

# 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.

October 24 2008

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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)

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In a message for UN Day, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes: 'We have just passed the midpoint in the struggle to reach the Millennium Development Goals ... If we want to advance the global common good, we must secure global public goods.'

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The gap between rich and poor has grown in more than three-quarters of OECD countries over the past two decades, according to a new OECD report.

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The death sentence on a young journalist has been overturned in Kabul.

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UNESCO will publish the first world map of underground aquifers of freshwater resources.

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

UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

### THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

#### MESSAGE ON UNITED NATIONS DAY October 24 2008

On this 63<sup>rd</sup> anniversary of our organisation, I join you in celebrating UN Day.

This is a crucial year in the life of our United Nations. We have just passed the midpoint in the struggle to reach the Millennium Development Goals -- our common vision for building a better world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We can see more clearly than ever that the threats of the 21<sup>st</sup> century spare no one. Climate change, the spread of disease and deadly weapons, and the scourge of terrorism all cross borders. If we want to advance the global common good, we must secure global public goods.

Many countries are still not on track to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015. I am also deeply concerned about the impact of the global financial crisis. Never has leadership and partnership been more important.

This makes our success at the high-level MDG event in September all the more remarkable. We brought together a broad coalition for change. Governments, CEOs and civil society. We generated unprecedented commitment in pledges and partnerships to help the world's poor. The final tally is not in yet, but the total amount pledged at the MDG event may exceed 16 billion dollars.

Partnership is the way of the future. Just look at the advances on malaria. Our global malaria effort has brought us within range of containing a disease that kills a child every 30 seconds. It is doing so through focused country planning. Greater funding. Coordinated global management. Top-notch science and technology.

We need models like these to tackle other challenges, including climate change, as we approach the conferences in Poznan and Copenhagen. We need them to achieve all the other Millennium Development Goals.

Let us keep building on this as a way forward. There is no time to lose. The United Nations must deliver results for a safer, healthier, more prosperous world. On this UN Day, I call on all partners and leaders to do their part and keep the promise.

– **Ban Ki-moon**

#### UDHR FORUM TO MARK 60<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee will mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) with a public forum on November 24 at 9.30am in the Main Committee Room, Parliament House, Canberra, organised in cooperation with the United Nations Information Centre, Canberra.

#### **BAN: WE FACE GLOBAL EXISTENTIAL THREAT**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has issued a call to action to address the challenges of climate change, global health, terrorism, financial instability and disarmament, all of which are key to securing the common good in a time of global crises (21/10/08).

"We come together today at a time of intense crisis – unrelenting waves buffeting the world's people and institutions," Mr. Ban told students and faculty at Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government.

Some people thought he had been overly dramatic a few months ago when he spoke of a 'triple crisis' of soaring food and fuel prices, accelerating climate change, and stalled development for over a billion of the world's people.

"Today, with increased evidence of the effects of all three crises around the globe, compounded by the ongoing shock waves of the financial crisis, my call to arms now seems distant and all too modest," he stated.

"Now more than ever we must be bold. In these times of crisis, when we are tempted to look inward, it is precisely the time when we must move pursuit of the common good to the top of the agenda," said Mr. Ban, adding that this involves addressing five global challenges. Turning first to the current financial turmoil, he said, "While recently we have heard much in this country about how problems on Wall Street are affecting innocent people on Main Street, we need to think more about those people around the world with no streets. Wall Street, Main Street, no street – the solutions devised must be for all."

In addition, the world cannot afford to delay action on the issue of climate change, which Mr. Ban called "the ultimate global and existential threat." He urged countries to conclude a new comprehensive climate deal that can be ratified and in place before the current commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol ends in 2012.

Global health was another "great challenge of our time," said the Secretary-General, noting that diseases and pandemics are spreading across borders today faster than ever before, and can have devastating impacts, if not controlled effectively. But it is also a challenge with "an immense scope for solutions," he added, pointing out that the world has the tools and resources to treat and control many of these diseases, as well as the know-how to build health systems that serve all.

Terrorism, combined with the threat of weapons of mass destruction, said Mr Ban, "is perhaps the most serious threat to international peace and security." He urged countries to further their cooperation to counter terrorism, including by being more innovative in developing their tools, strengthening partnerships with regional and civil society groups, and better leveraging their collective strengths.

Action was needed to address the "acute challenges" in the area of disarmament and non-proliferation, the Secretary-General stressed, noting that while there is widespread support for the view that nuclear weapons must never be used again, the threats still persisted. There were still gaps in the law, some key treaties remain to be negotiated, and new efforts are needed to create additional nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in the Middle East, and to bring existing zones fully into force.

"At a time when the world is focused on other more immediate crises, let us never forget that we must press our efforts to address the potential existential crisis which confronts humanity," he said. "It would not be responsible to do otherwise." While all of these challenges may seem quite different at first glance, they shared important traits that set them apart from other issues facing the world today.

"They endanger all countries – whether rich or poor, big or small – and all their people; they cross borders freely and are highly contagious; and they cannot be resolved without action by us all."

### **ECONOMISTS TO MEET BAN TO DISCUSS IMPACT OF GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is meeting with a group of eminent economists as part of his evaluation of the impact of the global financial crisis on United Nations efforts to achieve the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

[DETAILS: http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28671&Cr=MDG&Cr1=Ki-Moon](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28671&Cr=MDG&Cr1=Ki-Moon)

### **WORLD JOBLESS 'TO ADD 20 MILLION'**

The global financial crisis will add at least 20 million extra people to the world's unemployed, a study by a UN agency has predicted, the BBC reported (20/10/08).

This will bring the total number of people without work to 210 million by the end of next year, said the International Labor Organisation (ILO). ILO Director-General Juan Somavia said the figures showed that governments had to focus on individuals not just banks.

He called for more efforts to help those affected cope with unemployment.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7680863.stm>

### **ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL MEMBERS ELECTED**

The General Assembly has **elected** 18 countries to serve on the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), one of the principal organs of the United Nations, for three-year terms starting January 1 next year (22/10/08).

Eleven new members were chosen for the 54-member body, which coordinates the economic, social and related work of the various UN specialised agencies, regional commissions and functional commissions, and seven others were re-elected.

ECOSOC members are chosen by secret ballot and according to geographical grouping, and its overall membership is divided between 14 African countries, 13 nations from the Western Europe and Other States grouping, 11 Asian States, 10 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean and six from Eastern Europe.

**REPORTS:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28675&Cr=ecosoc&Cr1=>

### **RECORD-BREAKING 117 MILLION PEOPLE STAND WITH UN AGAINST POVERTY**

Shattering previous records, nearly 117 million people in 131 countries stood up last weekend as part of a UN-led campaign to demand that world leaders keep their promises to halve extreme poverty and achieve the other Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**) by their target date of 2015 (22/10/08).

Over 8,000 events were held around the globe, from Afghanistan and Burundi to Thailand and Uganda, as part of the "Stand Up and Take Action against Poverty" campaign over Oct 17/19.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28674&Cr=mdg&Cr1=>

### **STUDENTS GAIN ACCESS THROUGH UNDP PROGRAM**

ANU graduate students will have greater access to show their skills on the world stage as a result of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and ANU signing a Memorandum of Understanding (20/10/08).

The MOU will give ANU graduate students the chance to apply directly for allocated internships with the UNDP – places fiercely contested by students worldwide.

Signatories are Professor Lawrence Cram, ANU Acting Vice-Chancellor, and Dr Bruce Jenks, UNDP Assistant Secretary General and Director of the Bureau for Resources and Strategic Partnerships. **DETAILS:** Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

### **ONE JUST WORLD: CANBERRA FORUM**

Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Bob McMullan was scheduled to host the fifth in a new, national series of public forums on global poverty and development at Parliament House, Canberra on October 21.

The forum, supported by the ANU College of Asia and the Pacific, was focussed on new partnerships for development and how Australians work together to beat global poverty: non-government organisations, business, the education sector, faith groups, local communities, media, volunteers and others, all with a part to play as Australia committed to an enhanced aid program to work towards the Millennium Development Goals. One Just World is a national series of free after-work forums focusing on global poverty and development topics of high public interest and relevance. The aim is to help Australians become informed and involved in helping the 800 million people worldwide who are fighting to escape poverty.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.onejustworld.com.au>;

[Carol Wilson](#) on 0407 064 164; [James Giggacher](#) on 6125 2353.

## B. CLIMATE CHANGE

### **BAN CALLS ON EU LEADERS TO TAKE URGENT ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has stressed to leaders of the European Union (EU) the need to wrap up the bloc's energy and climate package by the end of the year (22/10/08).

In letters to the leaders of the 27 EU members and the head of the European Commission (EC), Mr. Ban emphasised that this would serve as a positive signal to the international community – and developing countries in particular – before negotiations on an ambitious successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol are expected to conclude next December in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The correspondence follows his talks with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and EC President José Manuel Barroso last week during the 12th Francophonie Summit in Québec City, Canada.

