

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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UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au or email the editor.

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

UN: RUDD CALLS FOR TOUGHER WORLD FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd has called for tougher international regulations and improved transparency of the world's big banks and financial institutions. He made the call in his first speech to the United Nations General Assembly, where he outlined the widespread reform program in response to the international financial crisis, ABC Online parliamentary correspondent Emma Rodgers reported (26/9/08).

Mr Rudd said strong political will would be needed to enforce reforms which he believed should be pushed through the G20 nations and implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to avoid a repeat of the problems now hitting the US economy.

The strong emphasis in his speech addressing the global economic volatility was a late shift in priority for Mr Rudd, after agreeing in meetings with UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown to unite to push a tougher regulatory strategy.

Mr Rudd also urged other countries to ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty and said Australia was committed to abolishing nuclear weapons. He also extended an invitation to governments around the world to become involved in Australia's Global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute, which will begin work early next year. Mr Rudd is lobbying for Australia to take a non-permanent seat on the UN Security Council in 2013.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/26/2374940.htm>

ZOELICK: CURRENT TURMOIL 'TO RIPPLE THROUGH DEVELOPING WORLD'

After talks at the UN, Mr Rudd and World Bank President, Robert Zoellick held a joint press conference (23/9/08). Mr Rudd, who described Bob Zoellick as an old friend of Australia, said the World Bank's latest report indicated Australia financially was in an enviable position and they had discussed current challenges in food security and the roll-through effect of the financial crisis and its impact on developing economies.

Mr Zoellick said the World Bank was trying to highlight some of the issues for the developing world and, in particular the double jeopardy of the fuel and food price increases, and "what we can try to do to help those that are most vulnerable.

"I believe that some of the turmoil over the course of the most recent week is likely to also ripple through the developing world in a way that we really haven't seen so far ... we now have to prepare for challenges in that realm as well."

"Much of the focus I think at this UN session, led by the Secretary General, is on the Millennium Development Goals and highlighting the fact that while we are now in a period where we are trying to focus on some of the financial recovery, that we also have to pay close attention to what is done on the human recovery side, particularly with some of the challenges that we are going to face in terms of aid and supporting these countries.

"I want to take this opportunity to thank not only the prime minister but the people of Australia. Australia was one of the countries that came in promptly and helped support a rapid food financing facility that we have to try to deal with taking that program to some of the countries that were most under stress."

They also discussed key issues in financing regarding climate change, Mr Zoellick said. "Whether it's the forestation questions or some of the other issues that we face, Australia really has stepped up and worked closely with us on some of these issues which are going to be important because when you really look at the food and energy and water they are all exacerbated because of the challenges of climate change."

Mr Zoellick said from the perspective of the World Bank, with a focus on developing countries, "what we now have to watch is to see what the ripple effects are in terms of

exports and the trading system and whether then this leads to some questions in terms of domestic investment in some of the developing countries, and some of them may not have strong banking systems.”

Fortunately the World Bank was a very well capitalised institution and was in a good position to help. It had been helpful to talk with Mr Rudd given his experience, “particularly in the Asia Pacific region, as we try to think about how we can support that, he said.” **REPORT:** http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Interview/2008/interview_0492.cfm

PUTIN’S FINANCIAL MARKET EXPERIENCES WOBBLER

Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin's success, driven by soaring oil prices and consolidation over government and media, has been diminished in the wake of a market failure that has plummeted further and faster than any other troubled market in the world. Putin, Russia's former president who is given credit for delivering the nation from economic standstill in 1998, faces the present financial crisis with no debt, a massive surplus, and vast holdings in foreign currencies. [The Washington Post](#) (21/9/08).

TROPICAL TIMBER AGREEMENT SIGNED

Mr Rudd signed Australia's ratification of the International Tropical Timber Agreement (ITTA), a key UN treaty for sustainable management of tropical timber. The ITTA is the principal global agreement designed to achieve sustainable management of tropical forests and vital in Australia's effort to mitigate climate change (23/9/08).

DETAILS: http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Release/2008/media_release_0496.cfm

AUSTRALIA-UN PARLIAMENTARY GROUP FOUNDED

The Speaker of the House of Representatives, Harry Jenkins, and the President of the Senate, John Hogg, have agreed to the establishment of an Australia-UN Parliamentary Group.

In a letter, they said it would be formed under a new category of Parliamentary Groups for International Organisations.

“As such it will be separate to the parliamentary groups formed under the auspices of the Australian National Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, as this category is reserved for country parliamentary groups,” they wrote.

“We will be asking our Parliamentary Relations Office to convene the first meeting of the Australia-United Nations Parliamentary Group so that an executive for the group can be elected.”

GLOBAL LEADERSHIP MORE VITAL THAN EVER TO SOLVE TODAY’S CRISES – BAN

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon opened the General Assembly’s two weeks of annual high-level debate by urging world leaders to rise to the “challenge of global leadership” and work together to solve the most pressing and intractable problems, from climate change and the energy crisis to entrenched poverty and the conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region.

“Our challenges are increasingly those of collaboration rather than confrontation,” Mr Ban **declared** in a wide-ranging speech before dozens of heads of state and government at UN Headquarters in New York. “Nations can no longer protect their interests, or advance the well-being of their people, without the partnership of the rest,” he said.

Stressing the need for collaboration rather than confrontation, he warned there were signs that many leaders and countries were unwilling to take up the mantle of doing more, not less, to help those around the world who need support, despite the scale of some of the crises.

“I see a danger of nations looking more inward, rather than towards a shared future. I see a danger of retreating from the progress we have made, particularly in the realm of development and more equitably sharing the fruits of global growth.”

As new centres of power and leadership are emerging in Asia, Latin America and elsewhere in the newly developed world, “we are on the eve of a great transition,” he said. Wise leadership was vital if the world was to regain the momentum on climate change produced by negotiations in Bali last year, combat malaria and HIV/AIDS or ensure that human rights are upheld and the principle of “responsibility to protect” is extended to all vulnerable populations.

“It takes leadership to honour our pledges and our promises in the face of fiscal constraints and political opposition. It takes leadership to commit our soldiers to a cause of peace in faraway places.

“It takes leadership to speak out for justice; to act on climate change despite powerful voices against you; to stand against protectionism and make trade concessions, even in our enlightened self-interest. Yet... that is why we are here.”

World leaders were due to discuss how to accelerate progress towards the eight globally agreed Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the target date of 2015.

Mr Ban said leaders should be “bold and specific” in spelling out what they will do to achieve the MDGs, given that his most recent report on the issue shows that sub-Saharan Africa is especially lagging in the race to meet the goals.

The UN had led the way this year on responding to the global food crisis, establishing a task force to devise long-term solutions and at the same time ensuring that seeds and fertilizers reach the hands of small farmers in struggling countries. The UN’s good offices had been put to diplomatic use, bearing fruit already in Nepal and Kenya and helping to defuse other conflicts and crises, such as in Cyprus, Côte d’Ivoire and Zimbabwe.

Mr Ban’s appeal for global leadership echoed one of the key themes of the recent meeting of top UN aides in Turin, Italy, where he noted that the UN is being sought out more than ever before to deal with the world’s biggest problems. [REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28169&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28169&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate)

BAN PLEDGES CONTINUED UN REFORM TO MEET CHANGING GLOBAL CONDITIONS. [REPORT:](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28028&Cr=UN+reform&Cr1=)

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28028&Cr=UN+reform&Cr1=>

UN BEST POSITIONED TO TACKLE TERRORISM, SAYS BUSH

The role of the UN had become increasingly more essential in confronting the global threat of terrorism, with multilateralism having the potential to usher in a more secure and more prosperous era, US President George W. Bush told the UN (23/9/08).

Since banding together eight years ago to address the “global movement of violent extremists,” it had been made apparent that “the United Nations and other multilateral organisations are needed more urgently than ever,” he **told** the General Assembly annual high-level debate in New York.

Success in fighting terrorism depended on cooperation to prevent attacks from occurring instead of deploring them after they took place, Mr Bush said.

“By acting together to meet the fundamental challenge of our time, we can lead toward a world that is more secure, and more prosperous, and more hopeful,” he said. The world was almost in universal agreement that no cause could justify terrorism, with Security Council resolutions asserting it to be unlawful and other multilateral bodies such as the Group of Eight (G-8) industrialised nations and the Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC) speaking out against the scourge.

“Like slavery and piracy, terrorism has no place in the modern world,” President Bush said, calling on the UN to provide a “more hopeful alternative” and step up its efforts to “challenge tyranny.” Speaking in support for “brave young democracies” such as Georgia, Lebanon,

Afghanistan and Iraq, he emphasised political freedom was not enough to overcome terrorism.

“The extremists find their most febrile recruiting grounds in societies trapped in chaos and despair – places where people see no prospect of a better life,” he said, stressing the need to deal with poverty, disease and ignorance.

Acknowledging the difficulty of the tasks facing the UN, President Bush underlined how “the world needs a confident and effective United Nations” that could correct its mistakes and streamline its inefficiencies. With determination and purpose, the United Nations can be a powerful force for good as we head into the 21st century. It can affirm the great promise of its founding,” he said. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28188&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

BAN CALLS FOR ENHANCED FUNDING AND RESOURCES FOR UN MEDIATION ROLE

Stressing the importance of mediation in both resolving and avoiding conflict, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for proper funding and requisite resources to build up the United Nations’ capacity to carry out this vital role (23/9/08).

Addressing a high-level Security Council debate on mediation and the settlement of disputes, Mr Ban **noted** that while a small Mediation Support Unit (MSU) was set up in 2005 after the UN World Summit, only two positions are funded by the regular budget.

“Today, I would like to call upon the council, and indeed all member states, to invest up-front in our mediation capacity so that we can do more of this quiet diplomacy – and less often cross that Rubicon to where vast suffering and huge peacekeeping expenditures become inevitable,” he said.

“Without prejudging the role of the General Assembly in deciding budgetary matters, I urge the council to ensure that mediation efforts have the requisite resources.”

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28189&Cr=ki-moon&Cr1=>

BWC CAMPAIGNS FOR STRONG US-UN RELATIONSHIP

The Better World Campaign and its sister organisation, the United Nations Foundation, recently placed a full-page advertisement outlining a specific plan for the next US president to secure a strong US-UN relationship. With both campaigns focusing their attention on New York this week for the UN General Assembly, this advertisement was a perfect opportunity to urge the next administration—whether Republican or Democrat—to make international cooperation a top priority on its agenda. BWC said.

“Now that we’ve sent such a high-profile message to the candidates about the importance of international cooperation, we are looking ahead to making an impact on Friday’s Presidential debate. This first debate, to be held at the University of Mississippi and moderated by PBS’ Jim Lehrer, will focus exclusively on foreign policy, so now is the time to encourage the candidates to publicly voice their support for fully funding the United Nations.

“Millions of Americans will be watching Friday’s debate, and the candidates will come prepared to discuss a vast array of foreign policy challenges facing the next president. They will likely be asked questions about places like Iran, Darfur, and Russia, but we need to make sure that both presidential hopefuls are committed to working on each of these issues with our allies and through the UN system.

“Both Senator McCain and Senator Obama have voiced support for increasing the United States’ cooperation with our allies and working more through international organisations, but we need to make sure they back up these general statements with a specific commitment to paying UN dues in full, on time, and without conditions,” BWC said.

[Tell Jim Lehrer to press Senators McCain and Obama to back up their support for international cooperation by committing to fully funding the UN and UN peacekeeping.](#)

[Click here to send an email to Jim Lehrer, urging him to ask the candidates to commit to repaying our \\$1 billion debt to the UN.](#)

DETAILS: Better World Campaign team: <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/>

BAN CALLS AGAIN FOR RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN MYANMAR

General Ban Ki-moon has once again called for the release of all political prisoners in Myanmar, following yesterday's "welcome" move by the government in freeing several detainees as part of an amnesty procedure (24/9/08).

