will also improve the interoperability of the Australian and United States armed forces and open new avenues for industrial cooperation and effective technology sharing.

**REPORT 94:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/jsct/14may2008/report1.htm> or Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4002.

**BACKGROUND:** Russell Chafer, Committee Secretary on 02 6277 4622.

### **RAFTING REPTILES IN DOUBLE HELLO**

A research team lead by an ANU scientist has discovered a new species of iguana in the central regions of Fiji. The discovery is part of a study which suggests that the ancestors of the Pacific iguanas arrived up to 13 million years ago after an 8000 kilometre rafting trip from the New World.

Detailed genetic and morphological analyses show that there are three living kinds of *Brachylophus* iguanas, not two as indicated in current taxonomy. Scientists named the newly revealed iguana species *Brachylophus bulabula*. The scientific name *bulabula* is a doubling of *bula*, the Fijian word for 'hello,' thus signifying an even more enthusiastic greeting.

"The iconic Fijian iguanas are famous for their beauty and also their unusual occurrence in the middle of the Pacific Ocean because all of their closest relatives are in the Americas", said Scott Keogh, an Associate Professor, of the ANU School of Botany and Zoology and lead author of the study.

The mystery of how the Pacific iguanas originally arrived has long puzzled bio-geographers. Their closest relatives, found only in the New World, are separated by about 8,000 miles of ocean. The highest islands of Fiji have been above sea level for at least the last 16 million years, and the current study's findings suggest that the Pacific iguanas, both extinct and living, were likely to have been on the islands much of that time, following a long-distance rafting trip from the New World.

### **STRESS MIXES UP THE CHICKENS**

Stress about the US financial crisis got to an American economist commentator on the ABC on Wednesday when he was so concerned he got his metaphors a little mixed. Talking about the possibility of government intervention he said the government should not chicken out when the chickens came home to roost.