

# 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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569

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Unity and Supplement can also be accessed at: <http://www.unityunaa.info/>

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: [www.unaa.org.au](http://www.unaa.org.au) or email the editor.

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

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

#### **UN WORLD COURT TO RULE ON GEORGIAN CLAIM AGAINST RUSSIA**

The International Court of Justice (**ICJ**), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will deliver a ruling shortly on Georgia's claim against Russia that it has breached a global pact against racial discrimination.

### **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

#### **BAN WARNS ABOUT SHORT TERM PROBLEMS**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned of the dangers of the fight against the climate change – which he characterised as the “defining challenge of our era” – getting bogged down by shorter-term problems, such as the current global financial turmoil.

### **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

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

#### **DARFUR: BAN OUTLINES TIMETABLE FOR PEACEKEEPING FORCE**

The “severely stretched” United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur, which has struggled to find enough countries willing to supply troops and equipment, should now reach two-thirds of its full deployment by the end of this year: Ban

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

### **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **G. OTHER NEWS**

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

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

#### **FISH AND SEAFOOD ENDANGERED SAYS CSIRO**

Climate change is likely to hit supplies of many of Australia's favourite eating fish, including barramundi, salmon, rock lobster and prawns, the most extensive study on the subject yet undertaken by the Federal Government has warned.

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

### **FINLAND'S AHTISAARI WINS NOBEL PRIZE**

Finland's ex-president Martti Ahtisaari received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to build a lasting peace in places as diverse as East Timor and the Balkans in Europe, The Sydney Morning Herald reported.(10/10/08).

Finland's ex-president Martti Ahtisaari received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts to build a lasting peace in places as diverse as East Timor and the Balkans in Europe.

"The Norwegian Nobel Committee has decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize for 2008 to Martti Ahtisaari for his important efforts, on several continents and over more than three decades, to resolve international conflicts. These efforts have contributed to a more peaceful world and to 'fraternity between nations' in Alfred Nobel's spirit," the committee said in announcing the prize.

**REPORT:** <http://news.smh.com.au/world/finlands-ahtisaari-wins-nobel-prize-20081010-4xpw.html>

### **UN WORLD COURT TO RULE ON GEORGIAN CLAIM AGAINST RUSSIA**

The International Court of Justice (**ICJ**), the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, will deliver a ruling shortly on Georgia's claim against Russia that it has breached a global pact against racial discrimination. (07/10/08).

The ICJ, also known as the World Court, said it would give its order on the Georgian request for interim provisional measures against Russia on 15 October, according to a press release issued by The Hague-based institution yesterday.

In August, following fighting between Georgian, Russian and South Ossetian forces, Georgia filed an **application**. The Georgian Government asked the ICJ to impose provisional measures to preserve its right under the Convention to "protect its citizens against violent discriminatory acts by Russian armed forces, acting in concert with separatist militia and foreign mercenaries" on and around its territory.

In that application, Georgia said that since the early 1990s, Russia has "engaged in a systematic policy of ethnic discrimination directed against the ethnic Georgian population and other groups in those regions."

Further, Georgia contends that despite the withdrawal of its troops and its declaration of a ceasefire, Russian military operations continued in territories in Georgia's control.

Oral pleadings by both sides were held last month regarding the provisional measures, and the decision reached by the Court will be binding on the parties. Georgia has sought the interim measures pending the ICJ's final decision on the merits of the case.

### **WORLD'S ECONOMIC CRISIS MAY HIT AID AND DEVELOPMENT**

Aid and development officials warn that the world's deepening economic crisis may have disastrous effects on humanitarian aid and multilateral efforts to fight disease and poverty and care for refugee populations.

"It would be tragic if the funds available to the humanitarian community in general and the UNHCR in particular were to decline at the very time when the demands upon us are increasing so dramatically," UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said. [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://AlertNet.org/Reuters) (6/10/08).

### **BAN CALLS FOR GEORGIA AND ABKHAZIA EXTENSION**

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calls for the mandate of the UN mission monitoring the cease-fire between Georgia and Abkhazia to be extended for four months, as

officials consider whether to continue UN involvement in the aftermath of the Russia-Georgia war. [The Washington Times/The Associated Press](#) (6/10/08).

#### **UK MINISTER: URGENT REFORM NEEDED TO MEET MAN-MADE DISASTERS**

UK International Development Minister Gareth Thomas will release a statement warning that serious reforms are required to address the UN's handling of man-made and environmental disasters, as these disasters are happening with greater frequency and deficiencies and the UN's responses are costing lives. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (7/10/08).

#### **ARAB LEAGUE AMBASSADOR ARRIVES IN BAGHDAD**

The [Arab League](#) has dispatched an ambassador to Baghdad, the Washington Post reported (7/10/08). [SEE PEACE & SECURITY PAGE.](#)

#### **YEARBOOK OF THE UNITED NATIONS WEBSITE LAUNCH**

The online version of the *Yearbook of the United Nations*— the world organisation's flagship reference publication — was scheduled for October 9 in the General Assembly Visitor's Lobby.

The new website — <http://unyearbook.un.org> — which provides free public access to the 59 volumes of the *Yearbook* collection, details the work and achievements of the UN over the first 60 years of its existence (1946-2005).

The new site incorporates a user-friendly search function, allowing users to locate any *Yearbook* reference using key words, phrases or document symbols, by year or range of years. The new website is expected not only serve as a strong research tool, but to also help users better understand global issues as they affect them, also broadening the organisation's outreach to the public.

The *Yearbook of the United Nations* is the most comprehensive and authoritative work on the organisation. Each *Yearbook* volume provides analysis, is fully indexed, and includes the texts of, and votes on, all major General Assembly, Security Council and Economic and Social Council resolutions and decisions.

**DETAILS:** Julia Dean, National Information Officer, UN Information Centre for Australia, New Zealand & South Pacific, 7 National Circuit, Level-1, Barton, Canberra ACT 2600. Australia  
on 61-2-62738200 & 61-2-62738205(d) Fax: 61-2-62738206;  
PO Box 5366, Kingston ACT 2604. Australia; [www.un.org.au](http://www.un.org.au)

#### **IS VOLUNTEERING GOOD FOR YOU?**

Australia relies on the good will of volunteers to perform a huge range of functions, but is the work they are performing good for them? Or are the hours we ask them to put in having a negative effect on their health and well being? An ANU study of around 1000 volunteers in the ACT and Queanbeyan region was made public during Mental Health Week.

**DETAILS:** Dr Tim Windsor of the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research (CMHR), CEO of Volunteering ACT Lorraine Higgins and volunteers Jenny Jordan and Chris Hunter can be contacted through Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

#### **EISAKU SATO INVITES ESSAYISTS**

The Eisaku Sato Memorial Foundation for Cooperation with the United Nations University invites essays for 2008 Eisaku Sato Essay Contest. The deadline is January 31 2009.

Contributions are now being accepted for the 25th Essay Contest with the theme of 'Poverty in Africa: How should the United Nations Eisaku Sato address the challenge of poverty in Africa?'

The contest is open to international participation by anyone with an interest in both the United Nations University and the designated topic. There are no restrictions as to age, nationality or profession. The awards are valued at 500,000 yen, 200,000 yen and 50,000 yen.

The contest, inaugurated in 1980, has been held annually since 1990. It is supported by the Eisaku Sato Memorial Foundation for Cooperation with the United Nations University, which was established by the late Eisaku Sato, former Prime Minister of Japan, with the monetary award he received with his 1974 Nobel Peace Prize.