Those released included the country's longest-serving political prisoner, U Win Tin, and six other senior members of the National League for Democracy (NLD), whose leader Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. The other six are Dr. May Win Myint, U Aung Soe Myint, U Khin Maung Swe, Win Htain, Dr. Than Nyein and U Thein Naing.

"The Secretary-General reiterates that all political prisoners should be released and that all citizens of Myanmar should be able to enjoy political freedoms, as necessary steps towards the process of national reconciliation and dialogue," his spokesperson said in a **statement**. "He looks forward to any further action by the Myanmar Government in this regard."

The release of political prisoners was one focus of discussion between the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, Ibrahim Gambari, and the Myanmar Government during his latest visit to the country in August.

The head of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**) has expressed his "immense joy" at the release of the 79-year-old U Win Tin, a writer and former newspaper editor who was detained for nearly 20 years, and the laureate of a press freedom prize instituted by the agency.

"In freeing U Win Tin and other prisoners, the authorities have taken a wise and positive step towards respecting the fundamental human right of freedom of expression, an indispensable component of democracy and rule of law," UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura said.

News of the release of the seven prisoners was also welcomed by the independent UN expert on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, who **said** he hoped the move "would be the first in a series of releases of other prisoners of conscience, some 2,000 of whom are currently estimated to be still detained in Myanmar."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28207&Cr=Myanmar&Cr1=>

COSTELLO JOINS WORLD BANK ANTI-CORRUPTION COMMITTEE

Former treasurer Peter Costello has been appointed to the World Bank's new anti-corruption committee. His appointment to the four-member Independent Advisory Board (IAB) was announced in Washington last weekend. Yahoo reported the IAB was set up on recommendations by former US Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, who published a report on the work of the World Bank's anti-corruption department last year. Other members of the IAB are ex-US diplomat Chester Crocker, former Philippine Ombudsman Simeon Marcelo and Swiss jurist Mark Pieth. **REPORT:** <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/latest/5030388/costello-in-world-bank-corruption-body/>

UN ENVOY SAYS MIDEAST PEACE EFFORTS AT CROSSROADS

Peace talks by Israel and the Palestinians were at a crossroads 10 months after their leaders agreed to try to reach an accord this year and both sides need to step up their efforts to meet that goal, the United Nations' Mideast envoy said, AP reported (25/9/08).

"While there are some positive developments, there are also several factors that cause concern," Robert Serry told the UN Security Council. "The important period ahead must see decisive advances towards peace."

Despite continuing negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, he said, "it appears so far that no agreement has been reached on the core issues."

"However, it also appears that there have been substantive discussions, the potential of which must be built on with a continuation of intensive negotiations," he added. He addressed the council a day after Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni was elected as the new leader of the governing Kadima Party, replacing corruption-tainted Prime Minister Ehud Olmert.

Ms Livni, a diplomat who has played a central role in peace talks with the Palestinians and prefers negotiation to confrontation, said she intends to form a new government.

"We look to an urgent continuation of the negotiations, and for all parties to honour their Annapolis and road map commitments," Mr Serry said.

"Ten months after negotiations were relaunched at Annapolis, and with just over three months until the end of the year, the Middle East peace process stands at a crossroads," Mr Serry said. "We must continue to strive for agreement on all core issues in accordance with the agreed timeframe of Annapolis."

UN: QATARI EMIR ADVOCATES 'POSITIVE PEACE' BASED ON JUSTICE FOR ALL

Achieving a true global peace requires more than eliminating the threat of arms, the Emir of Qatar **told** the General Assembly's annual high-level debate (23/9/08), calling for a "positive peace" which aims to promote economic and social justice for all people.

"The realities of today's world require a different approach, for peace cannot be achieved through conflict between powers, agreement between empires, or coexistence among blocs," Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani said.

Instead, he stressed the need for an alternative in which international law guarantees political rights and in which development allows for "parallel and equal opportunities to one world that cannot head into the future hindered by the injustices of politics or blinded by the darkness of underdevelopment."

The emir noted that his country is preparing for the follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development, which seeks to review the implementation of the 2002 landmark anti-poverty agreement known as the Monterrey Consensus, to be held in Doha in November.

"My country looks forward to an international cooperation that offers the broadest base possible for political as well as social peace," he said.

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

GLOBAL CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE INSTITUTE PROPOSED

A \$100 million Global Institute to speed up the development of carbon capture and storage technology has been announced by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd (19/9/08).

The government plans to work cooperatively with other countries to help reduce the amount of CO₂ released into the atmosphere and is offering to host the institute in Australia and contribute up to \$100m towards its operation.

Developing and commercialising this technology is vital for Australia's future, a media release stated. The institute would aim to accelerate carbon projects through facilitating demonstration projects and identifying and supporting necessary research - including regulatory settings and regulatory frameworks.

Carbon capture and storage is a process that captures carbon dioxide (CO₂) and transports it to a site where it is injected deep underground for long-term safe and secure storage. Australia has already held informal consultations with industry and foreign governments over a possible model for the Institute.

World energy demand is projected to grow by 55 per cent between 2005 and 2030.

Despite the growth of renewable energy, fossil fuels, especially coal, will remain major sources of the world's energy in the coming decades. Around 80 percent of Australia's electricity currently comes from coal fired power generation. Coal is now Australia's largest source of export earnings, earning an estimated \$43 billion in 2008-09.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) and the Cooperative Research Centre for Greenhouse Gas Technologies (CO2CRC) are leading research into CCS. The government has also established the National Low Emissions Coal Initiative (NLECI), a \$500 million program to accelerate the development and deployment of technologies that will reduce emissions from coal use. It includes funding for research and to support the trial of different technologies.

The institute for carbon capture and storage was expected to be the centrepiece of Mr Rudd's speech to the UN General Assembly in New York, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (19/9/08).

BURYING CO2 COULD PAY FOR ITSELF BY 2030: REPORT

Trapping and burying carbon dioxide from power plants could become viable without public funding by 2030, helping nations reduce their dependence on energy imports and meet climate goals, a report said, Reuters reports (2/9/08).

But that could happen only if obstacles to the technology were removed and polluters forced to pay more to emit CO₂ in cap and trade schemes, it said. Carbon capture and storage (CCS) is seen by industry as a potential silver bullet to curb emissions from coal-fired power plants, which are multiplying rapidly in India and China, threatening to heat the atmosphere to dangerous levels. The cost of burying CO₂ could fall to 30-45 euros per tonne by 2030, said the report by consultancy McKinsey and Co.

REPORT: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/lm577029.htm>

'CHEMICAL EQUATOR' DIVIDES HEMISPHERES: SCIENTISTS

Scientists have discovered a 'chemical equator' that divides the polluted air of the Northern Hemisphere from the largely uncontaminated atmosphere of the Southern Hemisphere, the ABC reported (24/9/08).

UK University of York researchers found evidence for an atmospheric chemical line about 50km wide in cloudless skies in the Western Pacific, with levels of carbon monoxide four times higher on the northern side.

The discovery will help scientists model simulations of the movement of pollutants in the atmosphere more accurately, and to assess the impact of pollution on climate, the researchers said in a statement in Singapore on Tuesday.

CARBON CAPTURE AND STORAGE SEMINAR HOSTED

CSIRO and the CRC for Greenhouse Gas Technologies (CO2CRC) hosted a recent seminar on the latest research and technology underpinning carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS). Experts from government, industry, universities and research organisations attended to discuss developments in CCS technologies to lower Australia's emissions footprint.

CSIRO technologies for carbon capture and storage are delivered through CSIRO's Energy Transformed Flagship. According to CSIRO Petroleum Resources Deputy Chief Dr David Whitford, gas technologies used for decades in the petroleum industry have the potential to play a key role in CO₂ storage.

"As a major contributor to CO2CRC, CSIRO's expertise is being used to model potential storage sites as well as to predict the fate of injected carbon dioxide underground and assess the technical and environmental feasibility of the geological carbon dioxide storage," Dr Whitford said.

"Western Australia is likely to lead the application of commercial scale geological carbon dioxide storage over the next decade as a consequence of the growing liquid natural gas (LNG) export industry." REPORT:

http://www.csiro.au/news/newsletters/Energy/0809_energy/HTML/carbonseminar.htm

GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL SUBMITS VIEW

The Green Building Council of Australia has lodged two documents with the Federal Government. They collectively represent the GBCA's submission to the Federal Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme (CPRS) Green Paper. The submission reinforces the view that the built environment represents the single largest source of cost-effective greenhouse gas abatement both here in Australia and globally.

The council states while buildings have not been incorporated into the design of the CPRS, there are range of policy measures that the government should pursue that would be complementary to the operation of the CPRS and unlock the abatement potential within the built environment. **SUBMISSION:**

http://www.gbca.org.au/uploads/GBCA%20CPRS%20Green%20Paper%20Submission%20Sep%2008%20_Final_.pdf

GREENPEACE CRITICISES CLEAN COAL PLANS

The environmental group Greenpeace has called on the Federal Government to rethink its support for clean coal technology, the ABC reported (22/9/08).

The government had announced plans for a global Carbon Capture and Storage Institute in Australia next year and two clean coal power projects were being tested in central Queensland but Greenpeace spokesman Simon Roz says it was unproven technology that would take years to perfect. There was a risk that captured gases could escape into the environment.

"If there's any sort of escape, that massive store of carbon dioxide would be released," he said. "We know over time that there's movement with geological formations, how are they going to ensure this stuff would remain safe over time, and most importantly, who's going to have to pay for the potential clean up. Is it going to be the company that made the mess or is it going to be the taxpayers?"

SMARTER POLICIES 'NEEDED TO DRIVE ENVIRONMENTAL COMPLIANCE'

Social pressures and growing environmental consciousness have induced companies to improve their environmental performance beyond regulatory requirements, a report released in Singapore states (22/9/08). However, that was not the case in the highly-polluting US heavy-duty diesel trucking industry.

According to a study published in *Regulation & Governance*, trucking companies are not legally obligated to use best pollution control technologies. This, coupled with weak social scrutiny, means that environmental consciousness is limited in the industry.

Trucking companies in certain niche markets have improved environmental performance by purchasing expensive "greener" trucks and adopting maintenance measures to prevent breakdowns and reduce fuel costs – which, in turn, reduce dangerous diesel emissions.

"Environmentally-friendly actions undertaken by trucking companies are most often by-products of economic reasons, such as avoiding cost of repair, late delivery penalties, customer complaints about reliability, and rising prices for fuel," says co-author, Professor Robert A. Kagan from the University of California, Berkeley.

The study titled *Compliance costs, regulation, and environmental performance: Controlling truck emissions in the US* finds that in markets numerically dominated by small firms like trucking, social pressures alone are not likely to induce most firms to invest in costly emissions-reducing efforts. "Beyond compliance" environmental improvements are more prevalent when regulators first establish clear regulatory obligations and standards, backed by significant threats of enforcement.

DETAILS: September 2008 issue of *Regulation & Governance* (Vol.2 Issue 3); Alina Boey, Corporate Communications at aboey@wiley.com.sg on 65-9656 5580; <http://interscience.wiley.com> and <http://www.wiley.com>.

CLIMATE CHANGE INQUIRY

The House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee was due to hear from the Department of Climate Change at a public hearing in Canberra on September 25 as part of its inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on Australia's coastal zone.

"The Department of Climate Change has a key role in assisting Australia's coastal communities to prepare for the impacts of climate change," Committee Chairman Jennie George said.