Michele Montas, the Secretary-General's spokesperson, told reporters that Mr. Ban commended the EU for its years of strong leadership on global warming, which includes its flagship climate and energy policy package.

“While he sympathized with EU members who may find it challenging to be as ambitious in such times of economic constraint and uncertainty, he suggested that EU's forward-looking policy has the potential to deliver a clean economic growth, which will create millions of new jobs,” Ms. Montas said.

The Secretary-General underscored that clean industry and investment have proven to be of high quality and also offer long-term profits and returns.

“Thus, the current financial turmoil is not a justification for delaying action on climate change, but rather an opportunity to address both the financial and climate change crises that we face,” she said.

Meanwhile, a new report on the partnership between the UN and the EC was presented to the President of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28672&Cr=Climate&Cr1=>

### **TOP GLOBAL BUSINESSES GATHER FOR UN 'CARING FOR CLIMATE' INITIATIVE**

A United Nations-backed 'Caring for Climate' drew representatives from more than 150 corporations, civil society organisations and governments from around the world to discuss business solutions to the problem of global warming and speed up action on climate change (21/10/08).

The UN Global Compact, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) launched the 'Caring for Climate' scheme last year, with CEOs of 150 companies – including 30 from the Fortune Global 500 – signing up for the meeting in Geneva. The meeting aims to create a shared path in support of an effective successor pact to the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

“Climate change will undoubtedly reshape the business landscape as we know it,” said Georg Kell, Executive Director of the Global Compact. “Companies committed to 'Caring for Climate' demonstrate that a growing number of businesses is making a choice that tells us that a sustainable future and business competitiveness can complement each other.”

Since its creation, nearly 300 businesses have signed on, covering 30 industry sectors in 48 countries, including emerging and developing economies. A recent survey of signatories showed optimism about their ability to set targets and reduce their impact on the environment and that they expect similar leadership from governments, long-term plans to slash greenhouse gas emissions and stepped up investments in low-carbon technologies

## **PROTECTIVE SHIELD OF THE SUN IS SHRINKING**

The protective bubble around the sun that helps to shield the Earth from harmful interstellar radiation is shrinking and getting weaker, NASA scientists have discovered. According to a report in the Sydney Morning Herald (20/10/08), new data from the Ulysses deep-space probe show that the heliosphere, the protective shield of energy that surrounds our solar system, has weakened by 25 per cent over the past decade and is now at its lowest level since the space race began 50 years ago. Scientists, baffled at what could be causing the barrier to shrink in this way, were set to launch a mission overnight to study the heliosphere.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/19/1224351057111.html>

## **PRAISE FOR UN/DEUTSCHE BANK FOR 'GREEN NEW DEAL'**

Top global economists from the UN Environment Program and Deutsche Bank launched a plan for a 'Green New Deal,' echoing President Roosevelt's 'New Deal' to work America out of the Great Depression, to tackle the economic crisis and the climate crisis together.

Australian Greens Senator Christine Milne called on the Federal Government to embrace the plan which would see a massive investment in energy efficiency, renewable energy, alternative transport and forest protection, creating high quality, permanent jobs in a thriving, prosperous, green economy (23/10/08).

Senator Milne said "The economic meltdown and the planetary meltdown are in many ways two sides of the same coin. The best path to recovery is to use the same solutions to benefit both crises simultaneously, boosting our economy by breaking through the capacity constraints holding back the transition to a zero emissions economy."

UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner, was reported to note that logging costs the world over \$2.5 trillion a year in lost ecosystem services such as clean water and air, stopping soil erosion and storing carbon. This was more than the \$1.5 trillion the economic crisis has so far cost.

She said her questioning in Estimates hearings this week had revealed that the main constraint to rolling out solar panels and energy efficiency in Australia was the lack of capacity in the workforce. There were not enough trained installers and energy auditors.

"Governments and industry in Australia are worrying about job losses in the coal and forestry sectors while scratching their heads about how to deal with workforce capacity constraints for rolling out renewable energy and energy efficiency," she said.

"It is clear that we need a major coordinated investment in education and training to build capacity in the new, clean industries while helping those who currently rely on the old, dirty industries move into the clean future.

"If we try to deal with all of our problems separately, we will find ourselves hitting a host of new problems. If we take a coordinated approach, we will find coordinated solutions."

She said the Greens had long advocated taking this coordinated approach which the UN had called for this week. Internationally, the wealth of opportunities presented by the need to respond to the climate challenge had long been recognised, counteracting the usual shrill claims by vested interests that any change to business as usual threatens prosperity.

"It's time for Australia to get on board and build a new, green, zero emissions economy," she said. **DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on 0437 587 562

## **CALL TO SCRAP FREE PERMITS TO BIG POLLUTERS**

The Federal Government must immediately abandon plans to reward big polluters with free emissions permits, Australian Greens climate change spokesperson, Senator Christine Milne, said (20/20/08).

The Innovest/Australian Conservation Foundation report brings home the European experience in stark Australian dollar terms: giving free permits to polluters will deliver them a

multi-billion dollar windfall gain that could undermine the economic, social and environmental integrity of the whole scheme.

Senator Milne said, "The Greens have always argued that handing out free permits to the biggest polluters would continue to feed big business greed at the expense of ordinary Australians. This report confirms that in stark terms.

"The Government should immediately commit to auctioning 100% of emissions permits. This would ensure that big polluters take their obligations to reduce emissions seriously, and it would also deliver the government the cash it needs to invest in the renewable energy and energy efficiency solutions that will drive an equitable outcome.

"Professor Garnaut's strong recommendation that all permits should be auctioned was the key lesson he learnt on his first trip to Europe after being commissioned for his recent report. His clear conclusion is that the free allocation of permits would lead not only to greater transaction costs but also to political interference and heavy lobbying.

"As Professor Garnaut argued at the weekend, a well-designed response to climate change is an excellent path out of the current economic situation, delivering the economy a shot in the arm by boosting efficiencies and creating jobs." **DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on 0437 587 562.

### **RICH POLLUTERS STAND TO RAKE IN \$3 BILLION**

A new report says the Rudd Government could hand almost \$3 billion to some of the richest companies in Australia in free carbon pollution permits when its scheme to cut greenhouse gases begins in 2010, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (20/10/08). The report released by the Australian Conservation Foundation found much of the assistance, an estimated \$825 million, would go to big aluminium producers, including Rio Tinto in Australia and Britain, the American company Alcoa, the Norwegian company Norsk Hydro and the Australian company Alumina Ltd. **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/19/1224351056972.html>

### **REVAMP PUSH AS SOLAR PANEL COFFERS EMPTY**

Canberra's rebate for solar panels has proved so popular - even with the controversial means test - that the Federal Government has spent \$150 million, or three years' funding, in 16 months. Only four months into this financial year, the bucket of money put aside to subsidise solar panels is empty, but Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett told *The Sunday Age* (19/10/08) the government would continue to fund solar panels out of next year's budget. **REPORT:** <http://www.theage.com.au/national/revamp-push-as-solar-panel-coffers-empty-20081018-53nt.html>

### **LEADING CLIMATE CHANGE SCIENTIST ON SEA LEVEL RISE**

The House of Representatives Climate Change, Water, Environment and the Arts Committee was due to hear from the executive director of the ANU Climate Change Institute, Professor Will Steffen, at a public hearing in Canberra (23/10/08), as part of its inquiry into climate change and environmental impacts on Australia's coastal zone.

"According to Professor Steffen, the science surrounding the sea level rise issue is in 'a state of rapid change' and has 'progressed significantly' since the publication of IPCC data last year," Committee Chairperson Jennie George said.

"Professor Steffen's submission to the inquiry notes that 'the observed rate of sea level rise is tracking at or near the upper limits of the envelope of IPCC projections'. Professor Steffen further emphasises that 'the biggest uncertainty in the projected rates of sea level rise is associated with the behaviour of the large polar ice sheets'.

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

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

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

## **SAVE OUR PACIFIC NEIGHBOURS**

'Save our Pacific Neighbours, Save our Reef' is the theme of this year's Oxfam Walk Against Warming on November 15 in Brisbane, says Ann Matson, Community Campaigns Coordinator (Qld), Oxfam Australia.

Speakers will include Jessie Wells from Make Poverty History's 'See the Bigger Picture, Act on Climate Change' campaign, who will highlight Australia's responsibilities as the world's 2<sup>nd</sup> highest greenhouse gas polluter per capita to stop harming and start helping developing nations who are feeling the impacts of climate change first and worst.

With Australian Government representatives heading to Poland for UN Framework Convention on Climate Change talks, Ms Matson says coming weeks would be a crucial opportunity for events, like Walk Against Warming, to emphasise principal issues such as the need for forceful Australian leadership to negotiate a strong global climate agreement.

The Make Poverty History contingent walking in this year's colour umbrella parade begins from Queen's Park beside the casino to Roma St Parklands, Brisbane, when brollies will be decorated with images and messages highlighting the impact of climate change on the world's poorest countries, including Australia's nearest neighbours of the Pacific Islands.