Essays may be in either English (3,000-6,000 words) or Japanese (8,000-16,000 characters). English essays should be typed on A4-size paper and include an abstract of up to 450 words. Japanese essays should include an abstract of up to 1,200 characters.

Each entry should be submitted in quadruplicate (four copies) and must include a cover sheet listing the contributor's name, affiliation, age, gender, nationality, mailing address, and (if available) telephone/fax number and e-mail address.

Within the context of the designated theme, essays should include due consideration of population, food, environment, development and resource issues.

The deadline for entry is 31 January 2009. Submit entries by postal mail to:  
The Eisaku Sato Memorial Foundation for Cooperation with the United Nations University c/o  
United Nations University Library 5-53-70 Jingumae, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo 150-8925, Japan

A prize of ¥500,000, a second prize of ¥200,000, and several honourable mentions of ¥50,000 each will be awarded. The winners will be notified by June 2009; those who are able to attend will receive their prizes at a ceremony to be held later that month at the United Nations University. **DETAILS:** [satofoundation@aol.com](mailto:satofoundation@aol.com); tel. & fax 03-3409-0707.

## **UNity, UN AND UNAA CONTACTS**

[United Nations.](#)

[Secretary-General.](#)

[UN News Centre.](#)

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

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

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

UNity: <http://www.unityunaa.info>

The World Federation of United Nations is a global network of people linked through United Nations Associations in over 100 UN member states.

WFUNA website: <http://www.wfuna.org/who/>; newsletter at

<http://www.wfuna.org/news/newsletter/index.cfm>.

United Nations Association of Australia by state:

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

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

UNAA Qld [unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au](mailto:unaabalmain@optusnet.com.au) on ph/fax 07 32541096.

UNAA SA [mail@unaasa.org.au](mailto:mail@unaasa.org.au); 08 8226 4141.

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

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

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

UNAA WA [unaawa@tpg.com.au](mailto:unaawa@tpg.com.au) on 08 9221 9455 <http://www.unaa-wa.org.au/>.

UNAA NT (Darwin) <http://au.f313.mail.yahoo.com/ym/Compose?To=fletch44@bigpond.net.au>  
or on 0419 829509.

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006 and 2007 are on the UNAA website: [www.unaa.org.au](http://www.unaa.org.au)  
or email the editor. As a regular reader of UNity, please make sure you notify us if you change your email address by sending your new email address to [judycnnn@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judycnnn@yahoo.com.au)

Daily press briefing of office of the UN Secretary General:

<http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2008/db080527.doc.htm>

UN Daily News (Link only)

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

## B. CLIMATE CHANGE

### **BAN WARNS ABOUT SHORT TERM PROBLEMS**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned of the dangers of the fight against the climate change – which he characterized as the “defining challenge of our era” – getting bogged down by shorter-term problems, such as the current global financial turmoil. 7/10/08.

Global warming “remains the defining challenge of our era,” Mr. Ban **told** reporters at his monthly press conference at UN Headquarters. “The danger is that, as with the [Millennium Development Goals], the magnitude of the threat will be obscured by shorter-term problems, and in particular the deepening financial crisis.”

He voiced hope that the next set of UN climate change talks in the Polish city of Poznan in December will produce results through increased cooperation, agreement on a timeframe of work, and, “above all, a strong willingness [on] the part of developed and developing nations alike to lead on an issue that all agree is an existential threat to our planet.”

The Secretary-General acknowledged that in the face of immediate economic difficulties, the fight against climate change could take a back seat.

“Grave as it may be, today’s financial crisis is a passing storm from which we will recover,” he said.

But he warned that “we cannot say that about the potential catastrophe of global warming.” In a related development, Mr. Ban today lauded Japan’s leadership in fighting climate change through its “Cool Biz” programme, from which the United Nations has drawn inspiration for its own “Cool UN” scheme.

Japan’s initiative aimed to slash electricity consumption through raising thermostats in office buildings and encouraging all levels of Government personnel to shed their jackets and ties. It “has been an inspiration for the United Nations not just symbolically but literally,” he said in a message, delivered by UN University (UNU) Rector Konrad Osterwalder in Tokyo, on receiving the East Asian nation’s “Cool Biz” award.

In August, the UN launched its own “Cool UN” initiative, with temperatures being raised by five degrees from 72 to 77 degrees Fahrenheit in most parts of the landmark Secretariat building in New York.

“This practical step to reduce emissions and increase staff awareness of climate change was the ultimate win-win,” the Secretary-General said. “We achieved a reduction in emissions equivalent to 3,000 tons of carbon dioxide. We saved money.”

He said that a reverse process – turning down the thermostat by five degrees Fahrenheit – will take place in the winter.

“Cool UN is just part of the Organization’s efforts to address this global threat,” Mr. Ban said, noting the renovation of UN Headquarters will lead to a “greener and more efficient United Nations.”

### **MASS EXTINCTION CRISIS DEMANDS ‘ACTION AROUND THE GLOBE’**

The mass of extinctions now underway (see IUCN red list report ) underscores the urgent need for the global community to tackle human-induced climate change, Australian Greens leader Bob Brown said today.

“Unlike when the dinosaurs went to extinction 65 million years ago, this onrush of mass extinctions of species is preventable. It will take coordinated international action, but action must begin at home,” Senator Brown said.

“Environment Minister Peter Garrett should be leading this campaign. The most obvious first

action is to stop the clear-felling and burning of native forests and woodlands, which are the habitat of scores of rare and endangered species, and which hold back megatonnes of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.

"The plight of the Tasmanian Devil is a case in point. Labor governments in Hobart and Canberra are using taxpayers' money to foster clear-fell logging and to promote Gunns' pulp mill, which will lead to the destruction of 200,000 hectares of species-rich native forests. And most of the wood gained from this destructive logging ends up on ships going overseas to make throw away products.

"Right now, one of Australia's most stunning endangered species, the Swift Parrot has its prime nesting site in Tasmania's Wielangta Forest targeted for logging by Gunns, backed by both the Bartlett and Rudd governments, including federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett.

"This is a crime against nature," Senator Brown said.

Senator Brown also commented on the Australian Industry Group's submission to the government's Green Paper.

"Where is the Australian Industry Group's assessment of the number of jobs that will be lost when the Great Barrier Reef, Ningaloo Reef and Kakadu are lost to climate change? Or its assessment of the number of green-collar jobs that will be created in renewable energy and energy efficiency under an emissions trading scheme?" Senator Brown asked.

[DETAILS](#): Ebony Bennett on 0409 164 603

### **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **BAN SAYS POOREST PEOPLE CAN RELY ON UN**

The world's poorest people can count on the United Nations and its Member States to support them, despite the current crisis engulfing financial markets, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said. (07/10/08).

"Everyone has felt the earthquake on Wall Street. But it has not shaken our resolve," Mr. Ban **told** journalists at UN Headquarters in New York, where he held the first in a series of regular monthly press conferences. "Banks may be failing. But the world's bottom billion can bank on us."

The Secretary-General said he was heartened that world leaders had pledged during two high-level meetings at the UN last month – one on African development needs and the other on progress towards the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – to give \$16 billion towards assisting the poor.

"The generosity of these commitments is most encouraging, given the economic climate. It means the world is not forgetting the needs of the world's poorest people, notwithstanding the prospect of harder times.

"It means that, for all the obstacles, we have a good chance of meeting our Millennium Development Goals by 2015. I urge world leaders to honour these pledges."

During the General Assembly's annual General Debate, held last month, numerous world leaders warned that the financial crisis should not be used as an excuse to renege on pledges or reduce commitments to aid and other forms of official development assistance (ODA). Member States also called for renewed efforts to try to achieve a breakthrough in the so-called Doha round of trade liberalization talks, which have stalled, stressing that a deal was vital to help poorer countries to deal not only with the financial crisis, but the combined effects of rising food and fuel prices and climate change.

