

# 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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Editor: Judy Cannon - 07 3358 2623

Email: [judycnn@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judycnn@yahoo.com.au)

Contributing Editor: Ian Mathews - 02 6281 4025

Email: [ian.mathews7@bigpond.com](mailto:ian.mathews7@bigpond.com)

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

### UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON WORLD HABITAT DAY – OCTOBER 6

Many of the world's most pressing challenges -- poverty, natural disasters, escalating prices for food and fuel -- have important links with rapid urbanisation.

Urbanisation changes forever the way we use land, water and energy. Done well, it can bring people choices and help them thrive. Done poorly, it reduces safety, despoils the environment and exacerbates the marginalisation of those who are already suffering and excluded.

The theme of this year's World Habitat Day is *Harmonious Cities*. Our rapidly urbanising world cannot claim to be harmonious if slum-dwellers do not enjoy opportunities to find jobs and improve their living conditions. Nor will it be harmonious if the growth and expansion of urban areas comes at the expense of the natural environment.

The Millennium Development Goals call for a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers by 2020. As of 2005, slightly more than one third of the urban population in developing regions lived in slum conditions. In sub-Saharan Africa, the proportion was over 60 per cent, meaning that large investments will be necessary, for example to provide access to water, sanitation, durable housing or sufficient living space. But even in that region, and in others where deprivation is not as acute, simple, low-cost interventions could go a long way.

Cities have tremendous potential to be places where balanced development prevails, where diverse people live in harmony, and where healthy living conditions coexist with low levels of energy consumption, resource-use and waste. As we observe World Habitat Day, I call on all partners and stakeholders to do our utmost to realise this potential, and to build decent living conditions for all women, men and children in a way that also preserves our natural heritage and promotes greener and smarter growth.

– **Ban Ki-moon**

### ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT CALLS FOR POWER SHIFT AT UN

Calling for the democratization of the United Nations, General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto stressed the need to restore power "usurped" by the Security Council to other organs of the world body (1/10/08).

"The United Nations is supposed to be a democratic institution based on the principle of the equality and sovereignty of all member states," as well as the principle of "one state, one vote," Mr D'Escoto told UN Radio and the UN News Centre.

But he said that "votes don't mean anything if they're not taken into account. So we've got to move so that the majority really decides."

Characterising the 192-member assembly as the "most democratic and representative body" of the UN, the president pointed out that there is a perception among some that the organisation is "a dictatorship where a few decide things."

It was essential to reverse the "usurpation of power" that had taken place and return it to the assembly, which is "not the only organ that has suffered from this drive to concentrate all the power in the hands of the few," he said, noting that the role of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) has been significantly diminished as well.

Mr D'Escoto acknowledged that stronger nations would be hesitant to relinquish their power, but he underlined the need to push for changes nonetheless "for the sake of peace."

REPORT:

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28392&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

## **BELARUS ENDORSES WIDESPREAD DEMOCRATISATION OF UN**

The most senior officials in the UN Secretariat should come from a much broader spread of countries, Belarus told the General Assembly's annual high-level debate, calling for wide-scale democratisation of the entire organisation (29/9/08).

Belarus' Permanent Representative Andrei Dapkiunas said his country "has always been a proponent of honest democratic relations in the UN system, a supporter of equal opportunities for all member states and of the establishment of common rules of the game for the whole membership." He was backing the president's call for the democratisation of the UN. He said that kind of reform must include accelerated change within the UN Secretariat. **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28369&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

## **RESOLUTION BACKS IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL COUNTER-TERROR STRATEGY**

Following a two-day debate, the General Assembly renewed its unwavering commitment to strengthen international cooperation to prevent and combat terrorism, and, recalling its pivotal role in following up on implementation of the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy, called on member states and the organisation to accelerate their efforts to implement it in all its aspects.

Adopted on September 8 2006, the strategy united, for the first time, all 192 UN member states behind a common strategic framework. They agreed to take a concrete set of measures to address terrorism in all its aspects, and, by that action, to convey the same critical message: terrorism is never justifiable, whether on political, philosophical, ideological, racial, ethnic, religious or any other grounds.

In the strategy, member states also committed themselves to review its implementation in two years' time. The just-concluded meeting was the first major assessment of their efforts to implement the strategy's four pillars: to address the conditions conducive to the spread of terrorism; to prevent and combat terrorism; to build state capacity to prevent and combat terrorism, and to strengthen the role of the UN in that regard; and to ensure respect for the human rights of all as well as the rule of law as the fundamental basis for the fight against terrorism.

By this week's consensus resolution, adopted as orally amended, member states reaffirmed the Global Strategy and its four pillars, as well as their own primary responsibility to implement it. **DETAILS:** <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2008/ga10738.doc.htm>

## **MIGUEL D'ESCOTO: ACT NOW ON FOOD, FINANCE AND UN REFORM**

President [Miguel D'Escoto](#) also called for the end of "business as usual" in global affairs at the conclusion of the 192-member body's annual high-level debate. Instead he advocated urgent action for the twin food and financial crises and the reform of the United Nations (29/9/08).

"We have outlined our priority concerns, and reaffirmed our conviction that this uniquely representative body remains the most important and most democratic forum for global debate," Miguel D'Escoto **said**, wrapping up the five-day event that heard from over 100 heads of state and government.

The assembly was a forum that facilitates dialogue and solutions for answers to global issues, he said. "But it is only when all voices are heard that we can expect to implement truly comprehensive solutions." The current financial turmoil "has its roots in a 'mania of selfishness' that has come to dominate today's culture of 'I and mine,'" he said. "Those appealing for courage and compassion have far outnumbered those who inspire fear and distrust."

Characterising the food crisis as "madness," Mr D'Escoto said, "We are still facing the shameful fact that hundreds of millions of people suffer from hunger and malnutrition." But he voiced hope in the proposals put forward by speakers at the debate, which he said will prevent the situation from becoming "a prolonged catastrophe" if put into action.

Addressing immense inequities means that “we must take steps to defuse time bombs that are ticking at the heart of virtually all of our societies,” the president said, adding that this will require sacrifices on the part of all UN member states. “And there are undeniable signs that we are getting our priorities straight. We have decided to focus first and foremost on the most vulnerable, the billions of people who are living in abject poverty and neglect.”

Last week, two large events were held on Africa’s development needs and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline. These high-level meetings had generated unmistakable momentum for a successful gathering in Doha in November when the promises around financing for development would be consolidated, he said. He was, referring to the upcoming meeting to review the implementation of the 2002 landmark anti-poverty agreement known as the Monterrey Consensus.

#### **MANY NATIONS ADDRESS THE ASSEMBLY:**

##### **FOOD AND FUEL CRISES ‘REQUIRE RESULTS, NOT JUST PROMISES’**

The global food and fuel crisis will be not resolved unless countries start turning their statements and promises of assistance and reform on the issue into reality, Malaysian Foreign Minister Rais Yatim told the General Assembly, calling for a multi-track approach to tackling the problems (27/9/08).

Affluent countries have a particular responsibility to fulfil their commitments on providing aid and official development assistance (ODA) to needy nations, Mr Yatim **told** the fifth day of the assembly’s annual high-level debate. If they live up to those pledges, they would “set a standard for entire world, rather than on trying to pass the burden of action on to the developing world.”

Governments can and should also play a greater role than the private sector, particularly in developing infrastructure and transferring technology, than the private sector.

“The developing world is still infrastructure-deficient. Pure market solutions to technology transfer cannot be regarded as effective solutions for achieving sustainable development. Government intervention is required if these technologies are to be made available at concessionary rates,” he said.

Among many speakers in the assembly debate, Peruvian Foreign Minister José Antonio García Belaúnde **said** the food and fuel crises were having a disproportionate burden on the poor. He welcomed the assembly’s recognition of poverty as an issue that required a comprehensive global response, adding that new and ambitious strategies and programs are going to be necessary to help the poorest people.

He warned that the threats posed by the crises were overwhelming existing initiatives to fight poverty and making it harder for struggling countries to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the set of eight targets for slashing social and economic ills, by 2015.

#### **SPEAKERS REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28340&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

##### **AFRICAN STATES URGE RICH NATIONS TO MEET AID, TRADE PLEDGES**

Wealthy countries need to fulfil their much-vaunted commitments to spend more on aid and development to the world’s poorest nations and to liberalize international trade rules, the representatives of four African states have told the General Assembly.

Burundi’s Second Vice-President Gabriel Ntisezerana called on developed countries to live up to their collective pledge to contribute the equivalent of 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP) for aid and development, despite the current turbulence in international markets.

“Special attention must be paid to the problem of order in international financial markets, the need to increase investments in Africa, the rational management of hydraulic and energy resources, the transfer of technology and international trade agreements, the issue of climate change and the management of toxic wastes,” he said.

"It is more urgent than ever that we harmonize the procedures and instruments to realise our common goals, namely the battle against hunger, the reduction of world poverty and the consolidation of peace," Mr. Ntisezerana said.

**REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28317&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

### **VANUATU SEEKS UN REVIEW FOR LEAST DEVELOPED COUNTRY STATUS**

Vanuatu called on the UN to urgently review the criteria for classifying some nations as least developed countries (LDCs), a status that brings increased international aid and trade assistance, saying that the interpretation of the rules could lead to some struggling states missing out on vital funding (26/9/08).

President Kalkot Mataskelekele **told** the assembly that poor countries could find themselves having "graduated" out of LDC status, even though they remain highly vulnerable to external economic shocks.

"The decision of graduating a country from LDC status, in our view, must imply the recognition of undisputed sustainable socio-economic progress in the country," he said. There are currently 49 LDCs, classified by the UN for having the lowest socio-economic indicators.

**REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28298&Cr=general+assembly&Cr1=debate>

### **OTHER UN NEWS**

#### **BAN URGES COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT UN STAFF**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for collective responsibility and closer collaboration between the UN and member states to protect the organisation's staff, who, along with humanitarian workers, are facing increasingly serious threats to their safety in many parts of the world (1/10/08).