"The department's submission to the inquiry notes that, while all areas of Australia are at risk from impacts of climate change, the impacts on the coastal zone will be considerable. These impacts will affect a majority of Australians and associated infrastructure because 80 per cent of the Australian population lives in the coastal zone, and approximately 700,000 addresses are within 3km of the coast and less than six metres above sea level. Climate change, particularly projected sea level rise, therefore has serious implications for coastal areas," she said.

The inquiry will examine existing policies and programs related to coastal zone management, ways to promote sustainable use of coastal resources, and strategies to deal with climate change adaptation. It is also looking at ways to promote sustainable coastal communities, as well as governance and institutional arrangements for Australia's coastal zone.

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

BACKGROUND: Secretariat on 02 6277 4580; ccwea.reps@aph.gov.au.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

UN RIGHTS EXPERT WELCOMES MYANMAR'S FREEING OF POLITICAL PRISONERS

The independent UN expert on the situation of human rights in Myanmar has welcomed the reported release of seven political prisoners, calling it a positive sign of cooperation from the government of the South-East Asian nation (23/9/08).

Special Rapporteur Tomás Ojea Quintana **said** he hoped the freeing of the seven "would be the first in a series of releases of other prisoners of conscience, some 2,000 of whom are estimated still detained in Myanmar."

Among those released were U Win Tin, whom Mr Quintana met at Insein Prison during his four-day visit to the country last August. The other freed prisoners were Dr May Win Myint, U Aung Soe Myint, U Khin Maung Swe, Win Htain, Dr. Than Nyein and U Thein Naing.

Mr Quintana, who took up his post in May 2007, has proposed to the government four core human rights elements to help pave the road to democracy. One of these concerned the progressive release of all prisoners of conscience starting with elderly people, those with health limitations and long-serving prisoners.

Special Rapporteurs serve in an independent and unpaid capacity and report to the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council. **SEE ALSO MEDIA MATTERS PAGE**

UNDERGROUND SCHOOL NETWORK EDUCATES YOUNGSTERS

Political activists in Myanmar have established a network of schools that serve impoverished students and teach unofficial texts. For decades, the most reliable source of unofficial information has been smuggled books or underground discussion groups. Today, many go today to the American Centre, a consulate branch that provides outside publications. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (22/9/08).

AFGHANISTAN: PEOPLE HELD IN BAGRAM AND THEIR FAMILIES REUNITE

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and US military authorities in Afghanistan announced the start of the first face-to-face visits between individuals currently held at Bagram Theatre Internment Facility and their respective families (24/9/08).

This initiative comes in the wake of a program, established in January, to enable families to communicate with relatives held in Bagram via a videophone link. The program has been a major success, with nearly 1,500 calls made over the last eight months.

Families will be allowed to visit their relatives for 60 minutes and it is hoped visits will be repeated regularly. The ICRC helps families by reimbursing travel expenses.

"The videophone system was an important first step in reassuring family members that their relatives held in Bagram were alive and well, and vice-versa, because it gave them the opportunity to see and speak to one another," said Franz Rauchenstein, head of the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan.

"However, for the families and their detained relatives, nothing can replace the intensity of meeting face-to-face. We have continued to work with the US authorities to make such visits a reality, and we are very happy for the families that they now have this opportunity."

DETAILS: Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific on 612 9388 9039; sydney.syd@icrc.org

REPORT CALLS FOR ACCOUNTABILITY TO BOOST GENDER EQUALITY

A report, *Progress of the World's Women 2008/9: Who Answers to Women? Gender and Accountability*, was launched this week at UNHQ by Secretary-General BAN Ki-moon and UNIFEM Executive Director Ines Alberdi.

Its publication came at the halfway point to the 2015 deadline for achieving the MDGs and a week before the High-level Event to examine the world's progress regarding the MDGs.

The report demonstrates that one of the most powerful constraints on realising women's rights and achieving the MDGs is a deficit of accountability to women, with stronger accountability mechanisms needed in order to meet national and international commitments to women's rights and to translate those commitments into real changes in women's lives.

The report reflects that despite generous formal guarantees of equality, progress for many women, particularly the poorest and most marginal, has been far too slow. Every time legal systems turn a blind eye to injustices experienced by women, every time public service systems respond to women's needs only in relation to narrowly defined traditional female roles, and every time structures of opportunity in markets favour men's enterprises or limit women to vulnerable or low-return employment, we are faced with an accountability failure that reinforces gender-based inequality.

Progress 2008/2009 argues that the achievement of gender equality depends upon building the accountability of power holders to women so that power holders are answerable for meeting commitments to women's rights and gender equality. There had been marked improvement in national responses to women's needs in some areas, such as education. Such successes suggest that where there is accountability, progress is possible, even when resources are scarce.

Progress 2008/2009 also shows that strengthening accountability is both a technical and a political project. The technical dimension involves practical changes to the remit or mandate of institutions to ensure they respond to women's needs. It also involves changes in the operating procedures, performance measures, incentive systems and practices of institutions in order to ensure the implementation of these remits. Achieving these technical changes is, however, a political process: political leverage and power are required to see that mandates are translated into changed practices, and that incentives are created for changes in the 'deep culture' of institutions.

REPORT: <http://www.unifem.org/progress/2008/index.html>.

REPORT: UN FINDS MORE WOMEN HOLD POLITICAL OFFICE

Women are entering politics around the world in greater numbers than ever before, thanks to quotas and a growing realisation that only through power can women push for change, according to a new report from the UN Development Fund for Women. While the use of quotas is spreading across the globe, *The Economist* reports, some question whether they truly benefit the democratic process. [The New York Times](#) (19/9/08), [The Economist](#) (18/9/08).

LOOKING AFTER WOMEN'S INTERESTS - PAY EQUITY INQUIRY

The Office for Women, which is situated in the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, was due to appear before the House Employment and Workplace Relations Committee at Parliament House, Canberra, on September 25 to discuss recent trends in pay equity and possible priority areas.

The committee was keen to assess the potential impact of the increasing pay gap between men and women on the range of opportunities available to women and families in making decisions about career options and balancing family responsibilities and make recommendations that will ensure families have the opportunity to choose the option most appropriate to their situation. The committee is inquiring into the causes of any potential disadvantages in relation to women's participation in the workforce including:

Current structural arrangements in the negotiation of wages that may impact disproportionately on women;

The adequacy of current arrangements to ensure fair access to training and promotion for women who have taken maternity leave and/or sought flexible working hours; and

The need for further legislative reform to address pay equity.

DETAILS: <http://www.aph.gov.au/ewr>; 02 6277 4162; ewr.reps@aph.gov.au.

BACKGROUND: Secretary, on 02 6277 4162.

UN-BACKED FORUM FOCUSES ON DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF AFRICA'S WOMEN

As the current General Assembly meeting considers Africa's development needs, gender experts are coming together at a United Nations-backed forum spotlighting the continent's women, who are a vital part of efforts to achieve the global anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (22/9/08).

IMPORTANT ADVANCES MADE IN AFRICA

African countries were making important advances in embracing democracy, respecting human rights, tackling corruption and strengthening their economies, Tanzanian President and African Union (AU) Chairman Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete **told** the General Assembly (23/9/08). Mr Kikwete said he brought "with me a message of hope and optimism from Africa.

"Africa is no longer the hopeless case as perceived by some. There are so many good things happening on the continent. There is increasingly political stability, peace reigns in almost all nations except a few, and economies of many nations are blossoming." Many of the continent's countries had successfully staged democratic elections in the past two years, he said. Aside from Kenya and Zimbabwe, those polls were largely peaceful.

Mr Kikwete said it was also heart-warming that Africans themselves had taken the lead in monitoring elections and in resolving conflicts, such as in Kenya, as they arose.

"The old principle of non-interference in internal affairs is surely being replaced by non-indifference to violations of democracy and abuse of human rights."

But the Tanzanian President warned that while there were fewer conflicts in Africa today than before, more needed to be done to help the AU manage conflict prevention and resolution. Of the five-year conflict in Sudan's Darfur region, which pits rebels against government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen, he said the humanitarian crisis persists despite some encouraging signs of improvement.

The joint UN-AU peacekeeping force – known as **UNAMID** – is slated to have 26,000 troops and police officers when it reaches full deployment, but currently has only about 10,000 uniformed personnel in the field. **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28187&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

UNICEF DEMANDS RELEASE OF KIDNAPPED CHILDREN IN DR CONGO

The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called for the immediate, unconditional release of 90 pupils who were abducted from their schools in the north-east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) by members of the rebel Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) (22/9/08). **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28151&Cr=UGANDA&Cr1=LRA>

VENEZUELA EXPELS ACTIVISTS

Caracas officials deported Human Rights Watch Americas director Jose Miguel Vivanco and Human Rights Watch deputy director Daniel Wilkinson after the two made statements suggesting that a 2002 coup by opposition leaders was being used as a pretext to quash human rights. [CBC.ca](http://www.cbc.ca) (19/9/08).

MOVING FORWARD ON IMMIGRATION DETENTION REFORMS

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship was scheduled to appear before the Migration Committee on Wednesday to outline the implementation of the government's reforms to immigration detention, as part of the committee's current inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

Earlier this year, following on from the closure of Nauru and the abolition of Temporary Protection Visas, the Minister for Immigration announced a new 'risk-based' approach to immigration clients. Under the reforms, people will not be detained after health, security and identity checks have been completed, unless they present a risk to the community.

Committee Chairperson Michael Danby welcomed the reforms and the intention to reduce both the number of people in detention and the duration of their stay. He said, however, that many issues remained with the implementation of the general principles.

BACKGROUND: <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/reports.htm> or Secretariat on (02) 6277 4560; jscm@aph.gov.au.

BLUEPRINT FOR IMMIGRATION'S STRATEGIC DIRECTION

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) announced its strategic direction for the next three years with the launch this week of the *DIAC Strategic Plan 2008-11*.

The department's secretary, Andrew Metcalfe, said the document was a blueprint of how DIAC intends to manage its policies, programs and service delivery.

"This is a key document influencing how we will work with each other, our stakeholders and the community," Mr Metcalfe said (18/9/08). "In essence, our work is nation-building, where our pivotal role shapes the fabric of our society – now and into the future. The move to a three-year strategic plan is an exciting time for DIAC to focus on its long-term vision.

"Over the coming years, DIAC will play a leading role in shaping and delivering world-class migration and humanitarian services. Our purpose is to enrich Australia through the well-managed entry and settlement of people – and the DIAC plan is a valuable tool to help staff fulfil this purpose.

"The plan also provides the framework for the integration of budgets, priorities and plans for all levels of our business. To ensure the plan continues to reflect government priorities over the next three years, an annual review process has been built in.

"The strategic themes have been enhanced to reflect increased attention to humanity in our dealings with clients, evidence-based policy and decision-making and high performance in our service delivery.

"We are committed to being a recognised leader in client service delivery, understanding and achieving service excellence in a global environment. All of this must be delivered within a culture of high performance, supported by strong leadership and better engagement with the community and with our stakeholders."

PLAN: The DIAC Strategic Plan 2008-11

DETAILS: National Communications Branch on 02 6264 2244.

IMMIGRATION SENDS \$161,684.60 BILL

According to Crikey, Kasian Wililo, a NSW resident with a wife, two young children and a full time job - and former detainee of Baxter Detention Centre – has received a letter from the Immigration Department enclosing a bill for \$161,684.60.

It was reported that a letter stated the sum was the total expense incurred by Mr Wililo's stay in Baxter -- with an order for it to be paid in 30 days.

Crikey reported that as of June 30, there were 386 people with detention debts amounting to \$7,705,576, according to Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC). The rate was quoted at \$125.40 a day for all mainland detention centres.