#### **DPR KOREA: BAN SOUNDS ALARM ON LACK OF PROGRESS IN HUMAN RIGHTS**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has spoken out against the lack of "tangible progress" made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in addressing serious human rights concerns, with reports from the nation pointing to such actions as torture, public executions and forced labour. (07/10/08).

DPRK authorities have "not recognized the resolutions adopted by the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly on the situation of human rights in the country," Mr. Ban said in a **report** to the General Assembly made public today.

The Government has yet to engage in a substantive dialogue on the rights situation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Further, the DPRK has not cooperated or given access to the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the nation.

“Reports emanating from the country continue to indicate trends of arbitrary arrests, absence of due process and the rule of law, torture, inhumane conditions of detention, public execution, ill-treatment of refugees or asylum-seekers repatriated from abroad, and forced labour,” the Secretary-General wrote.

“In addition, reports also indicate that the population is being denied the freedoms of thought, religion, opinion and expression, peaceful assembly and association, movement and access to information.”

Calling on the Government to protect fundamental rights and freedoms, he urged authorities to enact domestic legal reforms to comply with international standards.

Mr. Ban spotlighted the dire food shortages in the DPRK, and their impact on the economic, social and cultural rights of the population.

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) cautioned in July that millions faced dangerous hunger levels, while the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned of a 1.7 million-ton cereal deficit.

But positive steps have been taken, the Secretary-General noted, such as the Government’s agreement to boost food assistance and expand the operations of UN agencies, including WFP and the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF).

He stressed the need for authorities to increase budget allocations for food and highlighted the importance of preventing discrimination in distributing food and health services.

“The Secretary-General is encouraged by the Government’s recognition of the urgency of the problem and its desire to address the issue of the people’s sustainable access to food, and he welcomes the Government’s extension of cooperation to the United Nations agencies and encourages the international community to lend its full support to efforts to address this issue,” the report said.

Additionally, Mr. Ban welcomed progress made under the six-party talks, also involving China, Russia, the United States, Japan and the Republic of Korea, calling “upon all regional and international actors to facilitate the creation of an environment conducive to generating greater engagement between the Government of the [DPRK] and the international community.”

Late last month, DPRK authorities informed the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) that it planned to restart nuclear activities at its reprocessing plant in Yongbyon, shut down last year.

They also said they are terminating access by IAEA inspectors to the facilities, which the agency verified had been taken off line last summer.

#### **DEATH PENALTY STAND LIMITED TO OUR OWN**

Australia will not help people facing the death penalty other than its own citizens, [Attorney-General Robert McClelland](#) said, The Age reported (4/10/08).

Mr McClelland was speaking at a [Law Institute of Victoria](#) lunch in Melbourne.

REPORT: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/death-penalty-stand-limited-to-our-own-20081003-4tkh.html>

#### **SECOND BOATLOAD OF ILLEGALS HELD IN TIMOR SEA**

A second boatload of illegal migrants has been intercepted in the Timor Sea while heading for Australia, undermining an assurance by the Rudd Government that Labor’s softening of its

refugee policy has not been exploited by people smugglers, The Australian reported. (07/10/08).

The people in the fishing boat, who were understood to be from the Middle East, were later picked up by the navy. Immigration Minister Chris Evans denied the latest arrival was a consequence of Labor's recent changes in policy.

**REPORT;** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24457898-601,00.html>

### **MIGRATION COMMITTEE VISITS PERTH**

The Joint Standing Committee on Migration hearing was scheduled in Perth for October 9, as part of its inquiry into immigration detention. The Committee will take evidence from a number of Western Australia's most prominent community service providers and refugee advocates.

Among others, Professor Linda Briskman, coconvenor of the People's Inquiry into Immigration Detention, as well as representatives from the Southern Communities Advocacy, Legal and Education Service (SCALES) was to appear before the Committee. Both have called for the abolition of mandatory detention and an overhaul of immigration policy.

Under the reforms announced in July by the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship, people will only be held in detention until health, security and identity checks have been completed. Beyond this, mandatory detention will continue to apply to those people that present an unacceptable risk to the community and to unlawful non citizens who have repeatedly refused to comply with their visa conditions.

In its submission to the committee, SCALES recommend that "further and detailed guidelines need to be provided, as to the meaning of unacceptable risk to the community."

The Committee's terms of reference cover areas of criteria for release from detention, transparency, detention infrastructure and alternatives to options for detention. One of the key areas that the Committee will examine in its first report is the criteria for detention.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/hearings/program08.pdf>.

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

Or on (02) 6277 4560 or [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au).

### **IRAQI WOMEN BALANCE PATRIOTISM AND FEAR**

As Iraq prepares to hold elections, women interested in standing as candidates must balance the desire to serve with security concerns. Unlike previous elections where ballots carried only party symbols, this time candidates' names will appear -- raising fears female legislators and their families might face a backlash from ultra-conservative elements of Iraqi society.

**TIME** (06/10/08).

### **ISRAEL'S FIRST INTEGRATED SCHOOL OPENS DOORS**

Israel's first bilingual Jewish-Arab high school, which has admitted its first class of 14 Arab citizens of Israel, faces exceptional challenges as the nation's first institutional effort to integrate students. The school has not received accreditation from the education ministry, which will make it difficult to receive government funding or administer matriculation exams; the ministry says the school failed to file complete paperwork by the deadline. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (07/10/08).

### **GEORGIA MEDIA PLIGHT HIGHLIGHTS FAILURE TO UPHOLD STANDARDS**

Georgia's lack of press freedoms is drawing fire from critics at home and abroad as a glaring example of the country's failure to live up to the democratic standards it claims to espouse.

[The New York Times](#) (0/10/08).

### **PARLIAMENT 'MUST PROVIDE CLOSER WATCH OVER SECURITY ORGANISATION'**

Australian Greens Leader Bob Brown said Parliament needs to provide a much closer watch over all security organisations, following a claim that the Australian Crime Commission has kept a secret file on the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Debus. (03/10/08).

"The parliament needs to provide a much closer watch over all security organisations. That's

how democracy works, not the other way around," Senator Brown said.  
[DETAILS](#): Ebony Bennett on 0409 164 603

### **SEEKING ASYLUM A HUMAN RIGHT, NOT ILLEGAL**

Greens Senator Sarah Hanson-Young has demanded a re-think of the way Australia considers asylum seekers, with a reminder that fleeing persecution and seeking refuge is a human right enshrined in international law. (07/10/08).

Some recent media reports have stated that 'illegal migrants' have been intercepted on the way to Australia.

"The myth that asylum seekers are illegal immigrants must no longer be perpetuated," said Senator Hanson-Young. "A term like 'illegals' is not only offensive, but also inaccurate. It is not illegal to arrive in this country without a visa."

Senator Hanson-Young said that Australia had a responsibility to assist asylum seekers.

"As a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Geneva Convention on Refugees, and a country that considers itself compassionate and a champion of the 'fair go'."

[DETAILS](#): Gemma Clark on 0427 604 760

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **DARFUR: BAN OUTLINES TIMETABLE FOR PEACEKEEPING FORCE**

The "severely stretched" United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur - which has struggled to find enough countries willing to supply troops and equipment - should now reach two-thirds of its full deployment by the end of this year, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. **said**. (07/10/08).