"I'm gravely concerned by the wide scale of threats, the rise in deliberate targeting of humanitarian and UN personnel and their vulnerability worldwide," Mr. Ban says in a new **report**, which covers the period from July 1 2007 to June 30 2008.

"The security of humanitarian and United Nations personnel continues to deteriorate," he adds, noting that over the course of the past year, they were "the targets of deliberate attacks by extremists, armed groups and disgruntled sections of populations in all areas of humanitarian and United Nations operations."

The period under review saw 490 attacks against UN offices, convoys and premises, with a 38 per cent increase in deaths of UN staff – or 26 deaths compared to 16 in the previous year. The majority of those casualties, 22 of the 26, were locally-recruited humanitarian and UN personnel.

It was also the worst period in recorded history for non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which lost 63 workers to malicious acts.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28383&Cr=Algiers&Cr1=>

#### **FOUR DEAD AFTER UN-CONTRACTED HELICOPTER CRASHES IN DARFUR**

A helicopter contracted by the United Nations crashed in the strife-torn Darfur region of Sudan, killing all four crew members, a UN spokesperson confirmed (29/9/08).

According to the UN-African Union Hybrid Mission in Darfur (UNAMID), the helicopter crashed near the Kalma camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) after takeoff from Nyala, the capital of South Darfur.

Earlier in the month a UN helicopter in Darfur was able to land safely after being shot at in the third incident of its kind in Darfur, where a conflict pitting rebels against Government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen has raged since 2003.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28363&Cr=darfur&Cr1=>

### **BEHIND THE SCENES AT UN'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

It takes a supreme logistical effort to accommodate the 75 heads of state and 36 leaders of government who troop to the UN Headquarters in New York City for the General Assembly. UN technicians unspool an estimated 1,300 miles of cables to broadcast the proceedings to member nations. One diplomat said of the experience: "I go back to my country with new ideas and new business cards and very sore feet." [Los Angeles Times](#) (1/10/08).

### **ICC CONTINUES PUSH TO CHARGE SUDAN'S LEADER**

The International Criminal Court's (ICC) chief prosecutor said he will continue to push for Sudan's leader to be charged with war crimes, the BBC reported (27/9/08).

Luis Moreno Ocampo said there was strong evidence that President Omar al-Bashir was behind attacks on civilians in Darfur province. The Sudanese government has rejected the allegations, saying the ICC's case threatens peace efforts in Darfur.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7639046.stm>

### **LEBANON AND SYRIA WIN TOP HONOURS IN UNESCO SCHOOL CONTEST**

Students from Lebanon and Syria took first place in the largest global contest for students, backed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), which seeks to foster dialogue between children from different cultural backgrounds (30/9/08).

The Lebanon-Syria team beat out over 36,000 students from 140 countries in the 2007-2008 Mondialogo School Contest, which ended recently in Beijing. Nearly 3,000 bi-national teams worked together on joint projects, such as photo essays, collages, music, plays, sculpture and web pages, and the top 25 teams converged in the Chinese capital to discuss the importance of cultural exchange and present their joint projects to the contest jury.

"I am heartened by the quality of the competing projects and the increasing success of the Mondialogo initiative, which is promoting cultural diversity by providing a platform for young students around the world to engage in a meaningful intercultural learning experience," UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura said. "The School Contest is putting to practice the ideals on which UNESCO is based."

The Indonesia-Ukraine team came in second, with Germany-Mexico and Syria-United States sharing third prize.

The global contest – started by UNESCO and the company Daimler in 2003 – has Brazilian author Paulo Coelho and Swedish writer Henning Mankell among its ambassadors. It also runs an Engineering Award, the world's first prizes aimed specifically at young engineers from developed and developing countries.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28377&Cr=unesco&Cr1=>

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **ACTIONS 'COULD HAUNT HUMANITY UNTIL THE END OF TIME: GARNAUT**

There are times in the history of humanity when fateful decisions are made, Professor Ross Garnaut says in his final Climate Change report (30/9/08).

"The decision this year and next on whether to enter a comprehensive global agreement for strong action is one of them," he says.

"Australia's actions will make a difference to the outcome, in several ways. The chances of success at Copenhagen would be greater if heads of government favouring a strong outcome set up an experts group to come up with a practical approach to global mitigation that adds up to various environmental objectives.

"On a balance of probabilities, the failure of our generation on climate change mitigation would lead to consequences that would haunt humanity until the end of time."

The Garnaut Climate Change Review examines the impacts of climate change on the Australian economy, the costs of adaptation and mitigation, and the international context in which climate change is experienced and negotiated.

The professor also said, "Australia will need to undergo huge change by mid-century if it wants to cut its emissions deeply enough to help achieve a global agreement that will avoid dangerous climate change and keep greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere from rising above 450 parts per million. And the success of this will depend on achieving a convincing global agreement at next year's UN climate talks," the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/10/08). [SEE ALSO ARTICLES IN FOCUS PAGE](#)

Professor Garnaut warns that the profitable coal industry that also provides cheap electricity must clean up its act or disappear.

"If the coal industry is to have a long-term future in a low-emissions economy then it will have to be transformed into near-zero emissions, from source to end use, by mid-century," he said.

"Priority should be given to the resolution of whether a near zero coal future is even feasible, either partially or in total. If it is not, then Australia needs to know as soon as possible so that all who depend on the coal industry can begin the process of adjustment, and so that adequate and timely investments are made in other industries."

In a media release, Professor Garnaut said the costs of Australia playing its proportionate part in an effective global effort were manageable.

However, "Without strong, effective and early action by all major economies, it is probable that Australians, over the 21st century and beyond, will experience disruption in their enjoyment of life and increasingly of their prosperity," he said.

"The case for strong mitigation is a conservative one. Of all developed countries, Australia probably has the most to lose from inaction and the most to gain from global mitigation. Australia should throw its full weight behind securing an effective international agreement from 2013."

The report states that an international agreement for the post-Kyoto period from 2013 must include all the major economies if there is to be a chance of containing emissions to necessary levels. It suggests an allocation of the international mitigation effort that could be managed by developed and developing countries, without being a threat to rising standards of living.

"It is crucial that an agreement is practical. There is no value in an agreement that is not backed up by substance," said Professor Garnaut. "There are reasonable chances of a practical agreement adding up to 550ppm concentrations in the atmosphere. Australia's fair share of such an agreement would be to reduce emissions from 2000 levels by 10 per cent by 2020 and 80 per cent by 2050. Australia should offer to play its full part in such an agreement.

"Australia should also offer to play its full part in an ambitious agreement. Its fair share of a 450ppm agreement would be to reduce emissions by 25 per cent from 2000 levels by 2020 and by 90 per cent by 2050," said Professor Garnaut.

"Such an agreement, aimed at 450ppm would not be easy to reach. It would place constraints on emissions from both developed and developing countries that go beyond what is being discussed and, more importantly, planned, for any but a few countries.

"The achievement of the 550 mitigation task involves a major change in the structure of our economy. Australia's total emissions entitlement would be up to 35 per cent below what they would have been in 2020 and 90 per cent by 2050," he said.

Professor Garnaut said that the overall cost to the Australian economy of tackling climate change under both the 450ppm and 550ppm scenarios was manageable and in the order of 0.1-0.2 per cent of annual economic growth to 2020.

In the absence of a comprehensive global agreement that adds up and in the context of another limited, Kyoto-style agreement, the report recommends that Australia's first step between 2013-2020 should be along the linear path to a 60 per cent cut in emissions by 2050. This would be a five per cent reduction by 2020.

Any effort prior to an effective, comprehensive global agreement should be short, transitional and directed at achievement of a global agreement.

The report recommends that the emissions trading system – the centrepiece of Australia's mitigation policy – should be established at the earliest possible date, in 2010.

**THE GARNAUT CLIMATE CHANGE REVIEW FINAL REPORT:** [www.garnuatreview.org.au](http://www.garnuatreview.org.au)

The report includes:

**Chapter 5:** Projecting Australian climate change ([PDF, 291kb](#))

**Chapter 6:** Climate change impacts on Australia ([PDF, 291kb](#))

**Chapter 7:** Australia's emissions in a global context ([PDF, 1.14mb](#))

**Chapter 9:** Towards global agreement ([PDF, 501kb](#))

**Chapter 11:** Costing climate change and its avoidance ([PDF, 521kb](#))

**Chapter 14:** Australia's emissions trading scheme ([PDF, 408kb](#))

**Chapter 15:** Adaptation and mitigation measures for Australia ([PDF, 192kb](#))

**DETAILS: The Garnaut Climate Change Review**

Ross Garnaut

Paperback | ISBN-13: 9780521744447

The Garnaut Climate Change Review final report is now available for viewing in Portable Document Format (PDF). To read PDF files, use [Adobe Reader](#). See ['Accessibility'](#) for more information.

A HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) version of the report will be available from October 15. If there are difficulties in accessing the provided PDF documents, an alternate format can be made available upon request. [DETAILS:](#) 03 9651 0631.

### **ACT OR THE PLANET IS AT PERIL: NEW UK STUDY**

The world will have to take drastic action within two years to reduce greenhouse-gas pollution if it is to avoid the worst effects of climate change, a new British study warns.

The Sydney Morning Herald (2/10/08) reports that weeks before leaders meet in Poland to discuss the next international treaty on cutting emissions, the scale of risk from failing to act rapidly is spelt out by the British Meteorological Office's Hadley Centre.

The centre, which has a reputation for being cautious, recommends cutting greenhouse gas emissions much more quickly than Australia's climate change review, conducted by Professor Ross Garnaut. The Met Office study shows that cutting emissions by 3 per cent a year from 2010 offers the only hope of avoiding a global temperature rise of more than two degrees - recognised as the threshold beyond which the worst impacts of sea-level rise and drought become a significant risk.