Minister for Immigration Senator Chris Evans was reported saying he was aware of the difficult circumstances and inequities that the detention debt policy sometimes produced and had sought comprehensive advice from the department.

REPORT: <http://www.crikey.com.au/Politics/20080924-Two-year-stint-in-Baxter-detention-Thatll-cost-you-160000-thanks.html?display=thankyou#comments>

STUDY ON FOREIGN SEX WORKER EXPLOITATION AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING

Australia and Canada's records in combating human trafficking were among the worst in the developed world, according to a University of Queensland researcher. Dr Andreas Schloenhardt, a senior lecturer in UQ's [TC Beirne School of Law](#) said trafficking in persons remained a phenomenon not well understood and poorly researched (22/9/08).

"This is despite greater public awareness and acknowledgement of the problem by government agencies," he said. "Strategic policies, concerted government action, along with prosecutions and convictions of traffickers are only slowly forthcoming and the support available to victims of trafficking is only marginally developed."

Dr Schloenhardt will conduct what is the first comprehensive and comparative analysis of the exploitation of foreign sex workers and trafficking in persons — especially women and children — in Australia and Canada.

"Government agencies suggest that several hundred persons are trafficked into both countries every year while non-governmental organisations and advocacy groups argue that this trade involves several thousand people," he said.

A recent prosecution in Far North Queensland for sexual servitude and the discovery of 10 Korean 'sex slaves' in Sydney by law enforcement and immigration authorities in early March 2008 were evidence that non-citizens were at particular risk, regardless of their legal status in Australia.

"The trafficking of persons, especially women and children, frequently involves international criminal syndicates that benefit from the exploitation of their victims."

DETAILS: Jan King at UQ Communications (0413 601 248).

CHRISTMAS ISLAND DETENTION CENTRE CONSTRUCTION COSTS \$396M

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Public Works this week tabled its report into the planning and construction of the Christmas Island Immigration Detention Centre.

The Public Works Committee first approved the construction of the Detention Centre in 2003 at an estimated cost of \$276 million. Despite a series of incidents increasing the cost of the

project, it was not until February 2008 that the committee was informed that costs had increased to \$396 million.

The committee found that the 43 per cent increase in costs was a result of poor original cost plans followed by a badly managed project, including the failure to adequately assess the risks associated with building in such a remote location.

The Department of Finance and Deregulation told the committee that it has now implemented a two-stage approval process for major capital works projects. This aims to increase confidence in the approval process by providing greater cost certainty for proposals.

Committee Chairperson Mark Butler said that while lessons had been learned from the failings of this project, the committee was not satisfied with the Department of Finance and Deregulation's justifications for the cost overruns.

"This project highlights the need for rigorous risk assessments to be undertaken at the earliest possible stage, and throughout the project planning phase," Mr Butler said. "The Public Works Committee will be seeking to assure itself that agencies have adequately considered project risks." The Public Works Committee is responsible for scrutinising large Commonwealth capital works projects on behalf of the Parliament.

DETAILS: Committee website <http://www.aph.gov.au/pwc>; or Secretariat on (02) 6277 4636.

EUTHANASIA ADVOCATE TAKES OWN LIFE

At her northern Sydney home, euthanasia advocate Caren Jenning finished the work she began more than two years ago in Mexico, AAP reported (19/9/08). Ms Jenning, 75, on Thursday last week administered to herself a lethal dose of the barbiturate Nembutal, a powerful sedative banned for human consumption in Australia.

She had travelled to Tijuana to obtain it in February 2006. Close friend and supporter Philip Nitschke said Ms Jenning took her own life with Nembutal "she had brought back from Mexico some years earlier". She died peacefully and alone at her Lane Cove home, on Sydney's north shore, he said.

It was a fitting end for a woman who would be remembered as "a person who stood up for what she believed in", Dr Nitschke told AAP. Ms Jenning had consulted her daughter Kate and those close to her about her intentions, which she had made clear some time ago, he said. **REPORT:** <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/newshome/5027165>

STILL TIME TO NOMINATE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MEDAL AND AWARDS

There is still time to submit nominations for the 2008 Human Rights Medal and Awards.

The Human Rights Commissioner, Graeme Innes said, "These are prestigious awards that are all the more impressive because of the fact that the winners are people and organisations, from all around Australia and from right next door, that have selflessly taken steps and put in effort to make Australia better and to assist our society."

"These are often uncelebrated efforts and commitments people have made in their day-to-day lives to issues of human rights, social justice and equality," he said.

"With only two weeks to go, we urge anyone who intends to nominate, or knows someone or an organisation that should nominate, to submit a nomination for one of these awards."

Nominations are being accepted for the Human Rights Medal, Young People's Human Rights Medal, and Human Rights Awards categories of Community (Individual), Community (Organisation), Law (sponsored by the Law Council of Australia), Literature (Non-fiction), Print Media, Television and Radio.

Winners will be presented with their Medals and Awards at a gala luncheon ceremony to be held on Human Rights Day, 10 December 2008, in Sydney.

NOMINATIONS: www.humanrights.gov.au/hr_awards; 02 9284 9618;

hrawards@humanrights.gov.au; Nominations by COB **October 3**.

CALL FOR 2009 HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE ABSTRACTS

The Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Conference will be held March 16/17 at the Melbourne Park Function Centre, Batman Avenue, Melbourne. and a call for abstracts is open until **November 3**.

The conference is organised for people working in public policy and service delivery, human rights advocacy and education, the legal profession and business with a commitment to corporate social responsibility. It will provide a forum for discussion, debate and increased understanding of human rights, with a focus on youth and Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) communities.

Abstract Categories are as follows:

- The Achievement of Human Rights: A review of the Victorian Charter of Human Rights & Responsibilities and what it has achieved considering Victoria's current state of affairs
- The Experience of Human Rights: Sharing the knowledge and insight of everyday people and their advocates. How do we progress a human rights culture?
- The Business of Human Rights: Practical examples of how incorporating human rights gives companies the competitive edge. An opportunity to showcase the big wins for both business and community when human rights are considered.

Abstracts should address the conference theme – Everyday People, Everyday Rights.

DETAILS: <http://www.humanrightsconference.com.au/>; Jessica Ardley

Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission, Level 3, 380 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne VIC 3000; 03 9281 7133; TTY: (03) 9281 7110; Toll Free: 1800 134 142; Jessica.Ardley@veohrc.vic.gov.au; www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au

COMMISSIONER INVITED TO WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTION HEARING

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee on Thursday (25/9/08) expected to hear from the Australian Public Service Commissioner about the need to further protect public servants who speak out about wrongdoing in the workplace as part of its inquiry into public interest disclosures.

According to the Australian Public Service Commission (APSC), eligibility for whistleblower protection should be expanded and protections against victimisation and discrimination in the workplace could be strengthened. About two-thirds of the 232,000 employees in the Australian Government sector are covered by the current limited whistleblower protections under the *Public Service Act 1999*.

The APSC submission to the inquiry also argues that sanctions and penalties should apply to people who make frivolous and false reports and that protections should not extend to those who blow the whistle to a third party such as the media. The Commission indicated that it is well placed to take on an expanded role as part of an improved whistle-blowing framework.

The Committee Chairperson Mark Dreyfus QC said, "The Australian Public Service Commission plays an important role in shaping reform and advancing the ethics and integrity agenda of the Commonwealth public sector. The committee is interested to hear more about the commission's views on improving protections for whistleblowers.

"It is not an easy decision to conceal or reveal suspected wrongdoing in the workplace. All too often whistleblowers are left frustrated, humiliated or ostracised at great personal cost. Yet speaking out should be recognised as a positive contribution to trust and accountability in public administration.

"Many of the contributors to the inquiry have argued for an organisation like the Public Service Commission or Commonwealth Ombudsman to take on an expanded role in investigating

public interest disclosures and supporting those who speak out. The committee is keen to further explore this idea with the commission at the hearing," he said.

BACKGROUND: www.aph.gov.au/laca; Secretariat on 02 6277 2358.

GREENS TO PUSH NEW STOLEN GENERATIONS COMPENSATION BILL

The Greens were to introduce a Bill into the Senate today which, if passed, would grant compensation to the Stolen Generations, the ABC reported (24/9/08). In June a Senate committee recommended that a similar Bill not proceed.

Greens Indigenous spokeswoman Rachel Siewert said the new Bill takes into account some of the committee's concerns.

"This is about compensation for the Stolen Generations," she said. "And what it's doing is setting up then a process by which that happens through the tribunal, which decides including appropriate reparations, deciding on the amounts of ex gratia payments providing a forum for truth and reconciliation." Both the Federal Government and the Opposition have previously said they do not support a national compensation scheme.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/24/2372562.htm>

D. PEACE & SECURITY

MIDDLE EAST QUARTET THREATENED WITH FAILURE

Aid agencies have accused the Middle East Quartet of failing in its mission and urged it to increase its efforts, the BBC reported (25/9/08).

In a report, the agencies said the Quartet - which comprises Russia, the US, the EU and the UN - had failed to make progress on a number of fronts.

The coalition of 21 prominent aid agencies, including Oxfam and Save the Children, warned the Quartet that the Middle East peace process would fall apart unless the group made swift and dramatic progress towards the goals it had set.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7634894.stm

DPR KOREA CUTS OFF UN ATOMIC WATCHDOG ACCESS TO NUCLEAR FACILITIES

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) will restart nuclear activities at its reprocessing plant in Yongbyon, shut down last year, and has terminated the UN atomic watchdog agency's access to the facilities (24/9/08).

On Monday, Mohamed ElBaradei, Director General of the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (**IAEA**), said that the DPRK had asked the body to remove seals and surveillance from the Yongbyon plant.

"This work was completed today. There are no more IAEA seals and surveillance equipment in place at the reprocessing facility," the agency **said** in a news release.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28206&Cr=IAEA&Cr1=DPRK>

INDIA, PAKISTAN LEADERS TO KICK-START PEACE TALKS

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and Pakistan President Asif Ali Zardari have agreed to kick-start their embattled peace dialogue, with new talks to be scheduled within three months, the ABC reported (25/9/8).

The leaders of the nuclear-armed nations agreed that their foreign secretaries "will schedule meetings of the fifth round of the composite dialogue in the next three months," a joint statement said after the summit at the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly.

In their first discussions since Mr Zardari replaced former military strongman Pervez Musharraf in August, the two leaders also called for an ongoing ceasefire to be "stabilised." Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since their independence in 1947.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/25/2374152.htm?section=world>

PAKISTAN REELS IN WAKE OF TERROR BLAST

The weekend bombing of the Marriott Hotel in Pakistan's capital Islamabad has prompted a fierce level of public condemnation as politicians call on Pakistanis to rally in the face of terrorism. The new government faces pressure to ensure the safety of its civilian population while at the same time not appearing to be an instrument of US anti-terrorism policy. [The New York Times](#) (22/9/08), [TIME](#) (21/9/08).

US RAIDS ON TALIBAN IN PAKISTAN CAUSE OUTRAGE

US raids on Taliban and al-Qaeda targets in Pakistani territory have caused outrage in Pakistan, adding to the loathing that some people there have long felt for the way that the US conducts itself on the world stage, the BBC's Owen Bennett-Jones reports (20/9/08).

"I would rather live in the dark ages under the Taliban than be subservient to any foreign power." The unexpected comment comes from an urbane, sophisticated and, I had always thought, Westernised Pashtun lawyer. He is a former minister with the Pakistan People's Party, the most liberal in Pakistan.

The word liberal in the Pakistani context means modern, educated, secular rather than theocratic and, up until now at least, pro-Western ... Taken aback by that conversation, I chatted about it with another senior Pakistani politician, a senator, again a well known liberal, Owen Bennett-Jones writes.