Some 85 per cent of the 26,000 troops and police officers expected when the peacekeeping mission, known as **UNAMID**, is at full capacity should then be in place by next March, "despite the many obstacles," Mr. Ban told a press conference at UN Headquarters in New York.

Only about 10,000 uniformed personnel are currently deployed in Darfur, an impoverished, arid region in western Sudan that has been the centre of fierce fighting and widespread humanitarian suffering since 2003.

Senior UN officials have repeatedly called on countries to provide the necessary blue helmets and equipment, particularly helicopters, so that UNAMID can carry out its mandate.

Mr. Ban said today that the first Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions will be deployed by the end of this month and he has spoken with the leaders of Thailand and Ukraine about contributing troops and equipment.

"Yesterday I spoke with the Prime Minister of Thailand [Somchai Wongsawat] with a view toward securing the deployment of a Thai battalion in Darfur," he said. "As you know, the Government of Sudan has approved the deployment of both Thai and Nepalese military units. It was a very positive conversation and I am assured that the Thai Cabinet will move ahead as soon as possible."

Turning to Ukraine, the Secretary-General said he explored the possibility of deploying military helicopters and personnel during his meeting with President Viktor Yushchenko on the sidelines of the General Assembly's high-level debate last month.

"We have had subsequent discussions with the Ukrainian Defence Minister [Yuriy Yekhanurov] in New York. These efforts are continuing. I expect the Government in Kiev to act soon."

Mr. Ban warned that the situation in Darfur, where rebels are fighting Government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen, continues to deteriorate.

"We are seeing increasing attacks on UN and international [aid] staff. The UNAMID mission is severely stretched."

A Nigerian soldier serving with UNAMID was killed following an ambush of a routine mission patrol in South Darfur state by 40 to 60 unknown attackers wearing civilian clothes. He was the ninth UN soldier to die in Darfur in the past three months.

The blue helmet, who was taking part in a nine-vehicle, 50-strong patrol between Nyala and Khor Abeche when the ambush occurred near Menawashei, died during his medical evacuation to Nyala.

The mission reported that UNAMID forces later captured one of the attackers and handed him to Sudanese Government police in Nyala, which is the South Darfur state capital.

UNAMID said it would investigate the cause and circumstances of the attack, adding it was stepping up its patrols in the area near Menawashei.

Mr. Ban strongly condemned the attack in a statement issued through his spokesperson, offering his condolences to the Nigerian Government and to the friends and family of the deceased.

"Both the Government of Sudan, as well as the concerned armed movements operating in the area, bear responsibility for the provision of security and for refraining from attacks against civilians as well as UN peacekeeper," the statement noted.

Mr. Ban stressed that "all parties have a responsibility to respect the mandate and integrity" of UNAMID, which has been in place in Darfur since January this year, taking over from the under-resourced African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS).

An estimated 300,000 people have been killed in Darfur over the past five years as a result of direct combat, disease, malnutrition or reduced life expectancy, while another 2.7 million people have been displaced from their homes.

In Khartoum, the first meeting of the tripartite committee – comprising representatives of the UN, AU and Sudanese Government – was held to review the deployment of UNAMID and outline practical solutions to logistical and other challenges which the mission faces.

The three parties agreed "to take every possible step to speed up the deployment," according to a press release issued by UNAMID, and also backed a set of measures to achieve that accelerated roll-out.

Susana Malcorra, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, later warned that "the challenges are very high and so we do request the support of the Government of Sudan, without which we cannot achieve this objective."

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28461&Cr=UNAMID&Cr1=Darfur>

### **LIVNI 'TIME IS RUNNING OUT'**

Time is running out for a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel's Prime Minister designate Tzipi Livni has warned, the BBC reported (9/10/09). Ms Livni was asked to form a coalition after Prime Minister Ehud Olmert quit last month amid corruption allegations.

She told a foreign policy forum that the peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, begun in Annapolis last November, would continue because "doing nothing has

its own price". "Israel wishes to arrive at peace with all of her neighbours - the Palestinians, Syria, Lebanon and the Arab nations," she said.

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/7654266.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/7654266.stm)

#### REPORT Lame-duck Olmert to try to persuade Medvedev on Syria, Iran arms sales

Ha'aretz (Tel Aviv, Israel) (7/10/08).

#### ARAB LEAGUE AMBASSADOR ARRIVES IN BAGHDAD

The [Arab League](#) has dispatched an ambassador to Baghdad, the Washington Post reported (7/10/08).

Hani Khalaf arrived a day after the first visit by an Egyptian foreign minister in 18 years. The previous envoy of the 22-member Arab League quit in January 2007, criticising Arab countries for not doing more to ease Iraqis' suffering.

The US Government has urged the Sunni-dominated Arab governments in the region to reestablish ties with [Iraq's](#) Shiite-led government. Many have been hesitant because of violence here and concerns that they could appear to be endorsing the US-led invasion of 2003. In addition, some nations are wary about the close ties the Iraqi government has developed with [Iran](#).

Mr Khalaf, an Egyptian diplomat, said he would try to promote reconciliation in Iraq, saying "We need a more active Arab role in Iraq."

REPORT: [Arab League deploys ambassador to Iraq](#)

#### PEACEMAKERS ARE UP AGAINST HISTORY

Nicosia is the last divided capital of Europe. Or so say the signs by the strangely calm, porous border that divides the city and sees scores of tourists, Greeks and Turks wandering from one side to the other at will. (08/10/08). Officially, only the Greek side is part of the European Union, yet even that side feels just half European....yet in the minds and spirits of Greek Cypriots, the Ottomans have never left. Physically, the Turks occupy the northern 30 per cent.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/07/1223145356096.html>

#### BRITISH BRIGADIER FORESHADOWS TALIBAN DEAL

Britain's top military commander in Afghanistan has warned against expectations of "decisive military victory" there. He also said Britons should prepare for a possible deal with the Taliban, The Age reported (6/10/08).

Brigadier Mark Carleton-Smith, commander of 16 Air Assault Brigade said people should "lower their expectations" about how the conflict will end. He said they should hope only for the reduction of the insurgency to manageable levels.

REPORT: <http://www.theage.com.au/world/british-brigadier-foreshadows-taliban-deal-20081005-4uac.html>

#### DICTATOR 'SOLUTION TO AFGHANISTAN'

A coded French diplomatic cable leaked to a newspaper quotes the British ambassador in Afghanistan as predicting that the NATO-led military campaign against the Taliban would fail. The best solution for the country, the ambassador said, would be to install an "acceptable dictator", the weekly *Le Canard enchaîné* reported, according to the BBC (5/10/08).

"The current situation is bad, the security situation is getting worse, so is corruption, and the government has lost all trust," the British envoy, Sherard Cowper-Coles, was quoted as saying in a French diplomatic cable. British officials have retreated from the two-page cable.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/04/1223013855606.html>

Source: *The Sun-Herald*

#### IRAN OFFERS TO SUSPEND ENRICHMENT - FOR OUTSIDE NUCLEAR FUEL

Marking a break from Iran's insistence that it will not negotiate over its uranium enrichment program, a senior Iranian diplomat said the country would suspend uranium enrichment if offered a supply of fuel for its nuclear power stations. The West greeted the proposal with

hesitation, saying that Iran had been offered a similar arrangement in a proposal from 2006. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (10/3)

#### **CHECHENS IN GEORGIA WATCHED WAR WITH RUSSIA WITH KNOWING EYES**

Chechens who fled a civil war with Russia in the 1990s to join the Muslim Kisti -- ethnic Chechens living in the mountainous region of Georgia -- watched the war between Georgia and Russia with a knowing cynicism. Some fled to the Turkish border when Russian aircraft began flying over Georgian territory. [The Christian Science Monitor](#) (07/10/08).