[REPORT: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/01/1222651169208.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/01/1222651169208.html)

### **EMISSIONS DEAL 'CRUCIAL' TO ECONOMIC FUTURE**

Australia's economic future rests on world leaders reaching a climate change agreement because the modest domestic cost of an emissions trading scheme is dwarfed by the costs to Australia of continued global warming, Lenore Taylor writes in The Australian (1/10/08).

Professor Garnaut reiterated his controversial recommendation that Australia aim for emissions cuts by 2020 of between 5 and 25 per cent, depending on the scope of the international agreement. Modelling conducted by Treasury for the Garnaut review found that

an emissions trading scheme starting with a carbon price of \$20 a tonne would result in a one-off increase in inflation of about one per cent.

Any further inflationary pressure could be avoided, Professor Garnaut concluded, if the government accepted his advice and spent at least 50 per cent of the revenue it raised from selling emissions permits on compensating low- and middle-income households -- including on credits of up to \$1000 to help low-income households buy greener appliances.

Professor Garnaut acknowledged that the global financial crisis deepened the uncertainty about whether the world would actually reach a deal in Copenhagen. A lot depended on the character of the US leadership after the US presidential election in November.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24428664-601,00.html>

### **REPORT PUTS ECONOMY AS FIRST PRIORITY**

Despite intense business lobbying, Professor Ross Garnaut is sticking to his argument that carbon trading should serve economic goals before vested interests, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/10/08)..

The final report of the Garnaut review argued for a 25 per cent cut to 2000 carbon emissions by 2020, on the condition that a global agreement was in place.

The review said the consequences of leaving climate change unaddressed posed a bigger economic threat, particularly to industries dependent on the environment, such as farming and tourism.

The chief executive of the Australian Industry Group, Heather Ridout, warned against the 25 per cent reduction in carbon emissions, saying, "It is very difficult to see how this could be achieved by 2020 without inflicting severe damage on the economy."

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/30/1222651083055.html>

### **RUDD MUST HEED SCIENTISTS, SAY GREENS**

"The science is clear - we cannot afford to fail on climate change," Australian Greens leader, Senator Brown, said before the release of the Garnaut report (29/9/08). "Australians know that success is the only option, and at the next election they will rightly punish the Rudd Government if it runs up the white flag.

"Big polluters are repeating the errors of the sub-prime situation, maximising their profits now and banking on ordinary people carrying the cost down the track.

"The difference is, while Wall St banks can rely on bail-outs if they fail, there can be no bail-out if we fail to prevent runaway climate change," Senator Brown said.

"The 25 per cent target the scientists recommend is the absolute minimum and still leaves a very high risk of catastrophic climate change. Australia can and should do better, targeting 40 per cent reductions by 2020 on our way to building a zero carbon economy by mid-century at the latest."

Senator Brown also welcomed the poll released by Greenpeace showing that Australians did not want emissions trading revenue to be handed straight back to the polluters in 'compensation' payouts.

"Australians know that the coal sector has raked in massive profits from polluting our planet. The time has come for polluters to pay their way, and for the revenue to be invested wisely in clean technologies and in helping Australians save energy."

DETAILS: Tim Hollo on 0437 587 562.

### **SEPTEMBER DRIEST IN MORE THAN A CENTURY**

Melbourne has experienced its driest September since records began in 1855, with only 12 millimetres of rain falling, well down on the 59mm long-term average.

Weatherzone said the low rainfall came as a surprise to meteorologists, The Age reported (1/10/08). Spring is usually Victoria's wettest season,

"To receive such low rainfall during September is quite a worry," said Weatherzone's Matt Pearce. Drought conditions in Victoria looked set to linger, with only average rainfall forecast for coming months - not nearly enough to make up for recent shortfalls and the long-running drought. **REPORT:** <http://www.theage.com.au/national/september-driest-in-more-than-a-century-20080930-4r0m.html>

### **EUROPE 'NEEDS CONSENSUS'**

The European Union should work out a consensus position on a battle plan to address climate change ahead of United Nations-sponsored global talks in order to play a leadership role in framing a global strategy, Polish officials said on Tuesday. Poland and other Eastern European EU members have objected to a proposed EU framework and are looking for a compromise. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://AlertNet.org/Reuters) (30/9/08).

### **CITY EMISSIONS LOWER THAN THOUGHT**

Cities do not contribute nearly as much to the global tally of greenhouse gas emissions as previously recognised, according to a study published in the journal *Environment and Urbanization*. Previously, cities were credited with contribution levels as high as 80 per cent, but the actual figure is 30-40 per cent [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://AlertNet.org/Reuters) (26/9/08).

## **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **PLEA ON BEHALF OF ASYLUM SEEKERS**

The first boat has arrived during the life of the Rudd Government and Asylum Seeker Resource Centre Campaign coordinator Pamela Curr writes she hopes these asylum seekers "are treated more decently and fairly than those poor souls who came in the time of Howard and Ruddock.

"Hopefully they will not have to endure the tags - illegals, SUNCS, queue jumpers etc from bigoted politicians and rancid media. Is it possible for Australia to remember that we are signatories to the Refugee Convention and act accordingly? Perhaps with decent political leadership we just might get it right this time."

The Royal Australian Navy intercepted the boat carrying 14 people near Ashmore Islands, 320km off WA's north-west coast. They were taken to Christmas Island for processing.

**DETAILS:** Pamela Curr on 03 93266006; [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au); [pamela.c@asrc.org.au](mailto:pamela.c@asrc.org.au)

### **CHRISTMAS ISLAND ARRIVALS PROMPT ASYLUM WARNING**

The Rudd Government is being warned to take a tough stand against the 14 boatpeople - thought to be from the Middle East - intercepted off Australia's northwest coast, amid fears they could be the first of a fresh wave of asylum-seekers, The Australian reported (2/10/08).

Opposition immigration spokesman Sharman Stone said the two Indonesian crew and their 12 passengers could be the first of many asylum-seekers, given Labor's decision to slash the border protection budget and introduce a policy of granting permanent visas to asylum-seekers regardless of their mode of arrival.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24433857-601,00.html>

### **MYANMAR CYCLONE VICTIMS NEED SUSTAINED HELP: UN-BACKED GROUP**

The UN, the Myanmar Government and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), which comprises the Tripartite Core Group, have stressed the need for continued assistance to the some 2.4 million people affected by Cyclone Nargis, noting that nearly half of the \$482 million appeal launched in July remains unfunded (1/10/08).

The group "recognises that the needs of the Cyclone Nargis' victims are still great and that increased and committed financial support is necessary in order to continue assistance to the cyclone survivors."

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**), donors have provided \$240 million in response to the appeal, which covers food supplies, agriculture, water and sanitation, health, schooling and shelter. Of these, agriculture and early recovery continue to be the least funded sectors.

Over 733,000 people have received food aid during the nearly five months since the disaster, and outbreaks of water-borne diseases have been successfully prevented in the cyclone-affected areas. Clean water is among the concerns for the months ahead, due to damage to rainwater collection systems and saltwater contamination of ponds, as well as low rainfall.

The UN has underlined the importance of continued support and called on the international community not to forget the cyclone survivors as the months pass.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28390&Cr=Myanmar&Cr1=>

### **SOMALIA: ICRC URGES RESPECT INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**

The recent intensification of fighting in the capital Mogadishu has resulted in scores of deaths. Hospitals and other medical facilities have been overwhelmed by an influx of casualties, while ongoing heavy fighting has prevented many other injured people from obtaining urgently needed medical care (29/9/08).

"Following the clashes this week, more than 140 wounded have been admitted to Keysaney and Medina hospitals in Mogadishu, which are supported by the ICRC," said Pascal Mauchle, head of the Somalia delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Panic-stricken people are abandoning their homes to reach safer areas, but as they do so they risk being caught in the crossfire."

The ICRC deplores the high number of civilian casualties. It urgently calls on all parties to the conflict to respect the rules of international humanitarian law, and reminds them that it is prohibited to direct attacks against civilians not directly participating in the hostilities or to launch indiscriminate attacks against military objectives and civilians or civilian objects. Every feasible precaution must be taken to spare civilians and their property the effects of the hostilities. Medical and humanitarian staff, hospitals and clinics must be respected and protected.

The ICRC has been providing humanitarian aid for the Somali population since 1977, working closely together with the Somali Red Crescent Society.

**DETAILS:** [www.icrc.org](http://www.icrc.org); Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific on 61 (0)2 9388 9039.

### **ARMED CHINESE POLICE STILL OCCUPY LHASA SIX MONTHS AFTER RIOTS**

The continued paramilitary presence in Lhasa, Tibet's capital, suggests that Chinese officials still fear an uprising similar to the deadly protests six months ago. The Guardian, the first Western news outlet to visit the city since those riots, found that activity is bustling but religious activity has moved underground and armed police patrol the streets. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (1/10/08).

### **OLDER WORKERS 'PUT OUT TO PASTURE'**

The Federal Government's announcement on Wednesday that it would make it easier for people to prove they had been discriminated against on the basis of their age was a critical milestone in protecting and valuing mature age workers, Sex Discrimination Commissioner and Commissioner responsible for Age Discrimination, Elizabeth Broderick said on International Day of Older Persons (1/10/08).

"This welcome change will bring the Age Discrimination Act into line with other federal anti-discrimination laws," she said. "In removing the need for age to be the dominant reason for unlawful treatment, this change will send a loud signal to employers and recruitment agencies to think twice about dismissing the value of workers aged over 45."

Commissioner Broderick said valuing mature age workers and attracting and retaining them in the paid workforce was a smart way to help tackle the local skills crisis.

"The reality of age discrimination is that we wake up one morning just like any other to find we've been branded 'out of step' or 'too old'," she said, "That's why the Federal Government's announcement is an important development. Up until now, it's been difficult for older people who've been put out to pasture by their employer to prove they've been discriminated against due to their age. Similarly, it's been difficult for over 45s who've been given short shrift by recruitment agencies to prove their age was the cause."