**DETAILS:** [www.oxfam.org.au/climatechange](http://www.oxfam.org.au/climatechange); Ann Matson on 07-3637 4615; [www.oxfam.org.au](http://www.oxfam.org.au)

## **GLOBAL COOPERATION VITAL TO BALANCE COSTS OF CHANGE AND MITIGATION**

The diabolical problem of climate change policies requires a global effort to develop a position that strikes a good balance between the costs of mitigation and costs of dangerous climate change.

According to a study published this month in *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature* by Wiley-Blackwell, the costs of various levels of mitigation for each country depend mainly on the extent of its own mitigation. However, the costs will reduce substantially if there is a global agreement to apply similar emission-pricing regimes.

The paper entitled *Measuring the immeasurable: the cost and benefits of climate change mitigation* outlines the Garnaut Climate Change Review which seeks to form and present key mitigating options for Australia. The review's conclusions were presented to Australian governments at the end of September and released soon after.

Author Professor Ross Garnaut, at the Sixth Heniz W. Ardent Memorial Lecture at the ANU on June 5, outlined the conceptual framework being used in the Climate Change Review conducted at the request of the federal, state and territory governments.

"Climate change mitigation decisions in 2008—and for the foreseeable future—are made under conditions of great uncertainty. The opportunity costs of delaying decisions are high. Australia and its partners in the international community will, for good reasons, make historic and fateful decisions about their approaches to climate change mitigation within the next three years", says Professor Garnaut.

The review presents quantitative measures to estimate the potential effects of the cost of climate change and mitigation. It assesses the feasibility of mitigation action in Australia and discusses the different mitigation mechanisms, including emissions trading schemes and price caps, the distributive impacts of mitigation schemes, and the need for global cooperation on mitigation efforts.

Professor Garnaut also says the "consequences of the choices made for climate change are large enough to be worth a large effort to take that chance in the short period that remains before our options diminish fatefully."

**DETAILS:** This paper is published in the November 2008 issue of *Asian-Pacific Economic Literature* (Vol.22, Issue 2).

ARTICLE ABSTRACT: <http://www3.interscience.wiley.com/journal/119405875/abstract>; Alina Boey on +65 9656 5580; [aboey@wiley.com.sg](mailto:aboey@wiley.com.sg)

## C. HUMAN RIGHTS

### ENTREPRENEUR SPENT 8 YEARS IN VILLAWOOD

Before Villawood, Ms Bao said she had never seen barbed wire, or cockroaches and ants for that matter. Nearly eight years later, all of them spent in immigration detention, there is little evidence of the woman who was once a successful Hong Kong entrepreneur Connie Levett writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (22/10/08).

Detained in January 2001 and held for 6½ years in Villawood, Ms Bao (not her real name) is now in community detention, having served more time in Australian immigration detention than any person.

"Almost eight years now, even in community detention, you are still in detention. I have suicidal feelings," Ms Bao said, speaking publicly, through a translator, for the first time. "After eight years my mental health is gone. How much longer do I have to wait?"

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/21/1224351253408.html>

### UNHCR RECOMMENDATIONS ON DETENTION IN AUSTRALIA

The UNHCR submission to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration Inquiry into Immigration Detention in Australia lists a number of recommendations, including that:

determinations to detain an asylum seeker should be 'limited solely to the purpose of establishing whether an individual poses a demonstrable risk to the security of the community';

'to remove any doubt as to the geographical scope of recommended policy, UNHCR suggests that it be made clear that the policy developments will apply throughout the Commonwealth of Australia, including any territories for the time being excised from the 'migration zone.' (Para 43).

It was also recommends that all possible alternatives to detention should be explored.

SEE also: <http://www.unhcr.org.au/pdfs/ImmigrationDetention2008.pdf>

### THE INDIGNITY OF DETENTION

A report by the Immigration Ombudsman into the cases of 25 long-stay immigration detainees was quietly tabled in Parliament last week with no fanfare and no publicity, writes Kerry-Anne Walsh in the Sun-Herald and Brisbane Times (19/10/08).

"No wonder. It's appalling reading, It should make civilised Australians hang their heads in shame," she says, outlining a particular detention history.

REPORT: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/opinion/the-indignity-of-detention/2008/10/18/1223750397125.html>

### IMMIGRATION DETENTION FROM A HUMAN RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

Migration Committee Chairman Michael Danby heralded that the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly HREOC) was to be among organisations appearing at a public hearing in Sydney on October 24 as part of the federal parliamentary inquiry into immigration detention in Australia.

Human Rights Commissioner Graeme Innes welcomed changes to immigration detention earlier this year, claiming they reflected a "fundamental shift" in policy. Under the reforms, people can 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 the commission's submission to the inquiry, however, it states that, "HREOC has not received further detail on the practical implementation of the new approach, in particular how such changes will be enforced or guaranteed. We are concerned that without legislative change these intentions may not be sufficient to create a system that guarantees freedom from arbitrary detention, among other human rights".

Chairman Michael Danby acknowledged the commission's substantial engagement in the area of human rights and detention.

"The commission has conducted a number of investigations into immigration detention in accordance with its charter and often their recommendations have been unpalatable to government," he said. But such questions about improvements to the system and implementing them were precisely of interest to the committee.

Other witnesses due at the hearing included National Legal Aid, Asylum Seekers Centre of NSW, Asylum Seekers Resource Centre of Melbourne, GetUp and former Human Rights Commissioner Dr Sev Ozdowski, who produced HREOC's influential 2004 report on children in immigration detention.

**BACKGROUND:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/index.htm>;  
Committee Secretariat on 02 6277 4560; [jscm@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscm@aph.gov.au).  
<http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/detention/subs.htm>.

### **IRAQIS LEADING WAY IN GROWING NUMBERS OF ASYLUM-SEEKERS: UNHCR**

The number of people seeking asylum around the world is on the rise with Iraqis being by far the top nationality in search of safety, according to a UNHCR report (17/10/08).

Some 165,000 applications were submitted to the 44 industrialised countries included in the report in the first six months of this year, and Iraqis made up 12 per cent of all asylum claims lodged with 19,500 applications and some 20 per cent of those petitioning Sweden.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) **report** showed that the number of claims made by Iraqis was higher than the combined number of asylum claims submitted by Russia (9,400) and China (8,700), the second and third highest nationalities seeking asylum.

While the top three countries of origin for asylum-seekers saw either a downward or stable trend, the number of Somali claims lodged rose significantly, reflecting a deteriorating situation in the conflict-wracked Horn of Africa country. More than 7,400 Somalis were registered between January and June this year, compared to 5,000 for the 2007 period.

Pakistan and Afghanistan also had large numbers of citizens seek asylum in the first half of 2008, with 6,300 claims each. For Afghanistan this represents a 22 per cent increase on the corresponding period for last year and a 42 per cent rise on 2006.

### **AUSTRALIA'S OBLIGATIONS TO PEOPLE FLEEING DANGER**

The Australian Human Rights Commission is to present the third of its seminar series celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), entitled *Complementary protection: meeting Australia's obligations to people fleeing danger*.

At a meeting beginning at noon on November 3, speakers will include Dr Jane McAdam, Senior Lecturer, Law Faculty at UNSW and author of *Complementary Protection in International Refugee Law*. She is an international expert on legal frameworks for protecting people from being sent back to countries where they face danger and will discuss how other countries have created systems of complementary protection.

Another speaker, Phil Glendenning, is Director of the Edmund Rice Centre in Sydney, which has produced several research reports on the fate of asylum seekers who have been deported by Australia. He also co-produced the recent documentary *A Well Founded Fear*. He will speak about the need for a complementary system of protection for those asylum seekers who have been rejected under Australia's current refugee determination system.

His documentary will be screened. The venue will be at the Australian Human Rights Commission, Level 8, Piccadilly Tower, 133 Castlereagh Street, Sydney.

**DETAILS:** [krista.lee-jones@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:krista.lee-jones@humanrights.gov.au).

### **FORUM FOR EMPLOYERS ON PREVENTING SEXUAL HARASSMENT**

A forum on preventing sexual harassment in the workplace has been organised for November 12 by the Australian Human Rights Commission and the Australian Chamber of Commerce.

Elizabeth Broderick, Sex Discrimination Commissioner, will speak about the commission's new survey on sexual harassment in the workplace, to be released in November 2008. Commissioner Broderick will discuss the survey implications for employers.

Maureen Frank, a distinguished business strategist, author and lead advisor on women's issues to the Diversity Council Australia, will present the practical steps that employers can take to create workplace cultures that put a stop to sexual harassment before it happens.

Jennie Mansfield, a partner at Blake Dawson specialising in employment, discrimination and workplace training, will discuss how employers can meet their legal obligations in relation to sexual harassment.

The panel will be introduced and chaired by Scott Barklamb, Director, Workplace Policy, Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Effectively preventing and responding to sexual harassment: A Quick Guide. A revised version of the comprehensive publication, Effectively preventing and responding to sexual harassment: A Code of Practice for Employers will be released.