#### **CHINA SUSPENDS TALKS, PORT CALLS AFTER US SELLS ARMS TO TAIWAN**

Protesting the announcement of a \$6.5-billion defensive arms sale to Taiwan, China canceled a senior military visit to the U.S. in addition to suspending port calls by U.S Navy ships. Analysts suggest that China may seek to repair relations with a new administration in January. [Los Angeles Times](#) (free registration) (07/10/08).

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

#### **PROTECTING HEALTH FROM CLIMATE CHANGE**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) and over 80 top researchers on climate change and health, along with representatives of donor organisations, and UN agencies, will write the research agenda for global action to rapidly strengthen understanding of the health implications of climate change. This work will be the focus of a WHO meeting held in Madrid, Spain from October 6-8.

#### **CHINA'S HIV/AIDS PROBLEMS INCREASE**

HIV/AIDS infections rates are rising and spreading across China, according to a study published in the journal Nature. Infections have spread to all Chinese provinces, and rates in groups not previously considered to be in China's high-risk category are now rising quickly. [The New York Times](#) (7/10/08).

#### **MISSIONARIES' EXPULSION 'LED TO DEATHS'**

Leaders of Venezuela's forest-dwelling Yanomami tribe allege that the expulsion of American missionaries in 2004 -- accused by President Hugo Chávez of espionage -- has led to deaths by negligence of more than 50 people in the southern rain forest. Missionaries supplied medicine as well as fuel used to transport sick tribesmen to medical facilities for urgent care. [The New York Times \(free registration\)](#) (6/10/08).

#### **THINGS 'LOOKING BETTER' ACROSS AFRICA**

Even as the West grapples with a deepening economic crisis, Africa is on track to post solid growth this year, a trend led by many former war zones, including Angola, Mozambique and Liberia. Alongside the economic successes, many African countries are also posting progress in good governance. [TIME](#) (6/10/08).

#### **POVERTY CONTRIBUTING TO KENYA TRAFFICKING SCOURGE**

Economic woes are contributing to the vulnerability of thousands of Kenyans every year who fall victim to human traffickers and now represent one out of every 40 trafficked persons worldwide. In some cases, victims are promised employment; in others, they are taken advantage of after paying transport fees for passage to wealthier countries. [AllAfrica Global Media/The Nation](#) (5/10/08).

#### **CHINA LUNG DISEASE 'TO KILL 83 MILLION'**

A US study has suggested that more than 80 million people in China will die in the next 25 years as a result of lung disease, the BBC reported (4/10/08). The research says the vast majority of those premature deaths are preventable.

The study focused on the devastating impact of smoking and the widespread practice of burning wood or coal at home for cooking and heating. The Harvard School of Public Health research looked at a 30-year period, spanning the last five and the next 25.

Respiratory disease is already a leading cause of death in China, but this latest study suggests a startling rise. In the 30-year period, it calculates, about 83 million Chinese people will die prematurely of lung disease.

Prof Majid Ezzati, the study's senior author, says dramatic intervention now by China's Government could save many millions of lives.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7652140.stm>

### **RESEARCH INVESTMENT FAILING MENTAL HEALTH**

More money and effort needs to be directed to understanding the causes and treatment of mental disorders to ensure improvements in the health of the community and the one in five people that experience mental illness in any one year. (03/10/08).

Experts from AFFIRM – The Australia Foundation for Mental Health Research and the ANU Centre for Mental Health Research (CMHR) said that Mental Health Week, which begins on Sunday, is an opportunity for the community to support research on an illness which impacts many Australians.

Professor Helen Christensen, CMHR Director and Board Member with AFFIRM, said that increased investment in mental health research will improve prevention of mental disorders, help with predicting risk and assist in the development of better treatments.

“Relatively speaking, mental health research has received little of the research dollar relative to the burden of disease it contributes,” she said. “One in five Australians experience mental illness in their lifetime, but the best figures to date suggest only three per cent of total research and development funding in health is directed to mental health disorders.

“Research into mental health disorders in young people is particularly important because depression and anxiety begin in childhood and become more prevalent in adolescence. Young Australians rate depression and suicide as the leading issue confronting them, yet we have little practical knowledge as to the means to prevent suicide in this age group.”

Associate Professor Kathy Griffiths of AFFIRM and CMHR said that the stigma attached to mental health disorders means that the issue is often brushed under the carpet.

“Some 21 per cent of Australian adults say they would be unwilling to work with an individual with depression, 30 per cent would not vote for a politician with depression and 25 per cent believe one can just ‘snap out’ of depression. These public misconceptions may contribute to the decision by two thirds of people with a mental illness not to seek professional help.

“This not only has serious implications for an individual’s quality of life and community well being, one wonders if it also means that research, and research funding, is stigmatised too,” she said.

Chair of AFFIRM, former Senator Margaret Reid said that Mental Health Week was a time to consider the important role of research in contributing to improving the mental health of our communities. “Mental illness extends beyond individuals and affects family, friends and the wider community. It affects us all,” she said. “Research is critical if we are to make longstanding improvements in the health of our community.”

**DETAILS:** Martyr Pearce, ANU Media Office – (02) 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245

### **US CUTS FUNDING FOR CONDOMS IN MARIE STOPES' AFRICAN CLINICS**

The US government is cutting its funding for the supply of contraceptives to family planning clinics run by Marie Stopes International in Africa, alleging that it condones forced abortions in China. (04/10/08).

One of George Bush's first acts after becoming president was to stop all US funds to foreign organisations that helped women in any way to get an abortion, including providing advice. The UN Population Fund (UNFPA) lost \$34m that Congress had appropriated for it in 2002.

REPORT: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/oct/04/usa.internationalaidanddevelopment>

### **AFGHANISTAN: OVER 200,000 PEOPLE TO RECEIVE AID**

Hundreds of thousands of Afghans may have to leave their homes this winter because of drought, insecurity and rising food prices in the north of the country, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) warned this week. The organization said it was working with the Afghan Red Crescent Society to meet the needs of 280,000 people (40,000 families) in eight districts of the northern and north-western provinces of Kunduz, Balkh, Faryab and Badghis by distributing around 5,000 metric tonnes (500 truckloads) of food. (07/10/08).

One villager from Dashte Archi district in Kunduz province said that the current drought is so severe that "from the 100 sers planted, we could not even harvest 25 sers" (one ser is equal to seven kilograms). Some of the villagers went through with the harvest only to obtain fodder for their livestock.

"If we don't get food to these people quickly, they might be forced to leave their homes in the dead of winter," said Franz Rauchenstein, the head of the ICRC delegation in Afghanistan. Afghan Red Crescent Society volunteers will deliver food parcels containing rice, beans, ghee, salt, white sugar and tea in two rounds to people living in the most affected areas. The beneficiaries were chosen on the basis of need by the Society's survey teams. The first distribution will take place before the onset of winter, the second in early 2009. "Our volunteers are doing an extraordinary job. They find it very rewarding to be able to help people and relieve some of their anxiety about the approach of winter," said Fatima Gailani, the president of the Afghan Red Crescent.

The ICRC is an impartial, neutral and independent organization. It has been helping the war wounded and people displaced by armed conflict or natural disasters in Afghanistan since 1987. It delivers its humanitarian aid in the country in cooperation with the Afghan Red Crescent Society, which has a grassroots network of over 20,000 volunteers.

In 2007 the Afghan Red Crescent Society provided food and other assistance to more than 500,000 families, and health services to around one million individuals. The Society carries out its humanitarian work in all provinces of the country.