Ms Broderick said the Australian Human Rights Commission had received 417 age discrimination complaints between mid 2004 to mid 2008, with 73 per cent of these being employment-related.

"In a time of skills shortage, we must be innovative and act now to make workforce participation attractive to the mature aged (people).

DETAILS: <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/index.htm>

### **MODERN DAY SLAVERY IN AUSTRALIA: THE QUEEN V WEI TANG**

The second in a seminar series, *Modern Day Slavery in Australia: The Queen v Wei Tang*, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is being presented by the Australian Human Rights Commission,

The seminar will feature two speakers, Bret Walker SC, who appeared as senior counsel for the Australian Human Rights Commission in *The Queen v Wei Tang*, discussing issues arising from the High Court's decision, and Elizabeth Broderick, Federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner also responsible for Age Discrimination,. She will discuss how the human rights of victims of trafficking can be better protected. She is a member of the National Roundtable on People Trafficking as well as the Chair of the National Roundtable Working Group to develop guidelines for NGOs working with trafficking victims.

The seminar will be on October 16 from 5.30pm at The Hearing Room, Level 8, Australian Human Rights Commission, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

DETAILS: [associate@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:associate@humanrights.gov.au); <http://www.humanrights.gov.au/index.htm>.

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **EU MONITORS BEGIN GEORGIA MISSION**

Observers from the European Union have begun deploying in Georgia to monitor a ceasefire with Russia, the BBC reported (1/10/08).

Two hundred monitors are overseeing the pull-back of Russian forces from buffer zones around the breakaway regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia. Russia has kept troops in the zones since ousting Georgia's forces after war broke out in early August.

Observers from 22 EU nations are deployed in Georgia to monitor Russia's troop withdrawal, which Moscow says will be completed by October 10. Many are French gendarmes, and there are also experts on human rights and legal issues.

But the monitors would only be able to patrol "up to the southern limit of the security zone", said Lt Col Vitaly Manushko, spokesman for Russian forces in South Ossetia, quoted by the Interfax news agency. REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7643612.stm>

### **ARSON PLAGUE TARGETS CHECHNYA FAMILIES, REBELS**

Residents and human rights advocates claim a campaign to burn down the houses of families with loved ones suspected of participating in Chechnya's ongoing conflict is being conducted with official sanction. While officials claim no knowledge of the dozens of such attacks, state-run news programs have repeatedly broadcast officials warning families of collective responsibility. [The New York Times](#) (29/9/08).

### **SERBIA MAY CONSIDER KOSOVO PERMANENT**

Serbian President Boris Tadic said on Monday Serbia might endorse a permanent division of Kosovo along ethnic lines if it is unable to prevent international recognition of Kosovo as an

independent country. Serbia, which claims ownership of Kosovo province, has been fighting a diplomatic battle since its unilateral declaration of independence in February. [The Toronto Star/The Associated Press](#) (30/9/08).

## AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN

### **BAN CALLS FOR CHANGE OF PACE IN AFGHANISTAN**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for a change of pace and direction in Afghanistan, where the worsening security situation is hampering the efforts of the government, the United Nations and international partners to rebuild the strife-torn nation.

“Despite the enhanced capabilities of both the Afghan National Army and the international forces, the security situation has deteriorated markedly,” Mr Ban writes in a new report. The number of security incidents in August rose to 983, the highest since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 and a 44 per cent increase compared to the same month in 2007.

Mr Ban highlights three trends amid the recent deterioration in security, namely a greater focus by insurgent groups on areas that had been stable until now, more “sophisticated” planning of insurgent operations, and an increase in civilian casualties.

“Civilians are also being killed as a result of military operations carried out by Afghan and international security forces,” he said.

The deterioration of the security situation has hampered the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in carrying out its efforts, with 90 of the country’s nearly 400 districts identified as areas of extreme risk. In addition, attacks on aid-related targets and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have become more frequent and more deadly. This is particularly disturbing given the worsening humanitarian situation in the country owing to a combination of conflict, drought and high food prices, which have left one-sixth of the population in need of food aid.

Mr Ban is convinced that “a change of pace and direction is required,” in which, among other things, every party to the Paris Conference that took place earlier this year must do its utmost to implement the commitments made there as early as possible.

“It is essential that the people of Afghanistan begin to see quickly and clearly that we have embarked on a new course and that it will produce results,” he states.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28352&Cr=Afghan&Cr1=>

### **KARZAI SEEKS SAUDI PEACE ROLE**

Afghan President Hamid Karzai said he has made repeated efforts over the past two years to engage Saudi Arabia in peace talks with the Taliban. The president said there had not yet been any direct negotiations, only requests for help, the BBC reported (30/9/08).

He said that Afghan officials had travelled to Saudi Arabia and to Pakistan to kick-start the process. His comments came during the president's traditional message to the Afghan people during the Eid holiday. Saudi Arabia was one of the few countries to recognise the Taliban government when they ruled Afghanistan before being overthrown by US forces in 2001.

**REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7643959.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7643959.stm)

### **VETERAN MUJAHEDIN ‘BEHIND VIOLENCE UPSURGE’**

Three warlords are spearheading the resurgent campaign against Afghanistan being conducted from Pakistan: Mullah Mohammed Omar, former Taliban head of state; Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former Taliban prime minister; and Julaluddin Haggani, a former Taliban cabinet minister. All three mujahidin rose to prominence during the war to oust the Soviets from Afghanistan and now operate largely unmolested, and sometimes in concert, from the tribal regions of Afghanistan. [Los Angeles Times](#) (30/9/08).

### **SOME 20,000 PEOPLE FLEE PAKISTAN'S TRIBAL AREAS FOR AFGHANISTAN**

Some 20,000 people have fled fighting in north-western Pakistan in recent months and sought refuge in eastern Afghanistan, where aid agencies have rushed supplies (29/9/08).

The nearly 4,000 families started arriving in eastern Afghanistan's Kunar province as fighting intensified across the border in Bajaur Agency in Pakistan's tribal areas over the summer.

"In the last two weeks alone, over 600 Pakistani families have fled into Afghanistan," said Mohammed Nadir Farhad, the UN refugee agency's spokesman in Kabul. "The majority are living with their relatives and friends, but there are some 200 families who live in the open air."

Kunar's provincial authorities are working closely with the UN and other international organisations to coordinate and monitor the humanitarian response closely. Coordination is important to ensure that aid is delivered effectively, to maximise the use of limited resources while meeting the basic needs of the displaced families.

UNHCR has so far provided plastic sheets, blankets, jerry cans, lanterns and other supplies to the families in Marawara and Dangam. It is also funding a mobile clinic to visit Shigal and Marawara five days a week. Relief items have also been distributed by agencies like the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Afghan Red Crescent Society (ARCS) and UNICEF. **REPORT:** <http://www.unhcr.org/news/NEWS/48e0d6f14.html>

### **PAKISTAN APPOINTS NEW ISI HEAD**

The military in Pakistan has appointed a new head of the powerful Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency.

Lt Gen Ahmed Shujaa Pasha is a former head of military operations who launched recent offensives against militants near the Afghan border, the BBC reported (30/9/08). He takes over amid mounting US pressure on Pakistan to do more to combat the Taliban and al-Qaeda.

Gen Pasha's appointment is among several changes announced as part of a shake-up in the army's top command. The reshuffle will be closely scrutinised by the United States and Afghanistan, which have questioned the ISI's reliability in fighting the "war on terror". Pakistani observers say the move appears to be an effort by army chief Gen Ashfaq Kayani - who was himself ISI chief until a year ago - to consolidate his control over the military. **REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7643728.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7643728.stm)

### **REPORT CLAIMS POLITICS BEHIND INDIAN RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE**

The rise of Hindutva ('Hinduness') and the Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party is often cited as the prompt for increased fighting between India's Hindus and its Christian minority. Affirmative-action benefits called "reservations," a privilege available to low-caste Hindus, are lost upon conversion to Christianity. Conversions of low-caste Hindus account for a great degree of successful missionary activity -- which some Hindus say is forced by the Christians. [The Economist](#) (25/9/08).

## **AFRICA**

### **ZIMBABWE OPPOSITION SAYS NO DEAL**

Zimbabwe's opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) says talks with President Mugabe have failed to produce agreement on Cabinet posts (30/9/08).

MDC spokesman Nelson Chamisa accused Mr Mugabe of demanding all the key ministries for his Zanu-PF party in the new unity government. He was speaking after a meeting between MDC leader Morgan Tsvangirai and the Zimbabwean President.

A power-sharing deal was signed two weeks ago to end the political crisis. Mr Chamisa said the Opposition and Mr Mugabe remained far apart on the issue of who should control which ministries. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7645001.stm>

### **ZIMBABWE FACES FIRST POWER-SHARING CRISIS**

Robert Mugabe, who shares executive power in Zimbabwe with Morgan Tsvangirai, said that he would appoint the leaders of the cabinet without input from the former opposition leader -- prompting a crisis that threatens to unravel the fragile power-sharing agreement. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (1/10/08). [Mail & Guardian \(South Africa\)](#) (1/10/08).

### **OVER 1000 CONGOLESE FLEE TO SUDAN**

About 1,200 Congolese have sought shelter in southern Sudan in recent days to escape brutal attacks by members of the notorious Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) that have included the abduction of children and torching of homes, the UN refugee agency reported (1/10/08).

The Congolese arrived on foot in the Sudanese villages of Gangura and Sakure after a four-day journey, telling local authorities and aid agencies about savage attacks on six separate villages in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

From what they had learned, the attacks were ferocious and unremitting, said Geoff Wordley, assistant representative for UNHCR operations in southern Sudan, adding there are unconfirmed reports of bodies seen floating in local rivers.

"Many refugees being treated in the MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] clinic showed wounds from machetes and bullets."