On November 12 at 9.15am at the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry (VECCI), Level 1, Room 1.6, 486 Albert Street, East Melbourne.

**DETAILS:** Coreena D'Souza at the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry; [Coreena.dsouza@melb.acci.asn.au](mailto:Coreena.dsouza@melb.acci.asn.au); on 03 9668 9950.

### **NATIONAL DISABILITY STRATEGY WELCOMED**

The announcement of the commencement of work by the Australian Government on a National Disability Strategy was warmly welcomed by Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes (17/10/08).

"One in five Australians have a disability, and the time has arrived for us, as a nation, to take a planned approach to ensuring that this 20 per cent have equal access to all facets of Australian life," he said.

Commissioner Innes emphasised that Australians with disabilities were citizens and that access to buildings, voting in elections, and seeing captions on television and in the cinemas should occur as a matter of course - not be a matter for argument. Such broad change could only occur with a planned approach.

Mr Innes said that the ratification by Australia earlier this year of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was an excellent start.

### **EVERYDAY PEOPLE, EVERYDAY RIGHTS - HUMAN RIGHTS CONFERENCE 09**

is to be held over March 16/17 2009, at the Melbourne Park Function Centre, Batman Avenue, Melbourne. **Dan Adams will give the Human Rights Oration: 'Human rights and climate change'**.

The call for abstracts for the Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission's Human Rights Conference is open until November 3.

Abstracts are invited in one of the following categories:

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

**DETAILS:** Jessica Ardley, Victorian Equal Opportunity & Human Rights Commission  
Level 3, 380 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne on 03 9281 7133; F 03 9281 7159;  
TTY: (03) 9281 7110; Toll Free: 1800 134 142; [Jessica.Ardley@veohrc.vic.gov.au](mailto:Jessica.Ardley@veohrc.vic.gov.au);  
[www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au](http://www.humanrightscommission.vic.gov.au)

#### **PHOTOGRAPHIC NOTE**

Entries for the 2008 Human Rights Photography Competition close on **October 31**. The 2008 Human Rights Photography Competition is sponsored by Digital Camera Warehouse, Australian Photography Magazine, Vision Graphics and Actnow.com.au.

**DETAILS:** [www.humanrights.gov.au/photo\\_comp](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/photo_comp) or call 02 9284 9618; awards ceremony on 02 9284 9618; [hrawards@humanrights.gov.au](mailto:hrawards@humanrights.gov.au).

#### **ANNUAL CONSULTATIONS ON REFUGEE PROGRAM**

Each year, the Refugee Council of Australia (RCOA) invites people from across Australia to participate in its annual national consultations on the future of Australia's refugee and humanitarian program. These consultations inform RCOA's annual submission to the Minister for Immigration and Citizenship on issues the Australian Government should consider in planning the coming year's refugee program.

These consultations cover a wide range of topics - from the strategic role of Australia's refugee program, to the refugee and humanitarian visa application process, issues relating to pre-arrival orientation, travel to Australia, on-arrival settlement services, onshore protection visa issues and the complex settlement issues faced by refugees and humanitarian migrants. During October and November 2008, 28 consultations will be held in 11 cities across Australia to help inform RCOA's submission on the 2009-10 refugee program. In addition, a series of teleconferences will be organised to enable people in regional Australia to participate.

**DETAILS:** consultations and teleconferences around Australia:

- [Australian Capital Territory](#) consultation
- [New South Wales regional](#) consultations and teleconference
- [Northern Territory](#) teleconference
- [Queensland](#) consultations and teleconference
- [South Australia](#) consultations and teleconference
- [Sydney](#) consultations
- [Tasmania](#) teleconference
- [Victorian](#) consultations and teleconference
- [Western Australia](#) consultations and teleconference

**DETAILS:** To contribute ideas/find details of the consultation process:  
RCOA on 02 9211-9333; [info@refugeecouncil.org.au](mailto:info@refugeecouncil.org.au)

#### **GERSHON REPORT WELCOMED**

Australian Disability Discrimination Commissioner, Graeme Innes, has congratulated the Australian Government Information Management Office (AGIMO) for making the Gershon Report available in an accessible format for people with disability.

The new report into the Australian Government's use of information and communications technology makes a number of recommendations about how the government can make more effective and efficient use of information and communication technologies.

**REPORT:** [www.finance.gov.au/publications/ict-review/index.html](http://www.finance.gov.au/publications/ict-review/index.html)

## D. PEACE & SECURITY

### SOUTH EAST ASIA

#### **AUSSIE TROOPS TO WITHDRAW FROM TIMOR**

Australia is to withdraw some of the soldiers operating in East Timor because of the improved security situation, the Federal Government has announced, The Australian reported (22/10/08).

Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon said the Australian Defence Force would cut back its total force presence in East Timor to approximately 650 personnel by early next year. Currently, the Australian-led International Stabilisation Force (ISF) comprises around 750 Australian troops plus some from New Zealand.

He said the Australian Government was encouraged by the growing ability of the East Timorese agencies, with support from the UN, to deal with security.

**REPORT:** <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,24535005-5007133,00.html>

#### **FIVE ARRESTED OVER FOILED INDONESIAN BOMB PLOT**

Indonesian police say they have arrested five members of a terrorist cell that was planning to blow up a state oil facility in north Jakarta, the ABC reported (23/10/08). Police said they had also seized weapons, explosives and plans for advanced bomb circuitry boards.

The men are believed to have studied bomb-making under Malaysian extremist Azahari Husin, a notoriously callous explosives expert who was tracked down and shot in Java in November, 2005. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/22/2398715.htm>

#### **AUSTRALIA HELPS BRING FORMER KHMER ROUGE LEADERS TO JUSTICE**

A further \$5 million Australian contribution to the United Nations (UN) for the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), also known as the Khmer Rouge Tribunal was announced by Foreign Minister Stephen Smith (21/10/08).

He has advised Cambodia's Ambassador for Australia, Meas Kim Heng, of the contribution and said under an agreement between the UN and the Royal Government of Cambodia, the ECCC will conduct trials of former Khmer Rouge leaders charged with crimes against humanity during the 1975-1979 period, in which it is estimated up three million people perished under the Khmer Rouge regime.

In 1997 the then newly formed Cambodian Government requested UN assistance in establishing a trial process to prosecute the senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge. The Cambodian National Assembly in 2001 passed a law to create a court to try serious crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime. It is known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia for the Prosecution of Crimes Committed during the Period of Democratic Kampuchea (Extraordinary Chambers or ECCC).

He said while the court was created by the Cambodian Government and UN, the ECCC is independent and would provide a new model for court operations in Cambodia.

Australia has been a long-term supporter of Cambodia's efforts to bring Khmer Rouge leaders to justice. This new funding will support the UN contribution to the work of the ECCC over the next two years.

### MIDDLE EAST

#### **UN POLITICAL CHIEF VOICES HOPE FOR ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN DIALOGUE**

The senior UN political official hopes talks between Israel and Palestine will both continue and intensify – in spite of the transition under way in the former country – in line with the peace process launched last year in the US city of Annapolis (22/10/08).

B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, told the Security Council that despite efforts by the Palestinian Authority to improve security and develop the judicial sector, "the situation on the ground is not improving in the way that is required."

Over the past month, Israeli-Palestinian violence has killed seven Palestinians, including two children, while 116 Palestinians and 34 Israelis have been injured. Among the deaths, a 61-year-old Palestinian woman and 15-year-old child lost their lives when the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) fired at stone-throwers in the West Bank.

This year's olive harvest in the region has just begun, but Mr Pascoe voiced concern over the safety of Palestinian farmers as they harvest crops near settlements and outposts. Although Israeli Defence Minister Ehud Barak has denounced those attacking olive pickers and said that the IDF is doing its best to protect them, he also acknowledged that it is impossible to watch over all locations.

"The calm brokered by Egypt is by and large holding between Gaza and southern Israel," in spite of incidents, such as the firing of a rocket into the Negev yesterday, the Under-Secretary-General said. "Unfortunately, there has been no improvement in the movement of goods and people in and out of Gaza," he said, with inadequate supplies of petrol, diesel, cooking gas and industrial gas entering the area.

Mr Pascoe underscored that the continued split between the West Bank and Gaza is causing ever-growing problems, including strikes by teachers and health workers. He called on all states in the region to support Egypt-led mediation efforts to reunify the two areas.

In a move he characterised as a "welcome development," the first phase of rubble removal began on 17 October one year after fighting in the Palestinian refugee camp of Nahr el-Bared in northern Lebanon ended.

"We look forward to the parties briefing the Quartet in the near future," the Under-Secretary-General said, referring to the diplomatic grouping comprising the UN, the European Union (EU), Russia and the US.