**DETAILS:** ICRC on (61 2) 9388 9039

### **MEDICAL DATA 'INTERNET' GOES LIVE, BOOSTS RESEARCH**

Medical and life scientists will be able to share information collected from many thousands of cases thanks to a digital network launched at The Australian National University in Canberra.(08/10/08).

The ACT node of the BioGrid network is a collaborative venture between ANU and BioGrid Australia . It will allow practitioners from hospitals, universities and research centres to share and aggregate data on diseases like cancer, dementia, diabetes and cystic fibrosis.

"BioGrid is like a large medical Internet, meaning that clinical researchers can access information from existing research and clinical databases across many disease types at multiple institutions," explains Dr Andrew Janke, a researcher with expertise in medical databases at the ANU Medical School .

"There are thousands of records of patient data available on the Grid, which has a high level of security to ensure that the integrity of the information and privacy of individuals are protected. There is also a very high standard of ethical checks in place at each of the node institutions."

Researchers using BioGrid will be able to extract the de-identified data they need to test hypotheses using their own analytical tools. The information in the virtual repository will be extracted on a regular basis from all source databases and then mapped back into local repositories at each site.

The ACT node of BioGrid will be used initially for clinical research in oncology, ageing and dementia as part of larger Australian projects including the Australian Cancer Grid and ANDI-CN (The Australian Normative and Dementia Imaging Collaborative Network). The computing grunt work will be provided by the ANU supercomputer facility, the most powerful of its kind in Australia. **DETAILS:** Simon Couper, on 02 6125 4171, 0416 249 241

## F. MEDIA MATTERS

### **WHEN THE LAW PROVIDES NO JUSTICE, CALL A REPORTER**

Every blue moon a journalist does some real good in the world, writes Richard Ackland in the Sydney Morning Herald (10/10/08). My pin-up girl right now is Colleen Egan, a Perth journalist for the local organ *The Sunday Times*. Ten years ago she started to look into the Andrew Mallard case, and what she found horrified her. In part due to Egan's journalism, Mallard is a free man today.

He was convicted in May 1994 of the murder of a Perth jeweller, Pamela Lawrence, and had served 12 years of a life sentence before the High Court quashed his conviction in 2005 and ordered a new trial. The High Court unanimously (has) found there had been a miscarriage of justice. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/09/1223145536069.html>

### **NEWSPAPERS THAT SHRINK WILL GROW: MICHAEL GAWENDA**

There is incessant chatter about the need for a new model for newspapers in the digital age, which might be true, but in the meantime, profitable newspapers are being butchered. Talk of a new model is nothing but empty words, writes former editor Michael Gawenda. (07/10/08).

The editorial cuts announced by Fairfax, publisher of the *Herald*, in response to a fall in advertising revenue, were chilling.... but for real change, courage is needed, as are vision and risk-taking and, above all, a commitment to newspapers and journalism that, frankly, I do not see at the moment.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/06/1223145255829.html>

**BANGLADESH:** A "right to information" (RTI) law granted by the council of advisers to the "emergency" administration in Bangladesh has been welcomed this week by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ). The decision was taken on September 20, but a special RTI ordinance has yet to be signed into law by the president.

Preliminary reports indicate that the law covers most official government agencies and all non-government organisations that receive public funds. All these agencies and organisations will be required to nominate officials to deal with the public right to information. Designated officials will have to comply with information requests from the public within 20 days of formally receiving them. In cases involving the right to life and liberty, requests for information would have to be met within 24 hours.

The ordinance also, reportedly, identifies 20 instances in which requests for information can be denied, including cases of corruption and human rights violations.

Several journalists' organisations and press freedom bodies, including the Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists and the Dhaka Union of Journalists, in August criticised an earlier draft of the ordinance, on the grounds that it granted too many exemptions. Although these bodies generally welcomed the advisory council's approval of the law, they pointed out several loopholes which could impair the law's efficacy, the IFJ reported, calling on the Bangladesh administration to notify the new law immediately through an announcement in the official gazette. **DETAILS:** IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

**PHILIPPINES:** Two journalists in the Philippines have reportedly received a series of death threats after broadcasting allegations of local council extortion, the IFJ reported (10/10/08).

According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines ( NUJ P), the Davao City-based journalists Erin Lumosbog, anchor of Radyo Ronda on the RPN9-dxKT network, and

James Pala, of Radyo Rapido, both reported receiving text messages warning their lives were at risk.

Mr Lumosbog receives threats each time he goes on air since he reported allegations that a group of councillors had demanded 1.2 million Philippine pesos from a businessman in exchange for a council permit, the NUJ P said.

One text message reportedly said: "If you will not stop from doing commentaries on the Sta Cruz issues, bullets might force you to stop." Mr Pala also reported receiving at least three similar threatening messages since he began discussing the same allegations on his program in late September.

Requests by both journalists to the councillors involved in the allegations to give their side of the story have been ignored, the NUJ P said.

"It is deplorable that threats are made against journalists in an effort to quell unfavourable reporting," IFJ Asia -Pacific said. "Acts of intimidation of this kind only highlight the strength and professional integrity of journalists in the Philippines who continue to do their jobs, and to do them well, despite contending with one of the worst cultures of violence against the media in the Asia-Pacific region."

In the wake of the murder of two Radio Mindanao journalists in August, the IFJ joins the NUJ P in calling on the Philippines authorities to act immediately to provide Mr Lumosbog, Mr Pala and their families' protection until the perpetrators of the threats were located and brought to justice.

#### **CHINA 'MONITORS SKYPE'**

China has been monitoring and censoring messages sent through the internet service Skype, researchers say, the BBC reported.(5/10/08). Citizen Lab, a Canadian research group, says it found a database containing thousands of politically sensitive words which had been blocked by China. The publically available database also displayed personal data on subscribers.

[REPORT:http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7649761.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/7649761.stm)

#### **IFJ PRESS FREEDOM IN CHINA CAMPAIGN**

October 8 Bulletin

In this bulletin:

1. IFJ Urges Free Reporting on Milk Powder Scandal
2. Fears for Press Freedom as Deadline Looms
3. IFJ Condemns Shut-Down of Business Newspaper
4. Protest Over Hu Jia's Detention Conditions
5. Blogger Zan Aizong Targeted by Authorities
6. Board Resignations at Radio Taiwan International
7. Fake International Press Cards Spark IFJ Concern

[DETAILS: ifjchina@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifjchina@ifj-asia.org); [asiapacific.ifj.org](http://asiapacific.ifj.org); [ifj@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifj@ifj-asia.org); [ifjchina@ifj-asia.org](mailto:ifjchina@ifj-asia.org)

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

##### **OUSTED LEADER DECRIES RULING AS COUP MANIA**

Fiji's deposed prime minister has accused the country's top judges of political bias and of encouraging future coups by backing the military putsch of two years ago, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (10/10/08). Yesterday the High Court upheld the legality of the 2006 coup by military commander Frank Bainimarama.

The ousted prime minister, Laisenia Qarase, and his SDL party had asked the court to rule on the legality of the putsch, arguing that the decision of the President, Ratu Josefa Iloilo, to back the coup, dismiss the elected government and appoint the military-led regime was unlawful. But the court found Mr Iloilo had acted lawfully in supporting Commodore Bainimarama's power grab. [REPORT: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/09/1223145542075.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/09/1223145542075.html)

##### **RACISM: THE ELEPHANT IN THE US POLLING BOOTH**

Voters may not say it out loud but pollsters back it up: racism is a lingering, significant factor in the 2008 presidential race that could elect the first black American to the White House, the AFP reported (5/10/08).