"I agree with him," he said. "Is there is no end to it? The Americans are now bombing Pakistani people. What are they doing here 12,000 miles away from home?" [REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7623097.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/7623097.stm)

AUSTRALIAN FORCES UNDER FIRE IN SOUTHERN AFGHANISTAN

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) is working closely with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan authorities who will launch a joint ISAF / Afghan Government investigation into the incident that occurred on 18 September. The ADF will also conduct a full investigation.

Initial ADF reporting indicates that the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) patrol was moving on foot towards a subsequent activity when they were fired on from a number of locations by unknown attackers. The SOTG patrol returned fire in self-defence.

Initial assessment indicates that the SOTG personnel acted in accordance with their Rules of Engagement and that their actions were appropriate and proportionate in what was a complex and lethal environment.

The ADF can confirm that Chora District Governor and tribal leader, Rozi Khan, was among those killed. It is not possible at this time to determine that he was killed by ADF fire.

A number of groups, including Afghan National Police personnel, were in the vicinity of the incident. No ADF personnel were wounded, however Initial reporting indicates that a number of local nationals were killed or wounded in the exchange of fire. The identity of these additional personnel will be determined as part of the investigations that are now underway.

Australian Forces make every effort to minimise the risk of any damage, injury or loss of life to non-combatants in the course of its operations. However, the ADF reserves the right to protect its own people.

The ADF will not release additional information on this matter until the ADF and ISAF / Afghan Government investigations are complete.

[DETAILS:](#) Defence Media Liaison: 02 6265 3343 or 0408 498 664.

MYANMAR MONKS CONSIDER TAKING UP ARMS

Some Myanmar monks, in particular younger monks, are growing frustrated with nonviolent methods of protest against Myanmar's junta, aimed at restoring freedom through the patient teaching of human rights theory. The quick defeat of the monks, dozens of whom were killed during the so-called Saffron Revolution, has led some to call for weapons and escalation. Monks have at no point resorted to a strategy of violence in their struggle against the military junta. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (19/9/08).

RICE SPEAKS OUT ON RUSSIA

US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice stepped up official rhetoric regarding Russia, condemning its behaviour as "anachronistic" and bound to lead to isolation. She specifically condemned Russia's recent military exercises in Venezuela but suggested that the US would nevertheless not stand in the way of a deepening relationship between the two countries. Rice rejected the notion that the US and Russia are engaged in another Cold War. [The Washington Post](#) (19/9/08).

E. HEALTH & MEANS

MDGS MAJOR NEW COMMITMENTS TO FIGHT POVERTY ANNOUNCED

Governments, foundations, businesses and civil society organisations announced significant new commitments to meet the Millennium Development Goals, as part of the High-level Event on the MDGs at United Nations Headquarters (25/9/08).

Major commitments—including more than \$4.5 billion for education and \$3 billion for malaria - -were announced by major donor countries and partners. Developing countries also announced commitments to mobilise domestic programs aimed at achieving the universally agreed anti-poverty goals by the target date of 2015.

Highlights of commitments included:

GOAL 1 Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Hunger

The European Commission has pledged an additional \$730 million (€500 million) to the World Food Program (WFP) during 2009-2012; the Republic of Korea has committed \$100m over next three years for emergency food relief through the World Food Program.

The US, through its program 'Investing in agriculture partnerships to combat hunger', has committed \$61m over the coming 5 years to support small-scale African farmers with affordable, reliable and high quality seeds and planting material.

The World Food Program, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Howard G. Buffet Foundation announced the launch of a \$7m Purchase for Progress (P4P) program to help connect thousands of farmers with reliable markets to sell their crops at competitive prices.

Companies and partnerships announcing steps to help lift people out of poverty included. Yara International (\$60m for fertilizer terminals in Mozambique and Tanzania. Ericsson is establishing an Innovation Centre to assist and encourage 400,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa. The GAVI Alliance is raising \$4 billion in the bond market to finance investments in developing countries. Finlay committed to create 10,000 new jobs in Bangladesh by 2011.

Pakistan launched a cash transfer program (Benazir Income Support Program), with an allocation of \$738 000 (Rs.34 billion) for 2008-09 to provide cash assistance of \$21/per month (Rs.1,000/per month) to 3.4 million low-income households.

Other Goals:

Goal 2 Achieve Universal Primary Education

Launch of the 'Class of 2015' Partnership to get 24 million children into school by 2010—\$4.5 billion in new pledges and commitments, including: \$3 billion from the World Bank to support education in 30 countries; \$500m from Saudi Arabia, \$500m from Australia, \$255m from

Spain and \$80m from Norway, \$92m from the UK for the Education Fast-Track Initiative, as part of commitment to give almost \$16 billion over ten years for education.

Participants include: the United Kingdom, Spain, France, Norway, Kuwait, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Kenya, Bangladesh, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Vatican, EC, World Bank, UNESCO, Arab Fund, Cisco, Intel, Action Aid, Dubai Cares, Khalifa Foundation, Oxfam Novib, Save the children, Education International, GCE, Queen Rania of Jordan, Comic Relief, Anglican Church, Holy See, Jewish Council of Public Affairs, World Congress of Muslim Philanthropists. The European Union set out commitments in its 'Agenda for Action' to increase support to education by \$6.3 billion (€4.3 billion) by 2010. Japan committed to build 1,000 schools in Africa, with approximately 5,500 classrooms.

Goal 3 Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women

Denmark committed to doubling development assistance to gender equality and women's rights in 2008 to close to \$80m. One hundred commitments towards MDG3 were announced as part of the MDG3 Torch event hosted by Denmark and Liberia, including a \$100m commitment by Goldman Sachs .

Goal 4 Reduce Child Mortality and Goal 5: Improve Maternal Health

A commitment was announced to mobilise \$2.4 billion in 2009, rising to \$7 billion by 2015, to meet the goal of reducing child and maternal deaths by saving 3 million mothers and 7 million newborns by 2015. The partners, including Norway, the UK, the World Bank, WHO and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, also announced the formation of a high-level Task Force on Innovative Financing for Health Systems which would help mobilise the extra resources needed to support stronger health systems and train over one million extra health workers.

Norway has pledged \$1 billion over ten years to reduce child and maternal mortality, in addition to a pledge of \$1 billion between 2000 and 2015 for vaccination of children in poor countries. Australia will spend at least \$210m in the next 4 years to improve women's and children's health, with a focus on Asia-Pacific countries. The Netherlands and the UK committed \$155m (€106 mn) in joint funding for water and sanitation initiatives in developing countries over the next five years. Japan committed to train 100,000 health workers in Africa.

Goal 6 Combat HIV/AIDS, Malaria and Other Diseases

A Global Malaria Action Plan was launched, including more than \$3 billion in commitments:

Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria: \$1.62 billion over two years in new grants for malaria submitted to its board for approval in November, including plans for distribution of 100 million additional bed nets.

World Bank: \$1.1 billion to expand the Malaria Booster Program, which supports the rapid scale-up of malaria programs in Africa.

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation: \$168.7 million to the PATH Malaria Vaccine Initiative for research on a new generation of malaria vaccines.

United Kingdom: over \$70 million (£40 million) pledge to support the Affordable Medicines Facility for Malaria, which the UK encourages the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to host. Additionally, commitment to an increase in malaria R&D funding to at least \$9 million (£5 million) per year by 2010 and to provide 20 million of the 125 million bed nets that are needed to close the global bed net gap.

Marathon Oil / Global Business Coalition on HIV/AIDS, TB, and Malaria / Equatorial Guinea: \$28 million co-investment will lay a solid foundation for a capital campaign orchestrated by GBC, Malaria No More and the UN Foundation to leverage the leadership of the world's most prominent business leaders to raise \$100 million by the end of 2010.

UN High Commission for Refugees / United Nations Foundation: \$2 million grant to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) for long-lasting, insecticide-treated bed nets in temporary refugee camps across Africa.

Sesame Workshop / Mattel / Malaria No More: \$2m program to provide Sesame-themed malaria education materials to children and parents and bed nets in Tanzania and Zambia.

The Organisation of the Islamic Conference will commit \$200m from its member states to fight malaria. Denmark committed to doubling assistance to \$196m (DKK 1 billion) in 2010 to achieve universal access to treatment by 2010 and reversing the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015. Japan pledged an additional \$560m to the Global Funds to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria.

Goal 7 Ensure Environmental Sustainability

Norway is providing \$35m for the establishment of the UN REDD program to combat deforestation in developing countries. Norway has also committed up to \$1 billion to the Amazon Fund for reducing deforestation in the Amazon. Bangladesh has committed \$35m in domestic resources for the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. The UK agreed to provide \$150m towards the Bangladesh Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.

The World Bank (financed by the governments of the UK, Netherlands and Switzerland) is to conduct a study for \$8m on the economics of adaptation to climate change.

Greece will contribute \$4m (€3m) a year for next 4 years to support adaptation efforts to climate change by African countries. Engage in similar agreement with the Alliance of Small Island States for \$1.4m (€1m).

Japan established the Cool Earth Partnership, a new financial mechanism on climate change on the scale of \$10 billion, cooperating actively with developing countries' efforts to reduce emissions. It will contribute \$1.2 billion to the Climate Investment Fund of the World Bank (total commitment by G8 countries is \$6 billion).

The Republic of Korea launched an East Asia Climate Partnership program, including \$200m funding over 5 years to support countries in East Asia to make economic growth compatible with climate change. Sweden announced a new funding package for climate change and development allocating over \$585m in additional support to climate-related development assistance over 2009-2011, with a specific focus on Africa. Japan committed to develop water facilities to provide safe drinking water to 6.5m people.

Goal 8 Global Partnership for Development

Spain committed \$292m (€200m) for the One-UN in the MDG Achievement Fund and \$161m (€110m) to 'Delivering as One,' an expanded multi-donor funding window in the MDG Achievement Fund, to operate in 2009. The UK committed \$73m (£40m) over 2 years to 'Delivering as One'.

Denmark set aside \$3 billion (DKK 15.3B) in 2009 for development assistance (equivalent to 0.82 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI)) to support efforts in achieving all MDGs and to combat poverty. Two thirds of bilateral assistance to be directed to Africa. \$39 million (DKK 200 million) set aside in 2009 to ensure follow-up to the recommendations of the Commission for Effective Development Cooperation with Africa.

Ireland committed to spend 0.54 per cent of its GNI towards achieving the MDGs in 2008 and increase spending to 0.70% of GNI by 2012; Japan committed to provide up to \$4 billion ODA loan over five years with special focus on infrastructure and agricultural development. The Republic of Korea's Official Development Assistance (ODA) is expected to reach around \$3.3 billion dollars in 2015, representing a six-fold increase from 0.04 per cent in 2000.

[DETAILS: www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel.](http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2008highlevel)

MOST MATERNAL DEATHS OCCUR IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES: UNICEF

Over 500,000 women die unnecessarily every year due to complications from pregnancy and childbirth, with 99 per cent of those deaths occurring in developing countries, according to a new report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) (19/9/08). [REPORT: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28119&Cr=Maternal&Cr1=Mortality](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28119&Cr=Maternal&Cr1=Mortality)

ETHIOPIA CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF HORN OF AFRICA EMERGENCY

The UN World Food Program (WFP) has appealed for US\$460 million to feed 9.6 million people affected by drought and high food prices in Ethiopia up to next March (22/9/08).

"The Horn of Africa region is facing the worst humanitarian crisis since 1984, and Ethiopia is caught in the middle," said WFP Executive Director, Josette Sheeran. "We know what needs to be done – we just need the funds to go out and do our job, protecting the hungry."