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28395&Cr=LRA&Cr1=>

### **SOMALIA: ICRC URGES RESPECT FOR INTERNATIONAL HUMANITARIAN LAW**

The recent intensification of fighting in the capital Mogadishu has resulted in scores of deaths. Hospitals and other medical facilities have been overwhelmed by an influx of casualties, while ongoing heavy fighting has prevented many other injured people from obtaining urgently needed medical care (29/9/08).

"Following the clashes this week, more than 140 wounded have been admitted to Keysaney and Medina hospitals in Mogadishu, which are supported by the ICRC," said Pascal Mauchle, head of the Somalia delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). "Panic-stricken people are abandoning their homes to reach safer areas, but as they do so they risk being caught in the crossfire."

The ICRC deplores the high number of civilian casualties. It urgently calls on all parties to the conflict to respect the rules of international humanitarian law, and reminds them that it is prohibited to direct attacks against civilians not directly participating in the hostilities or to launch indiscriminate attacks against military objectives and civilians or civilian objects. Every feasible precaution must be taken to spare civilians and their property the effects of the hostilities. Medical and humanitarian staff, hospitals and clinics must be respected and protected.

The ICRC is providing medical supplies for Keysaney and Medina hospitals which between them have treated more than 2,200 casualties since January. Recently it also extended its support to five additional temporary Somali Red Crescent Society primary health-care clinics on the outskirts of Mogadishu that care for more than 200,000 displaced people who have fled the capital during the past months.

The ICRC has been providing humanitarian aid for the Somali population since 1977, working closely together with the Somali Red Crescent Society.

DETAILS: ICRC Sydney Support Office on 61 (0)2 9388 9039; [sydney.sydney@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.sydney@icrc.org).

### **MORE THAN 100,000 PEOPLE FLEE**

More than 100,000 people are estimated to have fled their homes since armed clashes resumed between Congolese government troops and the armed opposition in North and South Kivu provinces on 28 August last, the ICRC reported (1/10/08).

Many violations of international humanitarian law, including looting and rape, have been committed by weapon bearers against civilians, the ICRC says.

"We have been witnessing a major deterioration in the humanitarian situation in the Kivus since the resumption of hostilities," said Max Hadorn, head of the ICRC delegation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. "Thousands of people have been displaced, often several times, and they urgently require aid. It is vital that humanitarian organisations have access to the areas most affected."

REPORT: <http://au.mg1.mail.yahoo.com/dc/launch?.rand=0vgnqpr1hf2k2>

## MIDDLE EAST

### SETTLERS 'TURN TO EXTREMISTS TACTICS'

Elements of [Israel's](#) settler movement are resorting to extremist tactics to protect their homes in the occupied West Bank against not only Palestinians, but also Jews who some settlers argue are betraying them. Radical settlers say they are determined to show that their settlements and outposts cannot be dismantled, either by law or by force, The New York Times reports. [The New York Times](#) (26/9/08).

### ISRAELI OFFER TO BOMB REJECTED: REPORT

Israel gave serious thought this spring to launching a military strike on Iran's nuclear sites but was told by President George W Bush that he would not support it and did not expect to revise that view for the rest of his presidency, senior European diplomatic sources have told the London Guardian. The then prime minister, Ehud Olmert, used the occasion of Bush's trip to Israel for the 60th anniversary of the state's founding to raise the issue in a one-on-one meeting on May 14, sources said. "He took it [the refusal of a US green light] as where they were at the moment, and that the US position was unlikely to change as long as Bush was in office", they added. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (25/9/08).

### PARTING SHOT

In a parting interview with the newspaper *Yedioth Ahronoth*, former prime minister Ehud Olmert was reported to have said Israel must reach an agreement with Palestinians that included a withdrawal from almost all the Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (29/8/08). And that Israel must also leave the Golan Heights.

There was a brief opportunity in which it was possible to reach an agreement with the Palestinians, he said. He was reported to have acknowledged that he had erred in the years that he believed it was possible to control Jerusalem.

The quote, in article, *US radar in Israel is aimed at Iran*, discussed the US long-range radar system in Israel capable of providing early warning in case of a missile attack.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/29/1222650990677.html>

## SOUTH AMERICA

### MEXICANS ALARMED BY VIOLENCE OF CRIME FIGHT

The crackdown on crime in Mexico is leading to increasingly violent standoffs, diminishing the public's appetite for the war on crime and limiting President Felipe Calderon's power to prosecute it. A grenade attack in western Mexico during an Independence Day celebration has reopened the debate over alternatives to the crackdown, including legalisation of drugs. [Los Angeles Times](#) (1/10/08).

## E. HEALTH & MEANS

### UN WARNS ZIMBABWE OVER FOOD AID

About half the population of Zimbabwe could soon be in need of constant food aid and medical assistance, the UN's humanitarian chief has told the BBC. John Holmes said three million people were already reliant on aid, and that figure could rise to five million. He said the situation was already grave and deteriorating.

However, he acknowledged that access for aid agencies had improved greatly since a political power-sharing deal was signed two weeks ago. On Monday, the president said he expected a unity government to be formed by the end of this week, but the MDC says talks had failed as Zanu-PF wants all the key ministries.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7647614.stm>

### **HAITI: FOOD AND INFRASTRUCTURE URGENTLY NEEDED**

Executive Director of the World Food Program, Josette Sheeran, has called on donor nations to fully fund urgent hunger needs and infrastructure rehabilitation in Haiti, which has been ravaged by a succession of tropical storms (27/9/08).

“The misery index is rising daily and this will require a massive effort to help people stave off hunger and save lives,” she said.

Since September 5, WFP has distributed food to 285,000 people in more than 57 shelters and is working with the IOM, UNICEF, Caritas, Care, Yelè Haiti Amurt and the Haitian Civil Protection Office. WFP needs US\$54 million for food, logistics and emergency telecommunications to meet urgent hunger needs.

“The US, Japan, EC, Switzerland and Canada have stepped up with almost \$11 million and we can meet urgent food needs until the end of November, she said.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>; Myrta Kaulard WFP Haiti Country Director/Hilary Clarke, on mob +(509) 37012353. /35

### **UN SEEKS TO HELP LANDLOCKED COUNTRIES OVERCOME TRADE HANDICAP**

High-level UN consultations to boost direct foreign investment in the world's 31 landlocked developing countries (**LLDC**) have been held to strengthen their participation in international trade and the global economy (1/10/08).

“As we attempt to find long-term solutions to their plight, external investment is critical in enabling landlocked developing countries to substantially mitigate their unfavourable geographical locations,” Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro told an investment forum at UN Headquarters in New York.

Speaking on the eve of a two-day High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly devoted to the **mid-term review** of the **Almaty Programme of Action**, a 2003 plan setting out specific measures to help landlocked countries, she noted that despite “much progress” in the past five years many still remain marginalized from the world economy with limited access to global markets and to the sea for external trade.

“The Almaty Programme highlights the role that foreign direct investment could play in this process,” Ms. Migiro said. “Foreign direct investment has a great potential as contributor to growth and development. It can bring capital, technology, management know-how and access to new markets. In comparison with other forms of capital flows, it is also more stable, with a longer-term commitment to the host economy.”

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28391&Cr=landlocked&Cr1=>

### **BWC ASKS 67 MILLION PEOPLE TO STAND-UP AGAINST POVERTY**

Soon, millions and millions of people around the world will get on their feet at the same time to STAND UP against global poverty and show their support for the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Better World Campaign reported this week.

Last year, the event set a Guinness World Record, with 43.7 million people from 127 countries standing up and BWC has set a goal to top that number this year, mobilising one per cent of the world's population, or 67 million people.

BWC asks: [Join us in Standing Up against poverty and for the MDGs on October 17-19!](#)

It says “67 million pairs of legs standing would be impressive, but a more sobering number is 1.3 billion. That is the number of people worldwide living on less than \$1 a day.

We're standing up for the impoverished, and the UN-led action plan for cutting poverty in half by 2015. [The Millennium Development Goals](#) set eight concrete objectives for enhancing quality of life around the world by preventing diseases, providing education, ending hunger, creating economic opportunities and protecting the environment. The UN Millennium Campaign—sponsor of Stand Up—has teamed up with an array of voices, from clothing company [G-Star RAW](#) to rapper [Will.i.am](#), to help spread the word about the MDGs and hold world leaders accountable to their promise to end extreme poverty.”

BWC, which describes itself as dedicated to a strong US-UN relationship, also says “As the largest global economy, the United States—particularly under the upcoming new administration—will need to spearhead the world’s efforts over the next seven years to reach these ambitious goals. The Better World Campaign has therefore commissioned an expert paper, written by Woodrow Wilson Centre scholar John Sewell, on how the next president can most effectively combat global poverty and support the MDGs.”

**BWC PAPER:** [Click here](#) to read a paper to be offered to the next president as a strategy for leading the fight against poverty.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/>

## HEALTH

### **WHO WARNS 500 MILLION AFFECTED BY VIRUS**

More than 500 million people are infected worldwide with the virus that causes genital herpes and more than 20 million people become newly infected each year, according to a study published (1/10/08) in the international public health journal, the *Bulletin of the World Health Organisation*.

*Herpes simplex virus type 2* is commonly spread through sexual contact and leads to lifelong infection. While painful genital ulcerations are the classical symptom, most people have mild symptoms and don't know that they are infected. These persons can thus unknowingly infect others.

“Serious consequences include an increased risk of acquiring, and likely transmitting, HIV, and transmission from infected mothers to their babies during birth, which can cause brain damage and death,” says Dr George Schmid, Department of HIV/AIDS at the WHO.

This first-ever estimate of the global burden found that roughly 16% of the world's population in the 15-49 year-old age group were infected, with considerable geographic variation. Women are more commonly infected than men, with the highest prevalence in sub-Saharan Africa where up to 70% of women are infected.