"Race is a factor for those who would vote for and against him," said Gary Weaver, an American University professor who leads its Intercultural Management Institute. "I think that there are some white Americans who will not vote for a black person. It is unlikely they would admit this publicly, but they might admit this in anonymous surveys," Weaver said.

According to a recent Stanford University poll, Obama could lose six points on election day due to his colour -- a troublingly price to pay for prejudice.

The US is more than 70 per cent white; about 13 per cent of Americans are black. Americans increasingly describe themselves as multiracial.

REPORT: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/newshome/5059451>

### **GREED HAS BROUGHT US UNDONE: PM**

Kevin Rudd has urged international leaders to end an era of "extreme capitalism" and reject the notion that "greed is good" by embracing a new world order of global financial regulation, The Australian reported (6/10/08).

The Prime Minister has refused to step back from his argument that the big banks might not be able to pass on in full any cut in official interest rates this week, with new Treasury advice underlining the rising cost of credit in the face of the global financial crisis.

But in attacking the multi-million-dollar executive salaries of the modern era, Mr Rudd has sought to place the global financial crisis within a values framework, warning that "the disease" of short-termism has infected governments and financial markets.

Mr Rudd said while the government still strongly supported the profit motive, the failures of regulators and predatory lenders in creating the crisis were clear.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24451390-601,00.html>

### **World Council of Churches**

#### **RELIGIOUS/POLITICAL LEADERS DIALOGUE ON THE ROLE OF RELIGIONS IN PEACE**

The United Nations Liaison Office of the World Council of Churches (WCC) co-sponsored an international dialogue on September 25 between some 300 religious leaders and political figures - including Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad - aimed at exploring faith perspectives and the role of religion regarding global issues such as poverty, war and prejudice while deepening mutual understanding.

The event, which was called "Has not one God created us? The significance of religious leaders contributing peace" included Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, President of the United Nations General Assembly Rev. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, former Norwegian prime minister Rev. Kjell Bondevik, and Jewish Renewal movement leader Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb.

Aimed at exploring faith perspectives and the role of religion regarding global issues, "the event demonstrated both the power and potential of religious leaders contributing to peace" said Rev. Christopher Ferguson, WCC Representative to the United Nations.

The evening which brought together religious leaders from Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Zoroastrian, Buddhist and other faith traditions was co-sponsored by the WCC United Nations Liaison Office, Mennonite Central Committee, American Friends Service Committee and Religions for Peace.

Critical questions of how religions inform human rights and concerns over human rights violations, nuclear arms, religious oppression, and environmental abuse, in countries including the United States, Israel, Palestine and Iran, were all part of the evening's dialogue.

"While there were points of contention and clear disagreements, the event reaffirmed that religious traditions insist on dialogue, respect and love for peace making," Ferguson said. Prayers from various faith traditions were offered to begin the discussion. A panel of religious and political leaders, using sacred texts, offered what their respective faith tradition brings to the struggle to eliminate poverty, injustice, global warming and war.

Dr. John Brademas, a former US Congressman and President Emeritus of New York University, served as the event moderator. Brademas, along with several of the evening's speakers, called for direct negotiations between Iran and the United States.

"We believe that war is not the solution to the differences that divide peoples," Brademas said. "Dialogue can make a real difference."

Rabbi Gottlieb spoke of the place of peacemaking and nonviolence in Torah and tradition and her work between Muslims and Jews and Palestinian and Israelis.

"Torah councils us that no matter what problems face us, we are to engage in solutions through dialogue, reconciliation and peace building measures, as it is written, the entire Torah is for the sake of peace," noted Gottlieb. "Dialogue brings many perspectives together, gives special attention to minority opinions and must be conducted by treating everyone with respect."

Nihad Awad, Executive Director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, emphasized Islamic principles to alleviate poverty, care for the environment, affirm the equality of all human souls, and work for peace and justice.

The Rev. Miguel d'Escoto Brockmann, President of the UN General Assembly, said that love was a guiding principle common to all religions. "When we do not see each others as brothers and sisters, we reject God," he noted.

Pres. Ahmadinejad spoke of the commonalities of religions, the fundamental place of justice, and the essential role religion plays in the spiritual, moral and legislative fabric of society. He stressed the dire situation facing the world and called with urgency for religious groups to contribute to peace building.

Mr Ferguson, who presented the evening's summation, noted the commonalities presented by the panel – all affirmed the place of dialogue for engagement, the fundamental place of justice to people of faith, and that our religious traditions direct us to love, dialogue and defend the rights of all persons.

He also noted that the evening was an example of the place of religion in dialogue and peace building. "In the midst of the current international crisis and tensions it became clear that religious leaders have much to contribute in peace making," he noted.

This dialogue was the fourth in an ongoing series of bridge-building encounters since 2006, which faith groups are developing with Iranian political, religious and academic leaders to encourage respectful conversation about the need for religious involvement in peacemaking. The WCC has a long history of dialogue and relationship building with religious, cultural and political leaders in Iran.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.mcc.org/iran/meetings2008/index.html>; <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1722/wcc-co-sponsors-internati.html>; <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/browse/21/article/1722/us-christian-leaders-met.html>

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

##### **REPORTS LINK KARZAI'S BROTHER TO AFGHANISTAN HEROIN TRADE**

When Afghan security forces found an enormous cache of heroin hidden beneath concrete blocks in a tractor-trailer outside Kandahar in 2004, the local Afghan commander quickly impounded the truck and notified his boss, the New York Times reported (4/10/08). Before

long, the commander, Habibullah Jan, received a telephone call from Ahmed Wali Karzai, the brother of President Hamid Karzai, asking him to release the vehicle and the drugs, Mr Jan later told American investigators, according to notes from the debriefing obtained by The New York Times. He said he complied after getting a phone call from an aide to President Karzai directing him to release the truck ... assertions about the involvement of the president's brother ... were never investigated, according to American and Afghan officials, even though allegations he has benefited from narcotics trafficking have circulated widely in Afghanistan.  
[ARTICLE: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/world/asia/05afghan.html?th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/world/asia/05afghan.html?th&emc=th)

### **PRESSURED TO TAKE MORE RISK, FANNIE REACHED TIPPING POINT**

Fannie, a government-sponsored company, had long helped Americans get cheaper home loans by serving as a powerful middleman, buying mortgages from lenders and banks and then holding or reselling them to Wall Street investors. This allowed banks to make even more loans — expanding the pool of homeowners and permitting Fannie to ring up handsome profits along the way, the New York Times reported (4/10/08). But by the time decorated marine Daniel H. Mudd became Fannie's chief executive in 2004, his company was under siege. Competitors were snatching lucrative parts of its business. Congress was demanding that Mr Mudd help steer more loans to low-income borrowers. Lenders were threatening to sell directly to Wall Street unless Fannie bought a bigger chunk of their riskiest loans. So Mr Mudd made a fateful choice. 6/10/08.

[ARTICLE: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/business/05fannie.html?th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/05/business/05fannie.html?th&emc=th)

### **IF THEY DOBBED ON DEBUS, WHO'S NEXT?**

The Australian Crime Commission does not have a file on the Minister for Home Affairs, Bob Debus, "or any other member of government", according to its chief executive, Alastair Milroy. That is the commission's way of reassuring the public that it is not spying on serving politicians. That is well and good - as far as it goes. Unfortunately it does not go far enough. Mr Debus - whose portfolio includes responsibility for the Australian Crime Commission - and the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, were understandably outraged when they were told about the existence of a contact report on the minister, written after a dinner engagement in April, by Chris Enright, the commission's managing director. The document, revealed last week in the *Herald*, is a long and detailed description of Mr Debus's behaviour and conversation. Like any description of the private behaviour of a person in the public eye, its po-faced observations may contain minor embarrassments for Mr Debus, but its content is hardly scandalous. That does not make it trivial. 6/10/08.