In addition, he called for increased talks between Israel and Syria under Turkish auspices as well as stepped-up efforts to build on progress in Lebanon.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28676&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

### **PALESTINE SOLIDARITY NETWORK TO GIVE EVIDENCE**

Asem Judeh, spokesperson for the Melbourne Palestine Solidarity Network, says he will be the principal petitioner to appear before the Standing Committee on Petition to give oral evidence to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on October 30 at Fitzroy Library, 128 Moor Street, Fitzroy, Melbourne.

"In Palestine it is a situation worse than South Africa's apartheid," he says. "At least the black South Africans were second class citizens. The Palestinians are not citizens at all, denied even basic rights. They have to watch as their homes are destroyed. And they have to keep quiet as they are demonised by much of the Western world.

"We want the Australian Government of the day to be independent and free from organised and excessive bias, especially when it comes to foreign policy," he says. "People are dying every day in Palestine and their dispossession and subjugation continues on, as bad as ever after 60 years. **DETAILS:** Asem Judeh on 0415 802 780;

<http://www.apf.gov.au/house/committee/petitions/roundtables/program30october2008.pdf>

## **ASIA**

### **UN ENVOY CONDEMNS ATTACKS ON AFGHAN CIVILIANS**

The top United Nations envoy to Afghanistan has condemned recent attacks against civilians in the violence-racked nation, including a suicide bombing on Monday that killed five

children in Kunduz, the murder of a number of passengers on a bus in Kandahar and the killing of a foreign aid worker in the capital, Kabul.

"I have stressed many times over the past months the need for proper protection of civilians during combat. With these incidents there was no combat," Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, **said** in a statement this week.

Calling for the proper protection of civilians, "The purpose of such attacks is to stoke fear among the wider population," he said. "I strongly condemn all such acts."

The Special Representative said his thoughts, as well as those of all those working for the UN in Afghanistan, are with the families and friends of those who have been killed and of those that remain missing.

Gayle Williams, a 34-year-old dual British-South African national who worked for the Christian non-governmental organisation (NGO) known as SERVE Afghanistan as a volunteer on projects assisting the disabled, was shot dead on Monday as she walked to work in Kabul.

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke out against the killing as well as those of two local UN staff members in Somalia during the past week, and voiced his alarm at the growing number of attacks against humanitarian workers in both countries. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28663&Cr=Afghan&Cr1=attack>

#### **ANTI-TERRORISM TALK 'INFLATED'**

A former head of Britain's security service, MI5, has described the response to the September 11, 2001 attacks on the US as a "huge overreaction" and said the invasion of Iraq influenced young Britons who turned to terrorism, the Guardian News & Media reported, according to the Sydney Morning Herald (20/10/08).

Dame Stella Rimington told *The Guardian* that al-Qaeda's attack on the US was "another terrorist incident" but not qualitatively different from any others. "I suppose I'd lived with terrorist events for a good part of my working life and this was, as far as I was concerned, another one," she said.

In common with Dame Eliza Manningham-Buller, who retired as MI5's director general last year, Dame Stella, who left in 1996, had already made it clear she abhorred 'war on terror' rhetoric and the government's abandoned plans to hold terrorist suspects for 42 days without charge. **REPORT:**

[http://au.mc375.mail.yahoo.com/mc/showMessage;\\_ylt=AndYaLE7I5bxES7AQVG59FXTqr0X?mid=1\\_295086\\_AJdbv9EAAHCISPvLegEIB3A1SHE&fid=Inbox&sort=date&order=down&startMid=0&.rand=642108414&da=0](http://au.mc375.mail.yahoo.com/mc/showMessage;_ylt=AndYaLE7I5bxES7AQVG59FXTqr0X?mid=1_295086_AJdbv9EAAHCISPvLegEIB3A1SHE&fid=Inbox&sort=date&order=down&startMid=0&.rand=642108414&da=0)

#### **COMMON STRATEGY NEEDED FOR AFGHANISTAN**

The ABC reported that Chief Marshal Angus Houston, Chief of the Australian Defence Force (ADF), said this week military efforts alone would not produce a successful outcome in Afghanistan, the ABC reported (22/10/08). Last November he warned, "One of the deficiencies in Afghanistan at the moment is that we don't have a comprehensive whole of country approach to the resolution of the problems there. We need to have all of the agencies, both military, civilian, government and non-government there working together cohesively to one common strategy with common goals and objectives."

#### **AUSTRALIA MAKES HONOUR PAYMENT TO AFGHAN TRIBAL LEADER'S FAMILY**

Australia has made an honour payment to the family of Afghan tribal governor Rozi Khan who was shot dead in a confused firefight, The Australian reported (22/10/08).

The speedy burial of Governor Khan meant no post-mortem examination was possible and it would probably never be known whether he died from shots fired by Australian troops, defence chief Angus Houston said. But, in accordance with Afghan culture, an honour

payment had been made to the dead man's family to help maintain sound relations with Mr Khan's followers.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24535423-601,00.html>

### **SAS TROOPS 'HIT WITH \$30,000 PAY DEBT'**

Elite SAS soldiers who fought Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan have been hit with a \$30,000 pay debt, The Australian reported (22/10/08). Some married diggers with children are being forced to live on \$250 a fortnight as they struggle to repay tax-free allowances, with after-tax income docked from their pay without consultation, the newspaper claimed.

Western Australian Liberal Senator and opposition defence spokesman David Johnston called the debt the worst thing he had ever raised in Parliament.

"Our special forces personnel are telling me that they don't know which is worse, dodging the bullets of the Taliban or dodging the missives being fired at them by bureaucrats," Senator Johnston told a senate estimates hearing.

Defence chief Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said he knew nothing of the matter and would have it investigated urgently.

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,24535313-12377,00.html>

On the ABC, the Minister for Defence Joel Fitzgibbon said the incident, which involved 105 soldiers, was disappointing and that the government had moved swiftly to fix the matter. He said no soldier would be financially worse off (23/10/08). He also said a decision had been made on ex-gratia payments in relation to an earlier and separate matter concerning suicides, bullying and bastardisation.

### **OLD TRADE ROUTE REOPENS BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN**

An old trade route has reopened after 60 years across the Line of Control (LoC) that divides disputed Kashmir, the BBC reported (22/10/08). Trucks carrying fruit, nuts and honey were flagged off by Indian officials from Salamabad in Indian-administered Kashmir under tight security. Lorries were expected to arrive later from the Pakistani side, bringing rice, rock salt and furniture. The opening of the trade route is part of a 2004 peace agreement between India and Pakistan, which both claim Kashmir.

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/7681320.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/7681320.stm)

## **AFRICA**

### **DARFUR SO BAD UN-AFRICAN UNION MISSION CANNOT BE EFFECTIVE: BAN**

The security conditions in Darfur remain so poor that the joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping operation cannot operate effectively, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in his latest **report** on the mission, urging the parties to the conflict in western Sudan to stop fighting immediately and start working towards a peaceful settlement (21/10/08).

The Sudanese Government and the region's many rebel movements "continue to pursue a military solution to the conflict" and they have made little progress in implementing the 2006 peace accord that was supposed to either end or reduce the fighting, Mr Ban writes.

The mission itself – known as **UNAMID** – is increasingly the target of armed attacks and banditry, obstructing its ability to deploy rapidly and to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians and help implement the peace agreement.

"Reinforcements are slowly arriving, but the security situation and difficult environment in Darfur have delayed the arrival of equipment for incoming contingents," Mr Ban states, noting that it is more than a year since the operation was authorised by the Security Council.

So far, just over 10,500 uniformed personnel, including troops, military observers and police officers, are in place across Darfur, far short of the estimated 26,000 blue helmets required when UNAMID reaches full deployment. More than 2,500 civilian staff has also been recruited, or 46 per cent of the total number of authorised posts.

Even bringing equipment and basic supplies into Darfur is exposing UNAMID staff to higher risk, given the volatility of conditions on the ground, the report points out.

Mission personnel "often undertake patrols and provide force protection escorts without adequate communication and transportation assets. UNAMID civilian personnel also work and live in an extremely unsafe environment."

A UN security assessment team which visited Darfur and the Sudanese capital, Khartoum, earlier this month is now finalising recommendations to improve staff safety and security. Mr Ban says the effectiveness of the mission also depends on Sudanese Government cooperation on issues such as the freedom of movement of UNAMID staff, customs clearance, visas and the re-supply of the operation by air, rail and road.

He stresses that the government has a responsibility to stop its aerial bombardments and military offensives and to "take concrete steps" towards disarming the so-called Janjaweed militiamen and other groups allied to government forces.

"I call on the government to comply with its obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law, in particular with regard to the protection of civilians," Mr Ban says. The report also calls on all rebel groups to commit to an immediate cessation of hostilities, start serious negotiations with the Government and fully cooperate with the peacekeeping mission.

"UNAMID, despite its broad mandate for the protection of civilians and assistance to peace implementation, is not designed to create a sustainable solution to the Darfur crisis. That is the responsibility of the parties to the conflict."