**REPORT:** <http://www.who.int/bulletin/volumes/86/10/07-046128/en/index.html>

### **NEW CENTRE TO HELP SPEED HIV/AIDS RESEARCH**

Researchers are preparing to launch a new HIV/AIDS vaccine research centre in hopes of facilitating international communications and speeding the search for a vaccine. The centre is being jointly funded by the Scripps Research Institute and the International AIDS Vaccine Initiative. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](#) (30/9/08).

### **INCREASING EFFORTS TO SAVE LIVES OF WOMEN AND NEWBORNS**

In a joint statement, UNICEF, the UN Population Fund, World Bank and WHO said that during the next five years, they would enhance support to the countries with the highest maternal mortality (25/9/08).

“We will support countries in strengthening their health systems to achieve the two MDG 5 targets of reducing the maternal mortality ratio by 75 per cent and achieving universal access to reproductive health by 2015. Our joint efforts will also contribute to achieving MDG 4: To reduce child mortality, the statement said.

The four stated they would work with governments and civil society to strengthen national capacity to:

Conduct needs assessments and ensure that health plans are MDG-driven and performance-based;  
Cost national plans and rapidly mobilise required resources;  
Scale up quality health services to ensure universal access to reproductive health, especially for family planning, skilled attendance at delivery and emergency obstetric and newborn care, ensuring linkages with HIV prevention and treatment;  
Address the urgent need for skilled health workers, particularly midwives;  
Address financial barriers to access, especially for the poorest; and  
Tackle the root causes of maternal mortality and morbidity, including gender inequality, low access to education – especially for girls, child marriage and adolescent pregnancy;  
Strengthen monitoring and evaluation systems.

“In the countdown to 2015, we call on member states to accelerate efforts for achieving reproductive, maternal and newborn health. Together we can achieve Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5,” the statement said.

[DETAILS: Joint statement on maternal and newborn health; 10 facts on maternal health](#)

### **UN HEALTH AGENCY ISSUES GUIDELINES ON MELAMINE-CONTAMINATED FOOD**

With the crisis of contaminated milk products in China having driven over 54,000 children to seek medical treatment, the United Nations World Health Organisation (WHO) has issued preliminary guidance to help authorities decide on the health concerns of melamine levels in food (30/9/08).

Kidney stones and renal failure has been reported in children in China, where four have died and a further 13,000 hospitalised, believed to be associated with the ingestion of melamine-contaminated infant formula.

Melamine was deliberately added to raw milk for several months to boost its apparent protein content, WHO said. Commonly used in such materials as containers and labels, melamine can also be found in agricultural products such as fertilizer. Alone, it is of low toxicity, but animal studies have suggested that kidney problems occur when combined with cyanuric acid.

The new WHO guidelines – *Melamine and Cyanuric acid: Toxicity, Preliminary Risk Assessment and Guidance on Levels in Food* – seek to help national authorities assess the risks of melamine levels in food.

But the agency cautioned that this is only a preliminary assessment with more data needed, adding that it is currently working towards a more thorough assessment through meetings with scientists from around the world. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28376&Cr=who&Cr1=food+security>

### **CHINA ARRESTS 27 OVER TAINTED MILK SCANDAL**

Police in northern China have arrested 27 people in their probe into tainted milk that has sickened 53,000 children and embarrassed China's reputation abroad, the ABC reported (1/10/08). State media reported the 27 were among 36 detained since law enforcers in Hebei province started investigating the company at the centre of the scandal.

It followed the discovery that the industrial chemical melamine, which is normally used to make plastics, had been added to the powdered milk. Four children so far have died after drinking milk tainted with melamine. (Reuters)

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/30/2378470.htm>

### **NEARLY \$3 BILLION PLEDGED TO FIGHT MALARIA**

World leaders and philanthropists pledged nearly \$3bn (£1.6bn) to fight malaria at a summit in New York, the BBC reported (29/9/08).

The meeting, at the UN, is looking at ways of meeting the Millennium Development Goals - targets on reducing global poverty by the year 2015. Donors hope the money will be enough to eradicate malaria by that time.

The money includes \$1.1bn (£598m) from the World Bank and \$1.6bn (£870m) from the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria. The British government and private organisations such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation have promised the rest.

Malaria still kills more than a million people each year, according to the World Health Organisation. The funding, will be used to support rapid implementation of the first ever Global Malaria Action Plan (Gmap).

#### **MSF: AFRICAN COUNTRIES NEED TO STEP UP MALARIA EFFORT**

Free health care and faster diagnostic testing for malaria by African countries could save thousands of lives each year if more widely implemented, Medicins Sans Frontieres said Tuesday. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://AlertNet.org/Reuters) (30/9/08).

#### **FIGHT AGAINST MALARIA AND MEASLES FIGURES AT UN**

UN Foundation's work to reduce measles and malaria mortality figured prominently during the UN General Assembly, a UN Special Session on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and at the Clinton Global Initiative (CGI).

U2 lead singer Bono, Microsoft founder Bill Gates, anti-poverty champion Jeffrey Sachs and others were lined up in support of UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's call to end child mortality from malaria by 2015. The UN also reaffirmed its commitment to reducing measles deaths 90 per cent by 2010.

"Saving children's lives is a central priority in the work of the UN Foundation," a letter to UNity stated. "As founding partner in the [Measles Initiative](#), we announced a \$9 million boost to help vaccinate an estimated 76 million children in about 25 countries during 2009 alone. A three-year gift supported by the Kessler Family Foundation, Merck, Inc. and Vodafone Foundation (whom we also work with on technology issues) will create healthier lives for children around the world.

"At CGI, the UN Foundation's Kathy Calvin announced a \$2 million partnership with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and our *Nothing But Nets* campaign to send anti-malaria bed nets to more than 630,000 refugees living in 27 camps in Uganda, Eastern Sudan, Kenya, and Tanzania." [DETAILS: Learn more about malaria, refugees and how you can help save lives: http://www.unfoundation.org/](#)

#### **MODEL OF PAID LEAVE FOR MUMS ARE BABY STEPS IN RIGHT DIRECTION**

Eighteen weeks of paid leave that parents can share and an additional two weeks reserved for partners to look after new babies, are good first steps towards building a comprehensive scheme of paid leave for parents, federal Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick said (29/9/08).

"I welcome this model put forward by the Productivity Commission today – especially its broad accessibility for fathers, same sex parents and those in self-employed, casual and contract employment," she said. "A national scheme of paid maternity and parental leave is long overdue and this fully costed proposal is extremely welcome."

"I am particularly pleased to see a proposal that funds a non-transferable two week period of leave for fathers and same-sex partners – this is critical for helping dads and supporting parents bond with their children and support mums.

"However I would emphasise that any effective paid parental leave scheme will be built over time and informed by experience. We should not see this proposal as the end point but rather a first step in building a world class paid parental leave scheme for Australia."

[DETAILS: http://www.humanrights.gov.au/index.htm](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/index.htm)

#### **GREENS TO PUSH FOR 26 WEEKS' PAID PARENTAL LEAVE**

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young says the Greens will push for 26 weeks' paid parental leave, saying that such a scheme will provide better support for parents and babies (30/9/08).

"Twenty-six weeks' leave following the birth of a child is what working parents need for a healthy and happy experience of birth and bonding," she said.

"What the Greens are calling for is backed by a broad range of stakeholder organisations, from unions, to women's groups and health organisations." The World Health Organisation and the Australian Breastfeeding Association advocate six months' paid leave for mothers to be supported through childbirth, recovery from birth, a healthy period of breastfeeding, and bonding. [DETAILS](#): Jamie Parker on 0418 428 089; Chris Holley (Sylvia Hale) on 9230 3030 / 0437 779 546.

## F. MEDIA MATTERS

### **MALAYSIAN PUBLISHER WINS 2008 UQ AWARD**

A distinguished, Malaysia-based independent publisher and expert in participatory information and communication processes, Chin Saik Yoon, has won the [UQ School of Journalism and Communication's](#) 2008 Communication and Social Change Award.

Announcing the A\$2500 award, Head of School [Professor Michael Bromley](#) said that Mr Chin was internationally known for his long-term commitment to communication for social change, especially as a regional pioneer in the use of information and communication technologies to empower poor and disadvantaged people (30/9/08).

"Mr Chin's publishing house, Southbound Press, is based in Penang, but its reach extends around the world," Professor Bromley said.

"Southbound is renowned for its promotion of works by authors from developing countries and its specialist focus on titles that address key development communication issues, while Mr Chin himself is recognised as a long-standing and consistent activist in communication and social change issues, especially in the fields of publishing, advocacy and non-government organisation development."

Mr Chin is also the principal technical consultant to an ASEAN Foundation project (designing a regional communications and information initiative to monitor animal-borne diseases such as avian flu), and a board member of UNESCO-ORBICOM (the International Network of UNESCO Chairs in Communications).

The award attracted 16 nominations from Pakistan, the US, Nigeria, India, Sri Lanka, Malaysia and Iran.

The CSC Jury also awarded a special Meritorious Commendation for Communication and Social Change Award to Nigerian CSC activist John Dada.

Mr Dada is the founder and program director of a rural NGO called the Fantsuam Foundation, which aims to build rural Nigeria's knowledge economy through the use of information communication technology (ICT) for human development.

[DETAILS](#): Marsali MacKinnon, UQ Centre for Communication and Social Change, on 61 7 3365 1393; [m.mackinnon@uq.edu.au](mailto:m.mackinnon@uq.edu.au).

### **JOURNALISTS' PRIVATE RECORDS TARGETED IN POLICE PROBE**

Queensland Police Union says personal information of journalists has allegedly been examined as part of an internal investigation into officers with close links to journalists, the ABC reported (28/9/08).

General secretary Mick Barnes said members have told the union that Ethical Standards investigators are targeting officers who talk or socialise with the media. He had received advice that private telephone records and bank statements of police officers and journalists had been examined.

Mr Barnes says members have contacted the union with strong concerns about the investigation and the Police Union was closely monitoring the investigation  
**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/28/2376108.htm>

### **MALAYSIAN BLOGGER DETAINED**

A decision to detain blogger Raja Petra Kamarudin for two years under the country's Internal Security Act (ISA) was reported by IFJ (24/9/08). The order, signed on September 22 extends Raja Petra's detention for two years on grounds his writing is a threat to "national security".