[ARTICLE: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/05/1223145172026.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/05/1223145172026.html)

### **BILL OF RIGHTS IS ESSENTIAL TO BEST SERVE HUMAN RIGHTS**

Five years ago I began my term as the president of the Australian Human Rights Commission, confident in the ability of the common law and a robust democracy to protect human rights. I leave convinced we need a major legal and cultural overhaul to deal with the human rights challenges of the 21st century, writes John Von Doussa in the Sydney Morning Herald (9/10/08). I have spent almost a half a century in the legal profession and more than a decade on the bench of the Federal Court ... Many minds had already disintegrated in long-term detention before the story of Cornelia Rau hit the front page. When I was a judge, although I sometimes had doubts about the laws I was required to apply, I did what many Australians do and placed my faith in Parliament to correct the harshness of the law. At the commission, I soon realised my faith in current parliamentary processes to protect basic rights was naive.

[REPORT: http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/08/1223145442732.html](http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/08/1223145442732.html)

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **TED TURNER AND UN LAUNCH 'WIN-WIN' SUSTAINABLE TOURISM STANDARDS**

The businessman and philanthropist Ted Turner and United Nations agencies have unveiled the first-ever voluntary sustainable tourism standards in a bid to ensure that tourism helps, not harms, local communities and the environment. 07/10/08.

The UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the non-governmental organization (NGO) known as the Rainforest Alliance, and the UN

Foundation (UNF), which was set up by Mr. Turner, **announced** the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) yesterday in Barcelona, Spain.

“Sustainability is just like the old business adage – ‘you don’t encroach on the principal, you live off the interest’,” Mr. Turner, who also serves as UNF’s Chairman, told the World Conservation Congress of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). “Unfortunately, up to this point, the travel industry and tourists haven’t had a common framework to let them know if they’re really living up to that maxim,” he said, calling the new criteria “a win-win initiative – good for the environment and good for the world’s tourism industry.”

A coalition of over two dozen tourism organizations developed the criteria, in consultation with sustainability experts and the tourism industry. More than 80,000 people, including conservationists, tourism industry leaders, governments and UN agencies, have been invited to comment on the resulting standards.

The criteria focus on four key areas: maximizing tourism’s benefits to local communities; curbing negative impacts on cultural heritage; slashing harm to local environments; and sustainability.

More than 900 million international tourists took trips last year, and UNWTO forecasts that number to surge to 1.6 billion by 2020.

“To minimise the negative impacts of this growth, sustainability should translate from words to facts,” the agency’s Secretary-General Francesco Frangialli said. “The GSTC initiative will undoubtedly constitute a major reference point for the entire tourism sector and an important step in making sustainability an inherent part of tourism development.”

### **FISH AND SEAFOOD ENDANGERED SAYS CSIRO**

Climate change is likely to hit supplies of many of Australia’s favourite eating fish, including barramundi, salmon, rock lobster and prawns, the most extensive study on the subject yet undertaken by the Federal Government has warned. 06/10/08.

The CSIRO study, commissioned by the Department of Climate Change and to be released today, reports the overall impact of global change “will pose some very significant risks to the sustainability of fisheries and aquaculture in Australia”.

Projected changes in temperature, ocean currents, rainfall and extreme weather events due to climate change are all likely to significantly influence fish stocks and marine ecosystems in the \$2.1 billion Australia fishery and aquaculture industry, the report finds.

It predicts that in the cooler southern waters, adverse impacts will hit the \$220 million-plus Tasmanian salmon industry, which represents a third of the country’s aquaculture production. The spread of the long-spined sea urchin south along the east coast of Tasmania, holds “serious implications” for the Tasmanian rock lobster and abalone fisheries, which are together worth more than \$150 million.

“Considerable impacts” would also hit the northern prawn fisheries. Impacts on coral reefs, such as an increased incidence of coral bleaching, would have flow-on effects for fisheries based on reef-associated species, such as coral trout and red emperor.

Changes in rainfall patterns would endanger catches of prawns, barramundi and mud crabs in the northern fisheries.

The Climate Change Minister, Penny Wong, said the report, a preliminary assessment of the challenges posed by climate change, found it was likely to affect the fishing industry, as well as the regional and coastal communities the industry supports.

Climate change impacts would vary by region, and some data suggests that effects may have already occurred.

Senator Wong said the report was another reminder of the need to tackle climate change through reducing carbon pollution.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/05/1223145175347.html>

### **GOVERNMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS AT COASTAL INQUIRY**

The South Australian Government were to appear before the House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee at a public hearing in Adelaide on October 8, as part of the Committee's inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on Australia's coastal zone. (08/10/08).

"Sea level rise and increased storm surge are a major risk to settlements and infrastructure along Australia's coasts," Committee Chair Ms George said.

"The South Australian Government submission highlights the importance of high-resolution digital elevation models of the coast to assess the potential impacts of climate change induced sea level rise."

"We will be interested in hearing how this information can be used by decision-makers to inform the development of adaptation responses," Ms George said.

Three-dimensional maps of ground surface topography, known as digital elevation models or DEMs, assist in identifying areas of likely exposure to inundation from sea level rise. The Australian Government is currently using high-resolution digital elevation models to map priority urban areas around Australia, including Adelaide, to assess the inundation risks from climate change.

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

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

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

### **'GLOBAL RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT NATIVE HABITAT'**

The Tasmanian Greens highlighted the publication of the most recent World Conservation Union (IUCN) Red List which paints a bleak scenario for the world's mammals, including the iconic Tasmanian Devil, and places an irrefutable responsibility on the Bartlett Government to do more to protect native habitat for all endemic species in Tasmania. (07/10/08).

Greens Shadow Environment spokesperson Cassy O'Connor MP said the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species identifies habitat loss as a primary threat to at least a quarter of the planet's 5487 mammal species. The list places the Tasmanian Devil, *Sarcophilus harrisii*, in the Endangered category.

"The Tasmanian Government has to get a better grip on contemporary environmental thinking, it needs to wise up to the value of biodiversity for a healthy environment, and therefore to human wellbeing, and to commit to more sustainable land management practices in Tasmania," Ms O'Connor said.

"The Tasmanian Devil has a precarious hold on survival in its native habitat. The IUCN projects at least a 90% decline in numbers across the Devil's affected range over the next decade, with the Devil Facial Tumour Disease spreading further and resulting in widespread local extinctions.

"Tasmania's North East is prime Devil country, yet it is being logged at an alarming, unsustainable rate. There is no justification for flattening and razing native animal habitat in Tasmania. Following the recent, massive, declines in Devil numbers every bit of available, intact, Devil habitat needs protection to give the species a better chance of survival."

"If this government values Tasmania's globally unique fauna such as the Devil, the Spotted Quoll, and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot, it must act to protect the island's remaining native habitat," Ms O'Connor said.

**DETAILS:** (03) 62338300; [www.tas.greens.org.au](http://www.tas.greens.org.au)

IUCN Red List: <http://www.iucnredlist.org/details/40540>

#### **PENGUINS WASH UP ON TROPICAL BRAZILIAN BEACH**

A plane typically used to transport military equipment was used to fly hundreds of penguins from tropical beaches in Brazil, where 270 Magellanic penguins washed up, to Pelotas, in South Brazil, where it is hoped upon release that the older penguins will then lead the younger penguins to Patagonia. [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (07/10/08).