In addition, Mr Ban reiterates that UN member states need to provide the units and equipment still missing from UNAMID, including 24 helicopters and additional units dealing with logistics, heavy transport, medium transport and aerial reconnaissance.

The Security Council is expected to discuss Mr. Ban's report next week when Under-Secretary-General Alain Le Roy, who has just completed a visit to Sudan, will brief the 15-member panel.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28652&Cr=darfur&Cr1=unamid>

### **ICC CONTINUES TO SUSPEND TRIAL OF CONGOLESE REBEL LEADER**

The International Criminal Court (ICC) has confirmed its earlier decision to suspend the trial of a Congolese rebel leader accused of recruiting child soldiers to serve in his militia, but ordered that he remain in detention pending another hearing (21/10/08).

In a ruling issued in The Hague, the ICC's five-member appeals chamber unanimously dismissed an appeal by prosecutors against the trial chamber's decision in June to stay the proceedings against Thomas Lubanga Dyilo.

But a majority of the appeals chamber reversed an earlier ruling regarding Mr Lubanga's release and ordered that the trial chamber hold a new hearing to determine whether he stay in custody or be released with or without conditions.

Mr Lubanga, the founder and leader of the Union of Congolese Patriots in the Ituri region of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), was charged with a series of war crimes, including conscripting and enlisting child soldiers into the military wing of his group and then using them to participate in hostilities between September 2002 and August 2003. The trial of Mr Lubanga was due to have been the first to be held by the **ICC**.

Announcing its rulings today, the appeal judges backed the view of the trial chamber that there was no prospect that a fair trial of Mr Lubanga could be held because prosecutors had failed to disclose more than 200 documents to the defence containing evidence that could potentially have exonerated the rebel leader.

“The prosecutor had obtained the documents in question from several information providers, in particular from the United Nations, on the confidentiality, and these information providers had refused to consent to their disclosure to the defence and, in most instances, to the trial chamber,” according to an ICC press release.

### **TSVANGIRAI SLAMS MUGABE'S 'DIALOGUE OF THE DEAF'**

Zimbabwean opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai says he hopes a power-sharing deal would work, but that there was a problem of trust between him and President Robert Mugabe, the ABC reported (19/10/08).

Mr Mugabe and MDC leader Mr Tsvangirai failed again to agree on a cabinet after four days of talks mediated by former South African president Thabo Mbeki which ended on Friday (local time).

Both sides have asked the Southern African Development Community (SADC) of regional countries, which appointed Mr Mbeki to mediate, to intervene in the dispute.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/19/2394990.htm>

## **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **GAP BETWEEN THE RICH AND POOR WIDENS**

The gap between rich and poor has grown in more than three-quarters of OECD countries over the past two decades, according to a new OECD report (21/10/08).

OECD's [Growing Unequal?](#) finds that the economic growth of recent decades has benefitted the rich more than the poor. In some countries, such as Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Norway and the United States, the gap also increased between the rich and the middle-class.

Countries with a wide distribution of income tend to have more widespread income poverty. Also, social mobility is lower in countries with high inequality, such as Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States, and higher in the Nordic countries where income is distributed more evenly.

Launching the report in Paris, OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría warned of the dangers posed by inequality and the need for governments to tackle it.

“Growing inequality is divisive. It polarises societies, it divides regions within countries, and it carves up the world between rich and poor. Greater income inequality stifles upward mobility between generations, making it harder for talented and hard-working people to get the rewards they deserve. Ignoring increasing inequality is not an option.”

A key driver of income inequality has been the number of low-skilled and poorly educated who are out of work. More people living alone or in single-parent households has also contributed.

Some groups in society have done better than others. Those around retirement age have seen the biggest increases in incomes over the past 20 years, and pensioner poverty has fallen in many countries. In contrast, child poverty has increased. (The OECD defines poor as someone living in a household with less than half the median income, adjusted for family size.)

Children and young adults are now 25 per cent more likely to be poor than the population as a whole. Single-parent households are three times as likely to be poor than the population average. And yet OECD countries spend three times more on family policies than they did 20 years ago.

In developed countries, governments have been taxing more and spending more on social benefits to offset the trend towards more inequality. Without this spending, the report says, the rise in inequality would have been even more rapid. Income gaps have widened over the past two decades in three-fourths of OECD countries. In today's changing world economy, that means ever more people at risk of being left behind.

According to Secretary-General Angel Gurría, "Ensuring growth for all, not just the rich, is the task we must set for ourselves." Governments need not sit on the sidelines: they should respond to income inequality with policies that help lift people up, she said.

**REPORT:**

[http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_201185\\_41530009\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/25/0,3343,en_2649_201185_41530009_1_1_1_1,00.html)

### **DOCTORS BREAK GOLDEN RULE**

More than a third of junior hospital doctors break a golden rule of their profession and prescribe themselves drugs, including tranquilisers and even morphine-based painkillers, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (22/10/08).

But medical leader Rosanna Capolingua has defended the young doctors, blaming their self-start drug use on the stress they suffer having to struggle in public hospitals which have been starved of funds by governments.

The doctors resorted to self-medication "because of the underfunding of the public hospitals",

Dr Capolingua, the president of the Australian Medical Association, said.

An AMA survey of 914 medical graduates in their second year of hospital training after graduation found that 69 per cent were at risk of burnout because of the pressures on them.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/21/1224351253378.html>

### **WFP DELIVERS NUTRITIONAL BOOST FOR SOMALI CHILDREN**

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) is to begin delivering emergency supplies of a highly nutritious, peanut-based food to Somalia in a bid to combat the growing threat of severe malnutrition amongst children in the war-ravaged nation (22/10/08).

"Children are the first to suffer when food is scarce and conditions harsh, which is why we are taking this step to protect them from the ravages of the very worst stages of malnutrition," said WFP Somalia Country Director Peter Goossens. "This specialised product is expensive, but worth every penny for its ability to save lives, particularly given the depth of current crisis in Somalia."

The shipment of food - known by its brand name, 'Supplementary Plumpy' - arrived in Kenya over the weekend and will be moved by air and road to Somalia, where it will be targeted at 63,800 children over the next six months. This is the first time that WFP has used supplementary Plumpy on a large scale and it will be delivered through WFP's existing network of feeding centres run by international, national and local NGOs.

Supplementary Plumpy -- a ready-to-eat food that is delivered in sealed sachets -- has both curative and preventative properties. Trials have demonstrated that malnourished children who take a daily dose for two months, recover quickly, and are normally protected from malnourishment for a further four months.

**DETAILS:** [http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech\\_0563.cfm](http://www.pm.gov.au/media/Speech/2008/speech_0563.cfm).

### **SCIENTIFIC HUNCH POISED TO SAVE THOUSANDS FROM TOXIC FISH POISONING**

A neuroscientist at UQ's [Queensland Brain Institute](#) has found a way to combat a debilitating illness that affects an estimated 50,000 people a year in tropical regions, uq Communications report (20/10/08).

Ciguatera poisoning – which often results in acute nausea, vomiting and painful gastrointestinal episodes – is caused by eating fish that have fed on a micro algae that are toxic to mammals and often associated with large algal blooms known as red tides.

Cases of ciguatera poisoning have been documented for more than 200 years – and were recorded and described by Captain Cook on his second voyage to the Pacific in 1774. Recently, scientists have discovered that the patented compound, brevenal, could be used to make an effective treatment for neurotoxic shellfish poisoning (NSP), a condition related to ciguatera poisoning.

Acting initially on a hunch, QBI neuroscientist [Associate Professor Fred Meunier](#) hypothesised that brevenal could be adapted to combat ciguatera poisoning.

Simultaneously, and unknown to Dr Meunier, Dr Dan Baden at the University of North Carolina Wilmington (US) was also considering adapting brevenal to fight ciguatera. The two scientists soon became aware of each other's interest and began discussing the possibility that the compound active against NSP could have the same therapeutic effect on ciguatera toxins.

Along with Dr Dan Baden, Dr Jordi Molgo (National Centre For Scientific Research, France) and Dr Richard Lewis at UQ's Institute for Molecular Bioscience, Dr Meunier pressed on to obtain a small batch of both ciguatera toxin and brevenal to test their hypothesis.

"It now seems that we have found a way of blocking the effect of the ciguatera toxin on sodium channels without affecting their function of propagating the electrical signals in neurons," Dr Meunier said. [DETAILS](#): 61 (0)7 3346 6414; [r.hohen@uq.edu.au](mailto:r.hohen@uq.edu.au)

## F. MEDIA MATTERS

### AFGHAN DEATH PENALTY OVERTURNED

The death sentence passed on a young journalist Sayed Parvez Kambakhsh has been overturned after his appeal hearing in Kabul on October 21, the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) reported (22/10/08). The Kabul appeals court replaced the death penalty with a 20 year prison sentence.