Raja Petra was reported not to have been tried, despite ongoing habeas corpus proceedings by his lawyers. Raja Petra is a blogger and editor of the political website *Malaysia Today*. He has run the popular alternative political website for two years, and has broken a string of controversial stories. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

### **WASHINGTON POST BUYS FOREIGN POLICY MAGAZINE**

The Washington Post Co. announced on Monday it was acquiring *Foreign Policy* magazine. Bought as part of the Slate Group, the new property is being positioned as part of the newspaper company's transition into a digital world, Forbes Magazine reported in its current issue..

CEO Donald Graham said the new acquisition should help "expand our journalism in the online arena." The buy marks the *Post's* second foray into new digital initiatives this month. Last week, the newspaper launched a new area of its website to aggregate political news from across the Web.

A representative from *Foreign Policy* says the site's total 2008 traffic to date has been 4,762,481 unique visitors. This includes 3,197,317 visitors to the foreignpolicy.com site and an additional 1,565,164 visitors to its blog, FP Passport.

### **WHEN IS IT NEWS AND WHEN IS IT SPIN?**

The Media Report on the ABC this week featured a spokesman from Spin Spotter which is described on its website as:

Spin doesn't belong in the news. It's like putting motor oil in the mojito. We have tremendous respect for journalists, but who would argue that the media circus isn't out of control? A full 66% of Americans think the press is one-sided. Now there's a website and software tool that exposes news spin and bias, misuse of sources, and suspect factual support. At SpinSpotter, you'll experience the news in a profound new way. Yes, the truth is back in town. (According to US media guidelines). **DETAILS:** <http://spinspotter.com/>

## **G. OTHER NEWS**

### **US HOUSE APPROVES BAILOUT ON SECOND TRY**

The House of Representatives gave final approval on Friday to the [\\$700 billion bailout](#) for the financial system, reversing course to authorise what may be the most expensive government intervention in history, the New York Times reported (3/10/08).

Within an hour, the legislation had been conveyed to the White House and signed by President Bush. Standing in the Rose Garden shortly before signing the document, the president thanked Congressional leaders of both parties by name and said they had achieved something "essential to helping America's economy weather the [financial crisis](#)."

Most Democrats favoured the bill (172 yeas to 63 nays), while a slighter majority of Republicans voted against (91 yeas to 108 nays). Every member of the House voted.  
**REPORT:** <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/04/business/economy/04bailout.html?hp>

### **\$20B INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM TO PRIME AUSTRALIAN ECONOMY**

The Federal Government has brought forward its \$20 billion infrastructure program by three months in a bid to shore up the economy against the effects of the global financial crisis, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (3/10/08).

After the COAG meeting in Perth, Mr Rudd said an interim list of projects the nation most urgently needed would be decided by Christmas, not March as originally scheduled.

This would allow work to begin earlier, and Sydney was expected to benefit substantially, given the poor state of its roads, rail and other infrastructure. Speeding up the Building Australia Fund was aimed to prime an economy expected to slow early next year, as well as boost confidence, he said.

"I think it's going to be a very important part of our economic message to the nation in these globally unsettling times."

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/rudds-20b-lifeline-for-the-nation/2008/10/02/1222651267629.html>

### **CHALLENGE TO NT INTERVENTION UNDERWAY**

The High Court is hearing a challenge to the federal intervention's compulsory five-year takeover of Aboriginal townships in the Northern Territory, the ABC reported (2/10/08).

The legal action has been launched by Reggie Warrajul and other community leaders around Maningrida, which is one of the more than 70 communities under Federal Government control. If the case is successful, it would set a precedent which could have wide implications for the Northern Territory intervention.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/02/2380294.htm>

### **AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE DISCUSS SECURITY IN ASEAN REGION**

The Australian Federal Police were due to give evidence on its role in assisting ASEAN nations before the Federal Parliament's Foreign Affairs Sub-Committee in Melbourne (2/10/08). The sub-committee is inquiring into Australia's relationship with ASEAN. Sub-Committee Chairman Michael Danby said the committee was keen to discuss the AFP's multi-faceted engagement with ASEAN countries.

He said the AFP is actively engaged in the ASEAN region. For example it is co-hosting, with Indonesia, a conference on combating the use of the Internet by terrorists and will also be providing training aimed to assist ASEAN police forces to combat people smuggling. It is also involved in an Asia region law enforcement program in Vietnam, and in regional cooperation teams and bomb data centres in Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand.

"Security in the ASEAN region is of vital importance to Australia and the committee will be keen to be briefed by the AFP on the security situation and challenges faced by the law enforcement and counter terrorist agencies of the region," he said.

The committee was also to hear evidence from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry. DAFF has advised that Australia's agricultural trade will expand due to income growth in ASEAN and through the implementation of a free trade agreement with ASEAN. The ASEAN region is host to various plant and animal diseases including bird flu.

"DAFF has a role in preserving Australia's quarantine border and preventing diseases such as foot and mouth disease and bird flu from entering Australia," he said. The committee was keen to be briefed on Australia's efforts to maintain the bio-security of its borders.

Also due to appear were representatives from the ACTU and from Australian automotive industries. "The committee has heard evidence that following the free-trade agreement with Thailand, that country changed the rules which subsequently adversely affected Australia's opportunity to export vehicles to Thailand. The committee will explore this issue with witnesses from the ACTU and from the Australian automotive industries," Mr Danby said.

DETAILS: Sub-Committee Secretary, John Carter, on 02 6277 4306; [www.aph.gov.au/jfadt](http://www.aph.gov.au/jfadt)

### **NEW CALEDONIA BANS WEEKEND PUBLIC CONSUMPTION**

New Caledonia will again experiment with a ban on the sale and public consumption of alcohol this weekend, Radio Australia reported (2/10/08).

The ban, from 7pm local time on Friday night, to midnight on Sunday to combat drunken violence, was first trialled last weekend in the capital Noumea. Oceania Flash reported last weekend's trial was a success in reducing alcohol related crime.

**REPORT:** <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200810/s2380171.htm?tab=latest>

### **RADIO AUSTRALIA SERIES ON INTERNATIONAL**

Last year the Australian Government granted student visas to over 228,000 international students, competing in the lucrative international education market which has seen strong growth and increased competition in the US, UK and Asia.

In a series of reports, Radio Australia's **Connect Asia** looks at the challenges for international students in Australia and the changing landscape of studying overseas.

### **ECUADOR BACKS NEW CONSTITUTION**

Ecuadorean voters have convincingly approved a new constitution that increases presidential powers, the BBC reported (29/9/08). President Rafael Correa hailed as a "historic win".

He has said the new constitution will help bring about a more just society and tackle instability in Ecuador. It will enable him to run for two new, consecutive terms. But critics say it gives the president too much power.

The constitution allows him to dissolve Congress within the first three years of its four-year term. The 444-article constitution will be the Andean nation's 20th. The package contains some of the most wide-ranging proposals the country - or any country in the region - has seen, says the BBC's Daniel Schweimler.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7640704.stm>

### **DESERT KNOWLEDGE PLANS LEADERSHIP IN DESERT COMMUNITIES SEMINAR**

The Desert Knowledge CRC plans a unique seminar and workshop on November 3 which will feature internationally-renowned author and thinker Margaret J Wheatley on how to lead and organise desert communities.

She will deliver a seminar on leadership in desert communities, followed by an interactive workshop focusing on:

How science is finding what Indigenous peoples have known all along—the basic building blocks are relationships

What makes for a healthy community

What kind of leadership works to mobilise a community and

The core principles for working in a community.

The event will be held in Crowne Plaza Grand Ballroom, Barrett Drive, Alice Springs.

**DETAILS:** Renee Westbrook on 08 8959 6041;

[renee.westbrook@desertknowledgecrc.com.au](mailto:renee.westbrook@desertknowledgecrc.com.au) and

<http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/publications/conferencestreaming.html>

### **BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS**

The specific challenges facing carers living in regional and rural Australia were to be explored at a public hearing in Albury on Wednesday (1/10/08). Local respite service provider.

Dementia Respite Options. has said many services still appear to be 'city centric'. Committee: "Addressing the special needs of carers living in regional and rural areas of Australia is of critical importance, Chairperson Annette Ellis said. "Carers living in regional areas frequently need to travel longer distances to access services and so have higher transportation costs than their city dwelling counterparts. Country people can also encounter additional costs for their accommodation when their family member requires hospitalisation or acute care in a regional centre and city". **DETAILS:** [www.aph.gov.au/ath](http://www.aph.gov.au/ath)

### **MILLION DOLLAR WISDOM**

Actor Russell Crowe has an Oscar and is co-owner of the Sydney Rabbitohs rugby league team, but maybe his next job should be US treasury secretary, AAP reported (1/10/08).

The New Zealand-born actor announced, during a US TV talk show appearance, a plan to cure America's financial crisis. Crowe was reported to say he believes the US government should give each American \$US1 million (\$A1.26 million).

His reasoning is the US has a population of about 300 million, so the \$US300 million (\$A377.05 million) outlay is a fraction of the \$US700 billion (\$A879.78 billion) financial bail-out package rejected by politicians in Washington on Monday.

"I was thinking," Mr Crowe said. "If they want to stimulate the economy and get people spending so they can look after their mortgage ... give everyone \$US1 million."