Around a quarter of those in need – some 2 million people – live in the arid Somali region of Ethiopia where it has not rained for three years. Pastoralist communities in the region have already lost half of their cattle herds. People are skipping meals and parents are pulling children out of school so that they can help to beg in towns or scour the countryside for food.

WFP is facing a similar challenge in neighbouring Somalia, where 3.25 million people – almost half the population – have been affected by drought, high food prices and conflict. Ninety per cent of WFP's food deliveries to Somalia arrive by sea, but attacks by pirates are disrupting supply lines and discouraging ship owners from making the journey. A Canadian naval vessel that has been escorting ships carrying humanitarian aid will withdraw its support on September 27 and no nation has yet volunteered to take over the protective role.

DETAILS: Greg Barrow, WFP/Rome, on +39-06-65132330; +39-3472582217 (ISDN line).

AFGHANISTAN FACES POSSIBLE FOOD SHORTAGE

Drought and conflict have combined to decimate Afghanistan's crops, raising the specter of millions more Afghans facing acute food shortages in the winter. Aid agencies warn of a growing humanitarian crisis, and that widespread hunger could set off civil unrest. [The New York Times](#) (19/9/08).

KABUL PLANS PEACE DAY POLIO CAMPAIGN

The Kabul Government and aid agencies are planning a mass campaign to immunise two million children against polio around International Peace Day on Sept. 21 in areas where children are normally inaccessible due to security concerns. [IRINNews.org](#) (18/9/08).

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES QUERIED

Contrary to what some marketers of the electronic cigarette imply in their advertisements, the World Health Organisation (WHO) does not consider it to be a legitimate therapy for smokers trying to quit (19/9/08).

"The electronic cigarette is not a proven nicotine replacement therapy," said Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General of WHO's Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health Cluster.

"WHO has no scientific evidence to confirm the product's safety and efficacy. Its marketers should immediately remove from their websites and other informational materials any suggestion that WHO considers it to be a safe and effective smoking cessation aid."

The typical electronic cigarette is made of stainless steel, has a chamber for storing liquid nicotine in various concentrations, is powered by a rechargeable battery and resembles a real cigarette. Users puff on it as they would a real cigarette, but they do not light it, and it produces no smoke. Rather, it produces a fine, heated mist, which is absorbed into the lungs.

Developed in China in 2004, the electronic cigarette is sold there and in numerous other countries, including Brazil, Canada, Finland, Israel, Lebanon, the Netherlands, Sweden, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

Marketers of the electronic cigarette typically describe it as a means to help smokers break their addictions to tobacco. Some have even gone so far as to imply that WHO views it as a legitimate nicotine replacement therapy like nicotine gum, lozenges and patches.

But WHO knows of no evidentiary basis for the marketers' claim that the electronic cigarette helps people quit smoking. Indeed, as far as WHO is aware, no rigorous, peer-reviewed

studies have been conducted showing that the electronic cigarette is a safe and effective nicotine replacement therapy.

WHO does not discount the possibility that the electronic cigarette could be useful as a smoking cessation aid. The only way to know is to test.

"If the marketers of the electronic cigarette want to help smokers quit, then they need to conduct clinical studies and toxicity analyses and operate within the proper regulatory framework," said Douglas Bettcher, of WHO's Tobacco Free Initiative. "Until they do that, WHO cannot consider the electronic cigarette to be an appropriate nicotine replacement therapy, and it certainly cannot accept false suggestions that it has approved and endorsed the product."

The WHO Study Group on Tobacco Product Regulation is scheduled to address the electronic cigarette, November 12-14 2008, in Durban, South Africa. Convened by WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan, its mandate is to advise her on scientifically sound and evidence-based recommendations to the member states about tobacco product regulation. **DETAILS:** WHO Tobacco Free Initiative: <http://www.who.int/tobacco>.

\$5 MILLION BREAST CANCER STUDY SEEKS 100, 000 WOMEN

More than 100,000 women are being sought to take part in the nation's largest ever breast cancer study, New Ltd reported (24/9/08).

The \$5 million study, funded by the National Breast Cancer Foundation (NBCF) and the Federal Government, will screen women with and without the disease in the hope of better understanding it. Breast cancer is the most common cancer among Australian women and is responsible for more than 2,500 deaths each year.

Under the study, the breast screens, as well as information about participants' lifestyles and cancer treatment, will be put in a database to help identify risk factors and treatment options. NBCF patron Sarah Murdoch told the National Press Club, Canberra said breast screening was well coordinated in Australia, but was not funded to contribute to research.

"Our \$5 million will build the foundation for a national, and even, international cohort study," Ms Murdoch said. "This will be a world-class resource, enabling cutting edge research. It could even provide a model for other cancers where screening is available." Ms Murdoch was launching national breast cancer awareness month.

The foundation is aiming to raise \$5 million for research during October through a number of events, including national pink ribbon day. She hoped the same recognition could be generated for disease like prostate cancer, the most prevalent cancer in Australia.

"We understand that prostate and other cancers don't get the same amount of exposure that we get," she said. "We really hope that a lot of the work that we do at the Breast Cancer Foundation will help other cancers."

REPORT: <http://www.news.com.au/dailytelegraph/story/0,,24396090-5014717,00.html>

13,000 BABIES IN HOSPITAL FOR CHINA FORMULA

China's milk scandal worsened again as the government announced that the number of infants hospitalised, after consuming contaminated baby formula, had risen to nearly 13,000, more than double the previous tally (21/9/08).

The ministry reported 53,000 infants have suffered some degree of illness from melamine-contaminated dairy products. Roughly 40,000 of them were examined and "recovered" without being admitted to a hospital. The other 12,892 infants were hospitalised with more serious kidney problems. Of those, 1,579 have already recovered and been discharged.

REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/09/22/world/asia/22china.html?ref=world>

HALF A MILLION EUROS RAISED FOR AFGHANISTAN

The UEFA EURO 2008™ 'Score for the Red Cross' campaign raised half a million euros which will be used to help mine victims in Afghanistan rebuild their lives.

June's UEFA EURO 2008™ tournament in Austria and Switzerland not only offered spectators exciting football; it also provided them with a chance to contribute towards important humanitarian activities. Through the 'Score for the Red Cross' campaign run jointly by UEFA and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) fans could support their national teams while also providing funds to help landmine victims in Afghanistan walk again and play an active role in society. Donations will also support activities of 16 of the participating National Red Cross and Red Crescent societies.

UEFA pledged EUR 4,000 for each actual goal scored during the tournament. There were 77 goals resulting in a total donation of EUR 308,000. In addition, fans contributed more than EUR 200,000 via the web-based campaign where they were able to purchase virtual goals for their favourite teams and help them win the title of most charitable team. Germany won the fundraising competition and showed their humanitarian commitment by donating the largest amount, followed by Spain and the Netherlands.

"I would like to thank football fans for their generous support and the solidarity they showed with mine victims, and congratulate Germany on their fine win," said UEFA's director of communications, William Gaillard. "Thanks also to the Austrian FA, Swiss Tourism and TEAM, who were among the many institutions which joined the fans in scoring for the Red Cross and made significant pledges to help make a difference."

In addition to emergency treatment, victims of landmines require years of rehabilitation and assistance to gain self sufficiency. Recognising this need, the ICRC also provides vocational training and help getting a job.

"The needs are great in Afghanistan," said Alberto Cairo, head of the ICRC's programme for the war-disabled in Afghanistan. "Sadly, the number of people who have lost limbs or suffered other injuries as a consequence of landmines is huge. Out of the 15,000 people who seek assistance at our limb fitting centre each year, over 3,500 will be helped thanks to the generosity of football fans."

DETAILS: www.scorefortheredcross.org; Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)
SYDNEY SUPPORT OFFICE TO THE REGIONAL DELEGATION FOR THE PACIFIC
on 61 (0)2 9388 9039; sydney.syd@ic
<http://www.icrc.org/Web/Eng/siteeng0.nsf/htmlall/afghanistan?OpenDocument>

YOUTH HEALTH A CONCERN SAYS REPORT

Policy makers need to rethink their approach to health and introduce stricter standards for the media if a decline in the health of Australia's young people is to be halted.

A report to be released in Canberra on Thursday finds that the health and wellbeing of Australians aged around 25 years and under have been declining on a range of measures over the last 20 years, even though death rates have dropped considerably.

This downward slide could negatively impact the nation's future population health unless action was taken now, argues report author Richard Eckersley, a founding director of Australia21 and a visiting fellow at the ANU National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health.

"Orthodox views about youth health and wellbeing tend to underestimate the growing importance of non-fatal, chronic illness – especially mental disorders," Mr Eckersley says. "Research suggests 20 to 30 per cent of young people are suffering significant psychological distress at any one time, with less severe stress-related symptoms such as frequent headaches, stomach-aches and insomnia affecting as many as 50 per cent.

"Mental disorders account for almost half the burden of disease in young Australians, measured as both death and disability. The weight of evidence suggests that the prevalence

of mental disorders has increased over successive generations of youth, as have some physical illnesses, notably diabetes, linked to rising levels of obesity.”

Mr Eckersley says that factors contributing to the decline in mental health among young people include family conflict and breakdown, education and work pressures, media and technological impacts, dietary changes and environmental pollution. He says that cultural intangibles, such as excessive materialism and individualism, are also a problem.

The report *Never better – or getting worse? The health and wellbeing of young Australians* was due to be launched late Thursday.

DETAILS: <http://www.australia21.org.au/>; Simon Couper on 0416 249 241.

F. MEDIA MATTERS

WRITER FREED IN MYAMAR AFTER 19 YEARS

Writer and editor U Win Tin was freed this week after 19 years’ detention in a jail in Myanmar (Burma) (24/9/08).

U Win Tin, a retired journalist, was the longest serving political prisoner in Myanmar. He was arrested on July 4 1989, and sentenced to 20 years’ jail accused of “anti-government propaganda”. Now aged in his 70s, U Win Tin was released on September 23 after Burma’s junta granted an amnesty to about 9000 prisoners for “good behaviour”, according to state media.

Five other political prisoners were also reportedly freed, including another well-known writer, U Aung Soe Myint, and four members of the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), according to the *Irrawaddy News*.

U Win Tin was formerly the editor of the *Hanthawaddy* newspaper and vice-chairman of the Burma Writers’ Union. He was a founder of the NLD, led by Aung San Suu Kyi, which won elections in 1989 but which was prevented from taking power.

In 2001, he was awarded the UNESCO/Guillermo Cano World Press Freedom Prize for his efforts to defend and promote freedom of expression. He was also awarded the World Association of Newspapers Golden Pen of Freedom Award the same year.

“U Win Tin, like many others in Burma , was wrongly imprisoned and his freedom has been far too long in coming,” IFJ Asia-Pacific said.

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) welcomed his release of but said unfortunately other writers and critics continued to be detained and strict censorship enforced.

A year ago a Japanese photojournalist Kenji Nagai was shot dead by a Burmese soldier as he reported on anti-government demonstrations in Rangoon.

DETAILS: IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919. [SEE ALSO HUMAN RIGHTS PAGE](#)

UNESCO VOICES CONCERN OVER DEATHS OF JOURNALISTS IN CAUCASUS

The head of the United Nations agency mandated to defend press freedom today voiced renewed concern over the safety of journalists in the Caucasus region, this time citing the deaths of two newsmen in the Russian Federation (18/9/08).

“I am deeply shocked about the all too numerous reports of violent attacks against journalists in the Caucasus,” UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura **said** in a news release. “I call on all authorities in the region to do everything they can to improve the safety of media workers.”