Mr Kambakhsh, 24, was arrested on October 27 2007 for reported insolence to Islam in the northern Afghan city of Mazhar-e-Sharif where he worked as a journalist for the daily newspaper *Janan-e-Naw*. On January 22 Mr Kambakhsh was sentenced to death by a Balkh primary court at a closed hearing when he was denied legal representation. The trial lasted four minutes, an Afghan journalists' association reported.

More than twenty IFJ affiliates from across the Asia-Pacific region issued a joint statement on February 2 calling on President Karzai to uphold the spirit of the Afghanistan Constitution's stated aim of defending the fundamental freedoms of the people of Afghanistan, including freedom of expression.

In a similar case, Ahmad Ghous Zelmay, an independent publisher and former spokesman for the Afghan attorney-general, was arrested by police on November 4 2007, in the Torkhum area near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. Mr Zelmay is reportedly accused of publishing a Dari translation of the Qur'an without its Arabic script.

On September 13, ten months after his arrest, Mr Zelmay was sentenced by a primary court in Kabul to 20 years in prison. His colleague Mullah Qari Mushtaq received the same sentence.

In March the Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) and the Committee to Protect Afghan Journalists (CPAJ) found that Mr Zelmay lived in confined quarters without regular access to daylight and suffered acute depression. The IFJ has joined with the AIJA and the CPAJ to demand Afghanistan ensure the safe and unconditional release of both Mr Kambakhsh and Mr Zelmay in keeping with Article 34 of Afghanistan's constitution, which states "freedom of expression shall be inviolable".

[DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**NEPAL:** A constructive meeting between Information and Communications Minister Krishna Bahadur Mahara and the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ) took place on October 21.

During the meeting Dharmendra Jha , President of the FNJ presented the minister with a 15-point memorandum on media related issues under Nepal's newly elected democratic government, the IJF reported.

The memorandum emphasised the imperative for a guarantee for press freedom to be an unalterable element of the country's newly developed constitution, the FNJ reported. Among issues raised were the establishment of a commission to investigate the murder, abduction, torture and violence against journalists since the 2005 Royal Coup, the implementation of the Working Journalists Act and the re-structuring of media law to ensure editorial independence from political interference across the country.

The meeting followed the successful application by journalists' associations on September 12 for the public release of a committee report on minimum wages under the country's Right to Information Act. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**PHILIPPINES:** According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJP), Rey Briones and Turing Sante received anonymous text messages warning on October 20 that their lives were in danger. Mr Briones, 29, is co-anchor of a daily radio commentary program for dwKI-FM in Lucena City and reporter and columnist for local tabloid *Southern Tagalog Banner*; Mr Sante is Mr Briones' co-host on dwKI-FM. Mr Briones is known for tackling issues such as corruption, governance and the environment in his radio show and newspaper articles, the NUJ P said.

Earlier two Davao City-based journalists, Erin Lumosbog, anchor of Radyo Ronda on the RPN9-dxKT network, and James Pala, of Radyo Rapido, both reported receiving threatening text messages after broadcasting allegations about local council extortion on October 10. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

#### **SECURITY FEARS 'ERODE FREE PRESS'**

The media watchdog, Reporters Without Borders (RSF), says democracy does not necessarily guarantee a free press, with security worries eroding freedoms, the BBC reported (22/10/08).

RSF cited the poor showing by the US and Israel, and urged US politicians to improve the situation. The warning coincides with the publication of the group's annual global index of press freedom.

Iceland was top and the US 36th. The bottom three countries on the list were North Korea, Turkmenistan and Eritrea. While parliamentary democracies not engaged in any war did well, others including the US and Israel helped to erode a free press, the report said.

[REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7683359.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7683359.stm)

#### **FECCA CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT SBS FUNDING BID**

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) has called on the Federal Government to support the SBS triennial funding bid and released its SBS Policy Paper which addresses in detail FECCA's position on SBS' plans for the future.

"FECCA supports SBS bid for increased triennial funding so it may improve its multicultural broadcasting services for all Australians. FECCA welcomes SBS strengthened focus on its multicultural charter in its SBS's *Plans for the Future* document", said FECCA. Voula Messimeri, chairperson

"The planned SBS World Multichannel with its focus on LOTE broadcasting is hugely welcome. Plans for English language tuition broadcasting will assist with the effective settlement of migrants and refugees. The planned children's LOTE programming will assist with language maintenance and enhance Australia's productive diversity.

"The plans to improve access to SBS vital radio services, with extended services, is also critical to the broadcasting needs of multicultural communities," she said. "Australia's new and emerging communities need dedicated broadcasting services as do our older established communities. Regional Australia with its increasingly multicultural population is also in need of more SBS radio services.

“SBS is critical to meeting the needs of Australia’s culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities and providing multicultural broadcasting services for the wider Australian community. For CALD communities an SBS focussed on its charter objectives is critical to social inclusion. A strong SBS should be considered a critical part of the government’s important social inclusion agenda.

“FECCA calls on the Federal Government to seriously consider SBS increased funding bid, particularly in light of SBS plans to increase its multicultural broadcasting output. The government should also rule out merging SBS with ABC”, said Ms Messimeri.

**DETAILS:** Voula Messimeri on 0414 532 529; FECCA on: 02 6282 5755.

**NOTE:** LOTE: Languages other than English

### **REPORTING THE OLYMPIC GAMES**

Jane Macartney, London Times correspondent in Beijing, addressed a seminar at the ANU, Canberra, this week on the challenges that China’s Communist leadership confronted in the Olympics year and whether it succeeded in overcoming those difficulties.

After examining the measures Beijing invoked to handle the unexpected and whether it fulfilled the promises of change that it pledged to the International Olympic Committee when it was awarded the Olympic Games, she believes the games have reinforced China’s reliance on old party ways and the risks associated with change and innovation.

China has been a feature of Jane Macartney’s life since she was born. Her father learnt Hakka in Japanese internment and one of his closest friends was a Hong Kong property developer. She read Chinese at university and then went to Taiwan to immerse herself in a culture whose language she could read but speak only haltingly.

She went into journalism and by 1986 was working for American news agency UPI in Beijing. She remained until mid-1989, covering several of the most transformational years since the end of the Cultural Revolution. After joining Reuters, she covered Pakistan and Afghanistan before returning to Beijing in the mid-90s as bureau chief, in time for the death of Deng Xiaoping and China’s ever-accelerating race to embrace capitalist style economic reforms. That was followed by postings in London, Japan and Singapore before The Times offered her the China correspondent role in 2005.

**DETAILS:** <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/pah/seminars.php>; [Helen Gruber](#) on 6125 3106.

### **CHINA’S PRESS FREEDOMS EXTENDED**

China has extended some of the rules that gave foreign reporters greater freedom during the Beijing Olympics, the BBC reported (18/10/08).

State news agency Xinhua said the temporary arrangement for the games, due to expire on Friday, would become standard practice. It means journalists can continue to conduct interviews without applying to the authorities for permission. The move has been welcomed by the main organisation representing overseas media in China.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7675306.stm>

### **UNEASE IN THE CONSERVATIVE COMMENTARIAT**

In recent weeks some prominent conservative intellectuals seem to have discovered they have two hands after all, [Patricia Cohen](#) writes in the New York Times (18/10/08). In column after column, these writers have alternately praised the virtues of [John McCain](#) and [Sarah Palin](#) and lamented their shortcomings. The syndicated columnist Kathleen Parker, for example, wrote in National Review on September 26 that Governor Palin is “clearly out of her league” and should bow out of the campaign. **ARTICLE:**

<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/19/weekinreview/19cohen.html?ei=5070&emc=eta1>

### **ABC’S ACTION ON PRESENTER CRITICISED**

Supporters of radio presenter Stephen Crittenden, who has been stood down as the host of Radio National’s *The Religion Report*, have accused ABC management of seeking to

suppress religious and cultural debate at the national broadcaster, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (26/10/08).

Mr Crittenden faces dismissal at the end of the week unless he can convince management to overturn the findings of an internal investigation which found he had engaged in "serious misconduct" as a result of his article in the July 19/20 edition of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* Spectrum section, which examined Samuel P. Huntington's contentious 1996 book on growing Islamic unrest, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*. The following week, the ABC's head of national talk radio, Mark Collier, suspended Stephen Crittenden, on the grounds the presenter had not secured permission to have the story published.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/08/25/1061663736677.html?from=storyrhs>

## G. OTHER NEWS

### FINANCE REFORMS 'MUST HELP POOR'

Leaders of French-speaking nations have said the needs of the poorest countries must be considered in any long-term solution to the financial crisis, the BBC reported (20/10/08).

Speaking at the Francophonie summit in Quebec City, Canadian PM Stephen Harper said it was essential for developing nations to have access to free markets. His French counterpart, Francois Fillon, also agreed that "nobody wants to put more protectionism in place".

On Saturday, the US agreed to host a summit to discuss economic reforms. The meeting, the first of a series, is to be held sometime after November's presidential election and will include developed and developing countries.