**REPORT:** <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/entertainment/5050956/crowe-plan-fix-financial-crisis>

## H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### **ALL ISN'T LOST: A SMALL SACRIFICE CAN SAVE THE PLANET**

Australians will be driving clean electric cars, giving up their lamb roast and rump steaks for chicken and pork, living in higher-density cities and swapping cheap air flights for interstate trains, write Marian Wilkinson and Ben Cubby in the Sydney Morning Herald (1/10/08). In the outback, millions of beef cattle and sheep will disappear from the marginal rangelands, farmers will grow grasses and eucalypts for carbon trading and kangaroos will dominate the bush, potentially becoming one of the nation's biggest export meats. This image of a sustainable future for Australia has now become a mainstream view with the release of Professor Ross Garnaut's final sweeping report on how the nation can take up the fight against climate change.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/news/environment/global-warming/a-small-sacrifice-can-save-the-planet/2008/09/30/1222651085699.html>

### **PAKISTANI PRINCE DOES IT HIS WAY**

"A group of the world's nations," he says, "have come together and agreed on eight basic targets for development that all countries should achieve. We can achieve these targets." Familiar? Yes it is another sonorous and well-meaning statement about the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). What is different is that the prince, Rafeh Malik, has decided to try to achieve the MDGs in one Pakistani village. He has taken the lead himself, and right now, nothing is going to stop him. It does help that he owns Ratrian, a poverty-ridden village in the north of Pakistan. On his 18th birthday he inherited the village from his vast family estate. It has been in their keeping for generations ... Rafeh and his old friend Shehryar Mufti, a Dawn TV journalist, often discuss the big political and social issues ... In an age of globalisation, Shehryar reckons, Pakistan's old landowning classes need to change their game. They cannot go on presiding over villages like Ratrian without improving the lives of the villagers, he says.

**ARTICLE:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7641995.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7641995.stm)

### **REFUGEES BEAT BUCKLEY'S CHANCE**

Shayan Badraie loves his soccer, has taken up karate, and most importantly, can look you in the face and shyly answer questions, reports the Sydney Morning Herald (27/9/08). Seven years ago, many feared Shayan would not survive Australia's mandatory detention system. He was mute, wasting away and traumatised as the immigration minister, Philip Ruddock, and his department resisted calls to free him from the source of his trauma: detention.

What was the chance Shayan, now 13, would overcome post-traumatic stress disorder - sparked by the horrors he witnessed inside Woomera and Villawood detention centres - to enjoy this new life in Australia? Buckley's, or "Bucklies", as a controversial ministerial minute signed by Mr Ruddock noted ... In recent weeks Mr Ruddock has sought to soften public perception of his controversial ministry. But *The Bitter Shore*, a new book by (Jacquie) Everitt, will do nothing to help his cause. It retraces the hard-hearted treatment of Shayan, a six-year-old Iranian refugee (who came to Australia by boat with his father, Saeed Badraie, and stepmother, Zahra Saberi, in March 2000), as he slipped into psychological paralysis, and the government's efforts to turn public opinion against the family.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/26/1222217517577.html>

## **FAILURE WRITTEN IN WEST BANK STONE**

The latest phone call came from a journalist in Denmark. Why, he asked, has Israeli settlement in the West Bank continued despite peace negotiations with the Palestinians?, writes Gershom Gorenberg in the Washington Post (30/9/08). As a historian of settlements, I'm used to this question. Outgoing Prime Minister [Ehud Olmert](#) insists that Israel's future depends on a two-state solution. Building new homes in settlements only makes it more difficult to withdraw. When [President Bush](#) convened the Annapolis conference last November, there was media buzz about a settlement freeze. Olmert said that every request to build from within the government required his approval. Yet in the past year, construction has increased -- despite Olmert's talk, despite Bush's supposed commitment to his 2003 'road map' plan with its freeze on settlement.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/09/29/AR2008092902665.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

## **POLICE ACCUSED OF BIG BROTHER TACTICS**

Things are looking bad for free speech in Queensland, David Marr writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (29/9/08). The Queensland Police Service is cracking down on links between police and journalists following recent embarrassing leaks to the media. The general secretary of the Queensland Police Union, Mick Barnes, alleges that the records of journalists and police officers are being accessed in these investigations ... Advice received would suggest that private telephone and bank records are being examined for no other reason than association."

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/police-accused-of-big-brother-tactics/2008/09/28/1222540247016.html>

## **BAN MAINTAINS LOW PROFILE DIPLOMACY**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's diplomatic style is less high-flying than that of his predecessor, Kofi Annan, many observers say. Ban's approach to crises in Darfur, Myanmar and Zimbabwe have not resulted in high-profile, UN-brokered successes. Ban's special adviser Robert Orr said style should not be confused with substance. "These things move quietly until they break into the open," Mr Orr said. "The secretary general's style is to work very hard, persistently, behind the scenes." Author James Traub, who has written a book about Annan's tenure at the UN, says: "It is possible that Ban's decision, for whatever reason, to keep away from those extremely melodramatic settings may be prudent. But it also has the effect of reducing his size in the world." [The Washington Post](#) (29/9/08).

## **GOING BANANAS FOR OLD METHODS**

Ramy Azer has turned his traditional roots into a sustainable future, writes Jennie Curtin in the Sydney Morning Herald (1/10/08). If Ramy Azer succeeds in making paper from bananas on a commercial scale, he can probably thank his old Egyptian aunty for that ... Thus began a long journey to find an alternative source for paper, which gobbles up millions of trees every year. It eventually led Azer, who was born in Cairo, to mimic the techniques of his ancestors who made papyrus from giant reeds. But instead of using reeds, which occur in Australia only in Kakadu National Park, Azer turned to the trunks of banana plants, which usually are chopped down and left to rot on the ground after the fruit is harvested.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/30/1222651083067.html>

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **ENERGY**

#### **IAEA CHIEF: NUCLEAR STATES SET EXAMPLE FOR OTHERS**

The chief UN atomic inspector suggested on Tuesday that nuclear weapons states bore some blame for other countries seeking such arms - because they are modernising arsenals rather than scrapping them, the Seattle Post-Intelligencer reported (30/9/08).

Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, spoke on the sidelines of a 145-nation IAEA meeting that has focused partly on proliferation concerns exemplified by North Korea and Iran.

"How can I go with a straight face to the non-nuclear-weapon states and tell them nuclear weapons are no good for you, while the weapon states continue to modernise and to say 'we absolutely need nuclear weapons,'" Mr ElBaradei said.

Still, he said the "number one security threat" was not proliferation but the possibility of terrorists getting a nuclear weapon or the material to make a dirty bomb.

**REPORT:** [Seattle Post-Intelligencer/The Associated Press](#) (30/9/08).

### **US ENVOY IN CRUCIAL NORTH KOREA TRIP**

A top US negotiator has arrived in North Korea to salvage a nuclear deal, weeks after Pyongyang began to reinstate its plutonium program, the BBC reported (1/10/08).

Christopher Hill is expected to offer a compromise, after the initial deal fell apart amid wrangling over how much verification the North had to give. The isolated state had disabled some of its facilities as part of the deal.

Mr Hill's visit comes amid rumours that the North's reclusive leader, Kim Jong-il, is seriously ill. A deal was agreed last year and Pyongyang began dismantling its facilities in November 2007. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7642720.stm>

### **NEW UN NUCLEAR RESOLUTION ON IRAN**

The UN Security Council has unanimously passed a new resolution on Iran, reaffirming demands it stop enriching uranium, but imposing no new sanctions, the BBC reported (28/9/08).

The text calls on Iran to "comply, and without delay, with its obligations" under past resolutions and co-operate with the UN nuclear watchdog, the IAEA. Iran dismissed the move and said it would not stop enriching uranium, which it says is for peaceful purposes. Western nations suspect Iran wants to build a nuclear weapons capability.

The draft was agreed after Russia said it would not support further sanctions. But Iran's chief nuclear negotiator, Saeed Jalili, said the new resolution would cause "mistrust" and would not help global peace and security.

**REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7640133.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7640133.stm)

### **AUSTRALIA AND JAPAN LAUNCH NUCLEAR COMMISSION**

The leaders of Australia and Japan have launched a commission to press for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament ahead of a review of a key international atomic treaty, the ABC/AFP reported (26/9/08).

The International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament was unveiled by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and the new Japanese Prime Minister Taro Aso on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

The 15-member panel is led by former Australian and Japanese foreign ministers Gareth Evans and Yoriko Kawaguchi respectively, and comprises former heads of state, ministers, military strategists and disarmament experts.

It will seek to shape a global consensus in the lead-up to the 2010 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) review conference and beyond, Mr Rudd said.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/26/2375322.htm?section=world>

### **FRANCE AND INDIA SIGN MAJOR NUCLEAR DEAL**

France and India signed a landmark nuclear cooperation pact which opens the way for the sale of French nuclear reactors to New Delhi, the ABC reported (1/10/08).

"India and France welcome the signature of a bilateral accord for civil nuclear cooperation which will form the basis of enlarged bilateral cooperation in the fields of energy and research," a French presidency statement said.

The French-Indian pact marks a key step in India's bid to secure a new position as a nuclear power as the country faces a critical shortage of energy to fuel its booming economy.  
**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/09/30/2378538.htm?section=world>

## ENVIRONMENT

### **AMAZON LOGGING SPEEDS UP**

The Amazon is being deforested more than three times as fast as last year, Brazilian officials say, acknowledging a sharp reversal after three years of decline in the deforestation rate, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (1/10/08).

The Environment Minister, Carlos Minc, said the coming nationwide elections were partly to blame, with mayors turning a blind eye to illegal logging in hopes of gaining votes.

Environmentalists blame the global rise in food prices for encouraging soy farmers and ranchers to clear land for crops and grazing. Elections no doubt play a part, but "the tendency of deforestation rising is deeply related to the fact that food prices are going up", said Paulo Adario, who co-ordinates Greenpeace's Amazon campaign.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/09/30/1222651084459.html>

### **MADAGASCAR STRUGGLES TO SAVE WILDLIFE**

Tiny Madagascar, home to plant and animal species found nowhere else, is racing against time to preserve what is left of its once-vibrant ecosystems. Efforts include a program to hire local people to plant trees in areas that have previously been stripped of their vegetation in a bid to address habitat loss -- one of the main causes of species extinction. [TIME](#) (25/9/08).