Abdullah Alishaev from the Republic of Dagestan, who reported on religious affairs for the local television station TV-Chirkei, died on September 3 from wounds sustained when he was shot by unknown assailants the previous evening in Dagestan’s provincial capital, Makhachkala.

Magomed Yevloyev, founder, owner and former editor-in-chief of the independent news website www.ingushetiya.ru, died after he was detained by police on his return to Ingushetia from a visit to Moscow on August 31. Police brought him to hospital where he died from gunshot wounds to the head.

"The killings of journalists are crimes against society as a whole as they deal a blow to freedom of expression and access to independent information for the people of the region," Mr Matsuura said. "I trust that the investigation launched by the authorities will allow the culprits to be brought to justice." Last month he deplored the killing of three journalists in fighting in Georgia between Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian forces.

HEARING ON REGULATION OF COMMERCIAL BROADCASTING

Federal Parliament's Public Accounts Committee scheduled a public hearing to examine a recent report of the auditor-general on the regulation of commercial broadcasting by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA): No 46 of 2007-08 on *Regulation of Commercial Broadcasting*. Evidence was to be given by the Australian National Audit Office and the Australian Communications and Media Authority.

DETAILS: www.aph.gov.au/jpaa ; 02 6277 4615; jcpa@aph.gov.au.

AFGHAN JOURNALIST FEED FROM US BASE

The US Department of Defence has released journalist Jawed Ahmad who had been held without charge at Bagram air base in Afghanistan since last October (24/9/08).

Mr Ahmad was on assignment for Canadian Television (CTV) when he was arrested by US military forces at Kandahar and accused of having contacts with local Taliban leaders and possessing a video about Taliban materials. He was designated an 'enemy combatant'.

The Afghan Independent Journalists' Association (AIJA) reports that the 22-year-old was released unconditionally on September 22 after legal action in the US by the International Human Rights Clinic of Stanford Law School's Mills Legal Clinic, the International Justice Network and Afghanistan Human Rights Organisation.

The lawsuit filed in the US District Court in June against US President George Bush and Secretary of Defence Robert Gates asked the court to compel the president and US military to establish a lawful basis for his detention or release him immediately.

"Jawed Ahmad was held for a year without charge because he was doing his job as a journalist, which is to gather information from all sides to provide balanced and fair coverage. He should never have been detained," IFJ Asia -Pacific said.

Mr Ahmed was held virtually incommunicado and without access to a lawyer. His family and lawyers were not given basic information about his condition. In June, the AIJA reported that US officials denied knowledge of Mr Ahmad's situation.

On his release, Mr Ahmad said: "I am free from hell and today is my victory. After 11 months of being held in cell that was a like a grave, I want to tell the world the story of my detention and I hope that the stories of others held at Bagram will also see the light of day." He said he was never given a reason for his detention.

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

NEPAL: NEWSPAPER OFFICES UNDER ATTACK

Attacks against media outlets in Nepal have continued, the IFJ reported (22/9/08). According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), a group of people attacked the office of *Sandhyakalin*, a daily evening paper in a central district of Kathmandu, on September 21.

Also an armed group of about 15 people attacked staff and equipment at the offices of the Kathmandu-based daily *Metro Post* and weekly *Democracy* on September 18.

The group was reported to have assaulted the editor, Ramhari Silwal, and computer operator Laxman Chitrakar, and smashed furniture and equipment, according to the FNJ.

"The continuing attacks on media outlets in Nepal highlight a worrying pattern of media being targeted because people are upset by the content of essentially straight-forward news reports. These attacks constitute a challenge for Nepal's coalition government, which has assured the media community that it is committed to upholding the right to free speech," IFJ Asia-Pacific said.

The IFJ joins the FNJ in calling for authorities to investigate these latest incidents and to bring the perpetrators to justice. Such action will help to set an example so that the public understands complaints against the media must be dealt with by means other than violence. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

CHINA: China's Central Propaganda Department had ordered newspaper journalists to leave the city where the company considered responsible for a nationwide milk powder poisoning scandal has its headquarters, IFJ reported (25/9/08).

The department was also claimed to have deleted articles relating to the case from websites and insisted on pre-approving articles about the scandal before publication. The restrictions followed earlier instructions that only information obtained from official government sources, such as Xinhua News Agency and *China Daily* could be published. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia-Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

G. OTHER NEWS

BUSH: ENTIRE ECONOMY IN DANGER

US Senator Christopher Dodd, chairman of the Senate Banking Committee, said both parties in the US Congress had reached fundamental agreement on the outline of a \$700bn (£380bn) bail-out plan to revive the finance sector, the BBC reported (26/9/08).

Republicans and Democrats have been worried about who will fund the plan. Mr Dodd said Congress could act in the next few days to pass a Bill on the subject.

Americans must support a massive bail-out of financial markets to ease a "serious financial crisis", US President George W Bush said in a live TV speech on Thursday, the BBC reported (25/9/08). He said the entire economy was in danger and failure to act now would cost more later.

He spoke amid wrangling in Congress over a \$700bn (£378bn) bail-out of financial markets which this week dominated US politics and world attention.

Mr Bush invited Republican and Democratic presidential candidates John McCain and Barack Obama to the White House to discuss the deal. On Wednesday the two campaign rivals disagreed on delaying a TV debate over the economic turmoil. Mr McCain said he was suspending his campaign to help with the crisis, but Mr Obama stated voters now needed to hear from the candidates more than ever.

However, lawmakers from both the Democratic and Republican parties have voiced doubts about the (Bush) plan and the speed at which they were being asked to approve it. They want assurances that it would benefit ordinary American home-owners as well as Wall Street, and be subject to adequate oversight. [REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7634810.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7634810.stm)

CLERICS CONDEMN 'BANK ROBBERS AND ASSET STRIPPERS'

The two most senior figures in the Church of England have condemned the practices of some financial traders, the BBC also reported (26/9/08).

Writing in the *Spectator*, Archbishop of Canterbury Dr Rowan Williams attacked "paper transactions with no concrete outcome beyond profit for traders". When such trading went badly, it caused "real and crippling damage", he said.

In an earlier speech, the Archbishop of York, Dr John Sentamu, called share traders who cashed in on falling prices "bank robbers and asset strippers".

RUMOURS START BANK QUEUES

The Bank of East Asia has denied rumours that it is in financial trouble, after thousands of customers queued to withdraw their savings, the BBC reported (25/9/08). After weeks of global market upset, lines of people quickly formed outside the bank's branches in Hong Kong. In a statement, the bank said the rumours were malicious and untruthful, and they had informed the police. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7633468.stm>

PNG RANKS POORLY IN CORRUPTION INDEX

Australia's near-neighbour, Papua New Guinea, has done very badly in the 2008 Global Corruption Index, the ABC reported (25/9/08).

Denmark has come out first and Somalia last in a list compiled by Transparency International, which ranks countries on the basis of corruption. Australia scores a respectable ninth out of 180 between the Netherlands and Canada in the list of the least corrupt economies.

With PNG's wealth of resources, business might be booming, but so too is corruption. The tiny pacific nation ranks at 151st on the table, ranking with nations like Laos and the Central African Republic.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/25/2373865.htm?section=world>

PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE THE TRANSPARENCY OF POLITICAL DONATIONS

Representatives from the Australian Electoral Commission and Department of Finance and Deregulation were to attend a public hearing on 26/9/08 as part of an inquiry by Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee into the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008.

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

JAPAN'S ASO SEIZES POLITICAL SPOTLIGHT

It's taken a while for 68-year-old Taro Aso to realise his dream of becoming Japan's Prime Minister, the ABC reported (23/9/08). But the party he leads in 2008 is a besieged version of its former self, and it's looking to the comic book-loving former foreign minister to lead it out of despair. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/23/2371482.htm>

ELEVEN SOUTH AFRICAN MINISTERS RESIGN

Eleven members of the South African cabinet say they are resigning along with President Thabo Mbeki, who is to step down on Thursday, the BBC reported (23/9/08). The resignations were seen as a blow to the African National Congress government.

ANC leader Jacob Zuma said the situation would soon return to normal. The ANC is divided between supporters of Mr Mbeki and Mr Zuma. Mr Mbeki was due to leave office on Thursday after accusations that he interfered in the prosecution of Mr Zuma on corruption charges.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7631358.stm>

ISRAELI LEADERSHIP BATTLE CLOUDS BID FOR A PEACE DEAL

The UN's Middle East envoy has warned that peace between the Palestinians and Israel is at a crossroads as the fallout from the primary elections to replace Ehud Olmert as leader of the Kadima party casts a shadow over future talks, The Australian reported (20/9/08).

Kadima is deeply divided several days after former foreign minister Tzipi Livni replaced the ousted Mr Olmert. Early signs suggest the new leader will struggle to build a coalition government within six weeks, which is the cut-off period for when a general election would be called to settle things.

Ms Livni's defeated Kadima rival, Shaul Mofaz, has said he will take a break from politics in the wake of his loss, while the Labor Party of Defence Minister Ehud Barak has publicly said it has reservations about joining a Livni-led government.

The Palestinian Authority has been more enthusiastic about Ms Livni's elevation than most of her rivals and many of her friends, describing her possible ascension to prime minister as the only hope that peace talks will amount to something.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24372537-2703,00.html>

DFAT RECALLED TO DISCUSS AUSTRALIA'S RELATIONSHIP WITH ASEAN

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade is being recalled to continue its evidence to Parliament's Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee. The Sub-Committee is inquiring into Australia's relationship with ASEAN.

Announcing the public hearing, scheduled for Monday, 22 September at 11.00 am, Sub-Committee Chairman Michael Danby said the committee has more issues to discuss with the department.

"ASEAN hopes to create an ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 and the committee will be exploring how this might affect Australia's relationship with this most important trading partner." Mr Danby said. "The committee is also interested in Australia's participation in various ASEAN-related forums such as the East Asia Summit and the ASEAN Regional Forum."

The 10 ASEAN nations are the sixth most important export destination for Australian goods and services, and Australia is the eighth most important source of imports from ASEAN. Representing a population of around 575 million, the ASEAN nations are an important trading partner for Australia, worth over \$55 billion in 2007.

Along with exploring ways to improve Australia's involvement in ASEAN and opportunities to enhance the regional economy and improve cultural links, the committee will examine the security of the region and Australian involvement.

DETAILS: Sub-Committee Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 4306;
<http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/jfadt/asean1/index.htm>

CLOSING THE GAP FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The final public hearing of an inquiry into developing Indigenous enterprises was scheduled for September 25 at Parliament House, Canberra. Invited to appear before the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee were Indigenous Business Australia (IBA) and Reconciliation Australia. They were to outline their work to promote Indigenous business, governance and leadership.

IBA, through IBA Enterprises, assists Indigenous Australians to establish, acquire and grow small to medium businesses through business loans and business support services, which include business planning, business-related skills development and mentoring. This was a second appearance of IBA, "recognising the pivotal role they play in the development of Indigenous enterprises across Australia," Committee Chairperson Richard Marles said.

"We've heard from many participants about the role IBA plays in developing their business as well as the assistance that IBA offers to those who provide business support services to Indigenous Australians wanting to start their own business," he said.

The committee was also to hear from Barbara Livesey, Chief Executive of Reconciliation Australia, the peak national organisation building and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians for the wellbeing of the nation. Reconciliation Australia forms partnerships with corporations, Indigenous and non-Indigenous organisations, government and community groups, as well as individuals.

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

LAUNCH OF INAUGURAL GLOBAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

The launch of Global Entrepreneurship Week in Australia – an initiative that supports young Australians to turn their ideas into action and celebrates entrepreneurial opportunities – is scheduled for September 29 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, when participants are to take part in speed networking.

Global Entrepreneurship Week will be held November 17/23 for the first time in Australia, a week which extends across 75 countries. In Australia, the objectives of Global Entrepreneurship Week are to:

Support the enterprising spirit of young Australians

Connect young Australians nationally to entrepreneurial opportunities regardless of location

Raise awareness of the need for an 'entrepreneurial imperative' supporting Indigenous Australians. [DETAILS](#): Nicole Haj: 0417 303 146; pr@nicolehaj.com.au.

COMMONWEALTH BANK TO FRONT HOUSE ECONOMICS COMMITTEE

The House Economics Committee was due to hold a public hearing in Canberra on September 25 as part of a federal parliamentary inquiry into competition in the banking and non-banking sectors in Australia.

The Commonwealth Bank was to discuss how it is managing the current environment and what steps the bank is taking to provide competitive services to its customers.

Committee Chairman Craig Thomson said the committee would investigate the extent to which competition in the financial sector had reduced and, in particular, examine proposals that could help to increase competition and reduce fees and charges for people struggling with their mortgages. [DETAILS](#): Secretary on 02 6277 4209; economics.reps@aph.gov.au; <http://www.aph.gov.au/economics>.

MIGRANTS BOOST AUSTRALIA'S POPULATION

Migrants accounted for over half of Australia's net population increase in the year to March, figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) show.

The ABS says Australia's population reached 21,283,000 in March - an increase of 1.6 per cent or 336,800 people from the previous year. There were 430,000 arrivals from overseas during that period, while 230,000 people left Australia.

The net overseas migration to Australia of just under 200,000 accounted for 59 per cent of the country's population. Natural increase - the excess of births over deaths - contributed the remaining 137,700 people (41 per cent).

[REPORT: http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/24/2373205.htm?section=australia](http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/24/2373205.htm?section=australia)

H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

THE FLEECING OF AMERICA

World leaders converge on a battered New York this week for the United Nations General Assembly and my advice to them is: Think Damien Hirst, writes Roger Cohen in the International Herald Tribune (21/9/08). It's not that I expect them to dwell on the British artist's giant tanks of dead sharks, zebras and piglets at a time when the US economy is being socialised to the tune of \$700 billion (\$2,000 for every person in the country) as a result of a giant mortgage-related Ponzi scheme. It's that the Hirst bull market in the midst of the most convulsive week for financial markets since 1929 says something important about the global economy and America's declining place in it ... Asians have been saving rather than spending. Their consumers are in better shape. Their banks are in better shape. The China Investment Corp (CIC), a sovereign wealth fund, is sitting on \$200 billion (and a 9.9 percent stake in Morgan Stanley) while China's central bank is managing another \$1.8 trillion in reserves. And what have we heard from the new centres of wealth and power - China, India, Brazil, Russia, the Gulf states - about America's financial agony over the past week? ... When asked about the crisis, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, the Brazilian president, said: "What crisis? Go ask Bush." [ARTICLE: http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/09/21/opinion/edcohen.php](http://www.iht.com/articles/2008/09/21/opinion/edcohen.php)

A PEACE FROM THE BOTTOM UP

Amid the din of the financial crisis and the presidential campaign, the Bush administration's attempt to broker an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal has quietly expired, Jackson Diehl writes in the Washington Post (22/9/08). Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's 16 trips to the

region over the past 21 months; last year's Annapolis peace conference; months of meetings between Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams -- all have sunk under the weight of the corruption charges against departing Israeli Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) and the competition of crises from Georgia to Pakistan. Nor is the peace process likely to revive anytime soon.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/21/AR2008092101126.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

THE COAL CONUNDRUM

Tim Flannery's acknowledgement that the world is too far down the path to dump coal as an energy source will surprise many who have followed his warnings on climate change, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (20/9/08). Last March, James Hansen, arguably the world's leading climate scientist, and eight colleagues, claimed earth's climate system was about twice as sensitive to carbon dioxide pollution as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had found. This implies that there is already enough greenhouse gas pollution in the atmosphere to cause 2 degrees of warming, bringing about conditions not seen on earth for 2 to 3 million years and constituting, according to the authors, "a degree of warming that would surely yield dangerous climate impacts".

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/19/1221331207201.html>

ALL AT SEA IN A LEAKY BOAT

A Mediterranean island is at the crossroads of African hope and despair, but Paola Totaro finds Italian charity is tested at home (20/9/08). The smell will remain imprinted forever; an acrid cocktail of sweat, urine and exhaustion, the scent of hope and the stench of despair. In surreal, dignified silence, men, women and tiny children hobble down the gangplank, a sea of haunted faces clutching little more than each other or a plastic water bottle, long since sucked dry. An infernal scene, it is played out daily on the vast concrete wharf that dominates the tiny port of Lampedusa. There is no moaning, no wailing, just the deep drone of boat engines churning water, the shout of coastguards mooring, a seagull's cry. On land, safe and shaded from the vicious 40-plus heat, the relief is palpable, if fleeting.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/19/1221331207183.html>

THE AFGHAN-PAKISTAN MILITANT NEXUS

Seven years after 9/11, the US has declared the Afghan-Pakistan border region to be the new frontline in its war on terror. An accompanying map shows how militants operate on either side of the border. (Text: M Ilyas Khan/BBC). The article's summaries include Helmand, Kandahar, Quetta, Zabul, South and North Waziristan, Khyber and parts of Pakistan's tribal areas, and Swat. Kabul's writ has never run strong in the remote southern plains of Helmand province. Further south, across the border in Pakistan, lies the equally remote Noshki-Chaghai region of Balochistan province. Since 9/11, this region has been in turmoil. In the Baramcha area on the Afghan side of the border, the Taliban have a major base. The chief commander is Mansoor Dadullah. From there they control militant activities as far afield as Nimroz and Farah provinces in the west, Oruzgan in the north and parts of Kandahar province in the east. They also link up with groups based in the Waziristan region of Pakistan.

ARTICLE: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7601748.stm

RISE AND FALL OF THABO MBEKI

Thabo Mbeki was born into one of the leading families of the African National Congress, the BBC reported (20/9/08). His father - Govan - was a stalwart of both the ANC and the Communist Party. Thabo spent his early years in the rural Transkei. His father was often away on party business and he worked in the family store while he went to school. At 14 Thabo Mbeki joined the ANC. He left South Africa in 1962, travelling to Tanzania before going on to Britain where he studied economics at Sussex University. He was a popular figure, although his contemporaries remarked that he was always somewhat aloof. In 1970 Thabo Mbeki went to the Soviet Union for military training and then to the Zambian capital, Lusaka, where he was integrated into the ANC exile structures.

ARTICLE: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7626111.stm>

SECULAR SCHOOLS OF THOUGHT TAINTED

Imagine if Bob Hawke, our only openly atheist prime minister, had allocated \$165 million for religious schools to have an atheist, agnostic or humanist counsellor, philosopher or ethicist to help them teach values and improve their pastoral care, Jane Caro writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (22/9/08). Or if publicly funded (and they all are) religious schools were compelled to provide two hours a week of atheist, agnostic or humanist instruction to their students. Parents could withdraw their children from such classes, but no other instruction could be offered to those students during those two hours. Excluded children would be banished to endless repeats of videos in the hall. What would be the reaction if the reason given for the refusal to offer alternative instruction during the humanist two hours was that it was unfair competition because something more varied, academic or entertaining could encourage students to withdraw? If they wouldn't voluntarily listen to atheist philosophy, the argument went, they would just have to be bored. What if programs offered in some religious schools - programs claiming to teach merely grooming, good manners and social skills - turned out to be run by atheist feminist and gay rights advocates whose motivation was to convert students to their secular ideals. How would society react?

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/21/1221935447618.html>

FAT CATS FIRST

Looking back on the wreckage of the Bush era, there is one undeniable bright spot: It's been a very good time to be a fat cat, writes Dan Froomkin (23/9/08). A consistent result of virtually every major Bush policy, from tax cuts to war, has been to enrich the already wealthy. The pinnacle of Bush's legacy may turn out to be a \$700 billion bailout of the high-flying Wall Street firms that made enormous fortunes - and rewarded themselves with [billions in bonuses](#) - leveraging risky mortgage-backed assets. Now that those firms are in deep trouble, the Bush administration wants taxpayers - many of whom are facing their own financial troubles - to come to the rescue. And, in case there's any doubt that it's fat-cats-first with this White House, the news today is that Bush aides are balking at moves that would require companies accepting bailouts to cap executive pay, or give taxpayers equity for their contributions. [Lori Montgomery and Paul Kane](#) write in The Washington Post: "The Bush administration is resisting changes to the measure being sought by Democratic leaders and many Republicans, including one that would grant the government authority to cut executive pay at firms that participate in the bailout and another that would guarantee that taxpayers share in the profits if those firms recover financially.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/blog/2008/09/23/BL2008092301299.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

GRAIN STUBBLE COULD POWER A GREENER FUTURE

Using waste stubble would avoid having to allocate precious food-producing land to the production of bio-fuels (CSIRO), Anna Salleh for ABC Science Online writes (22/9/08). Australian researchers say biofuels made from the stubble left over from harvesting grains could replace around one fifth of the volume of petrol used in Australia.

Dr Michael Dunlop of CSIRO Sustainable Ecosystems in Canberra and colleagues reported their findings at the Australian Society of Agronomy Conference in Adelaide. Dr Dunlop says based on 2001 figures, the ten main grain crops of Australia produce about 65 million tonnes of stubble.

He says much of this needs to be left in the ground to protect soil, retain soil carbon and reduce evaporation. This would leave just under 15 million tonnes of remaining stubble to be distributed in a way that is economically viable to collect.

"That would be equivalent to roughly 20 per cent of the volume of the petrol that we use," he said. The researchers analysed figures for wheat, barley, canola, lupins, oats, sorghum, triticale, field peas and chick peas in their study.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/22/2370634.htm>

UN FORECASTS BOOM IN GREEN JOBS

The UN says millions of new jobs will be created worldwide over the next few decades by the development of alternative energy technologies, the BBC reported (24/9/08).

More than a million people already work in bio-fuels, but a UN report says that could rise by 12 million by 2030. It says 'green jobs' depend on a shift of subsidies from oil and natural gas to wind, solar, and geothermal power. New jobs could also include the expansion of recycling and making environmentally friendly vehicles.

The report, *Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World*, was commissioned and funded by the UN's Environment Program (UNEP).

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/7634792.stm>

GLOBAL WATER SCARCITY AFFECTS FOOD PRODUCTION

As the world's population and incomes grow, farmers will need increasing amounts of water to produce enough food to meet a demand, a troublesome equation when most of the world's farmers already lack sufficient supply, The Economist reports. Global warming, the newspaper says, will only exacerbate the problem. [The Economist](#) (18/9/08).

PETITION ON MURRAY-DARLING DILEMMA

The Murray-Darling Basin accounts for over 40 per cent of Australia's agricultural production and grows almost a third of all Australia's food. GetUP says it has spoken to scientists, environmentalists and farmers, and learned there were three things the Federal Government must do immediately if the mighty Murray is to flow again:

Recover and release 500 gigalitres of water into the river system by the end of the year, and 4000 gigalitres overall to prevent our food bowl turning into a dust bowl.

Create an emergency Interim Basin management plan, including a focus on the Coorong and Lower Lakes. GetUp says this could be done in a matter of weeks, as a precursor to establishing a truly independent authority that is not held to ransom by state governments' veto power.

Establish a national freshwater reserve system to protect rivers, wetlands and estuaries of high value to the river. As a first step, urgently intervene to save the Murray River Red Gums, the river's "green lungs" suffering from state inaction.

GetUp PETITION: www.getup.org.au/campaign/BuyMeARiver