Mr Sarkozy meanwhile said it was an opportunity to build a new global capitalism and leave behind the "hateful practices" of the past.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/7679144.stm>

### EXECUTION DATE TO BE ANNOUNCED

Last week, a spokesman for Indonesia's Attorney-General, Hendarman Supandji, said he would announce the time and date of the execution of the Bali bombers on October 24, the Sydney Morning Herald reported.

He said they would occur this year and rejected suggestions that the killings were being repeatedly delayed for political reasons. It was reported that a clear majority of Indonesians have no sympathy for the men. Even so, in a mainly Muslim country of more than 220 million people there is a significant fringe who regard them as slightly misguided heroes and accept the conspiracy theories that the murders were a CIA plot.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/19/1224351057096.html>

### SANCTIONS ON BURMESE INDIVIDUALS

An Australian Government brief states that on October 22, the [Government announced a revised list of Burmese individuals](#) subject to autonomous financial sanctions.

Following the regime's crackdown on peaceful protests in September 2007, on October 24 2007 Australia implemented bilateral financial sanctions targeted against members of the Burmese regime and their associates and supporters. Under these sanctions, transactions involving the transfer of funds or payments to, by the order of, or on behalf of specified Burmese regime figures and supporters are prohibited without the specific approval of the Reserve Bank of Australia.

A [full list of individuals](#) subject to Australia's financial sanctions is available at the Reserve Bank of Australia's website.

Australia also maintains targeted travel restrictions against senior regime figures, their associates and supporters. Australia has a longstanding ban on defence exports to Burma. Australia does not impose sanctions against trade or investment with Burma.

The brief states Australians viewed with grave concern the Burmese regime's violent crackdown on democracy protestors in late September 2007 and subsequent repressive actions, including large scale detentions and other acts of intimidation.

Australia has urged the Burmese regime to respect the legitimate right of Burmese citizens to peaceful protest and repeatedly called for the regime to respect the human rights of its people and to start a process of genuine political reform and national reconciliation.

At the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Australia has consistently supported firm resolutions on human rights in Burma, most recently co-sponsoring a resolution at the council's June 2008 session.

Forced labour practices in Burma have been a longstanding and serious concern.

Australian Embassy makes frequent representations to Burmese authorities.

**DETAILS:** [http://www.dfat.gov.au/GEO/burma/burma\\_brief.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/GEO/burma/burma_brief.html)

### **DR HANEEF INQUIRY CONTINUES**

The Australian Federal Police (AFP) has pointed the finger at the Department of Public Prosecutions (DPP) for the police's decision to charge former Gold Coast doctor Mohamed Haneef, the ABC reported (24/10/06). The AFP admits it made mistakes in the bungled terrorism case, but says its application of counter-terrorism laws was appropriate.

In the Clarke Inquiry submission, the AFP says its advice was fundamental to the decision to charge Dr Haneef with recklessly supporting a terrorist organisation in the wake of the failed UK bombings plots. The DPP has previously defended its role, describing its own internal miscommunication compounded by pressure from the Federal Police and a hothouse atmosphere in the AFP's Brisbane office.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/23/2399768.htm>

**COURT: NOT GUILTY** The Australian Government has frequently made bilateral representations to Burma on Australia's concerns. Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith expressed Australia's concerns to the Burmese Minister for Foreign Affairs, U Nyan Win, in July. The **OF RECEIVING TERRORIST MONEY**

Melbourne man Joseph (Jack) Thomas has been found not guilty of receiving money from a terrorist organisation, the ABC reported (23/10/08). But Mr Thomas, 35, has been found guilty of falsifying an Australian passport without a reasonable excuse.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/23/2399342.htm>

### **SPECIAL COORDINATOR TO SOLOMON ISLANDS**

Graeme Wilson has been appointed as Special Coordinator of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI) and is expected to take up his appointment in January.

The Australian Government has consulted the Solomon Islands Government and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretary-General on Mr Wilson's appointment, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said (21/10/08). Mr Wilson will be responsible for the overall coordination and strategic direction of RAMSI's assistance to Solomon Islands.

RAMSI's arrival in July 2003, at the invitation of the Solomon Islands Government and under the auspices of the Pacific Islands Forum, has seen the return of peace and economic stability to Solomon Islands.

Law and order has improved. RAMSI police advisers from 15 Pacific Island countries continue to work with their Solomon Islands counterparts to rebuild the police force. RAMSI civilian advisers have helped stabilise and improve the management of government finances, and provide reforms to encourage business and economic growth. RAMSI's focus is now on capacity building for public servants and the institutions they work in.

Mr Wilson, a senior career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, has been Assistant Secretary, Pacific Islands Branch since May 2005. From 2002 to 2005, he served as Australia's Ambassador to Mexico. He has also served in Noumea, Paris and Port Vila.

### **NEW AMBASSADOR TO THE HASHEMITE KINGDOM OF JORDAN**

Glenn White is to be Australia's new ambassador to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and is expected to take up his appointment in January, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said (21/10/08).

He said Australia and Jordan enjoyed a long-standing and warm bilateral relationship and Australia welcomed increasing cooperation with Jordan on a range of political and strategic issues.

"Australia recognises Jordan's important role in the Middle East," he said. "We share the goal of peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Jordan plays a key role in supporting Iraq's political, economic and security reconstruction."

Mr White is a career officer with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and is currently Director of the Southern Europe Section. Previously he served in Baghdad, Riyadh and Suva. Educated at the ANU, he joined the Australian Public Service in 1973.

### **RICH ROLE OF DESERT COMMUNITIES**

The role of desert communities in contributing to a more prosperous, culturally rich and sustainable Australia will be explored at a unique workshop in Alice Springs on November 3.

Desert Knowledge CRC is to host internationally-renowned author and thinker Margaret J Wheatley in a special seminar and workshop on how to build dynamic and resilient desert communities, a media release stated (22/10/08).

"No one discipline, institution or specialisation can answer the questions that now confront us. We all must draw from many different perspectives to reweave the world," Margaret Wheatley says. In her book *A Simpler Way*, she explores the question: Could we organise human endeavour differently if we understood how Life itself organises?

DKCRC research has found that certain rules govern the way deserts and all life in them – human included – operate, and this has profound significance to the way we organise our communities, livelihoods and industries, Jan Ferguson, Managing Director, DKCRC.

Margaret Wheatley 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 at Crowne Plaza Grand Ballroom, Crowne Plaza, Barrett Drive, Alice Springs, on November 3, at 11am. **DETAILS:** Laurelle Halford: 08 8953 7919; [laurelle@creativeterritory.com](mailto:laurelle@creativeterritory.com). The workshop will be streamed live: <http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/publications/conferencestreaming.html>; Managing Director Jan Ferguson is on 08 8959 6041/ 0401 719 882; <http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au>

### **OVERSEAS DELEGATES FOR DESERT KNOWLEDGE CONFERENCE**

So far more than 300 people are coming to the 2008 Desert Knowledge Symposium and Business Showcase conference, over November 4/6, with delegates from South Africa, India, US, Denmark, New Zealand and most Australian states and territories. The Business Showcase will feature over 40 booths and a varied program of activities.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.desertknowledge2008.com/grid.asp>

## **BID FOR NEW DESERT COOPERATIVE RESEARCH CENTRE**

Strong support from stakeholders and partners has led to a decision to bid for a new Cooperative Research Centre focused on the needs of 560,000 people in 1200 permanent settlements, large and small, which cover three-quarters of the continent, Jan Ferguson, Managing Director Jan Ferguson, commented in an earlier media release (21/10/08)

The desert may be dry but, per head of population, it is the nation's richest and most productive region, she says. "Desert people generate over \$90.5 billion a year in gross revenue for Australia, mainly from minerals, energy, pastoralism, cultural and eco-tourism and art," Ms Ferguson says.

"The typical desert resident contributes around \$80,000 in goods and services to the Australian economy each year; this is 50 per cent more than the national average. They are among our most entrepreneurial citizens: there are over 39,000 small businesses in desert Australia. This is one business for every 14 people in the deserts, compared with one for every 32 in Australia as a whole.

"Also the deserts cradle the world's oldest living human culture and its hopes for the future, along with a creative explosion in art, music, desert culture, food and design for living in dry and uncertain times." The human heartbeat of the deserts is its communities – Aboriginal, mining, pastoral, tourism and service settlements and centres – which make all the prosperity, creativity and sustainability possible, she says.

"Over the last five years, Desert Knowledge CRC has made major strides in understanding what desert communities need and how they differ from coastal or urban communities. We now have a clear picture of what helps them, what holds them back – and how policies that seem well-intentioned from an outside perspective sometimes fail or backfire in remote regions.

"Building on these invaluable insights, the proposed new CRC will focus on ways to strengthen and develop desert communities small and large, accessible and remote as a basis for the future development and sustainability of the deserts.

"Our stakeholders have agreed that the new research should focus on six key areas:

Smart Settlements will develop integrated solutions for the housing, water, energy, communications and waste challenges facing desert communities of all types, but especially the 900 Aboriginal outstations and settlements, pastoral stations and regions in the economic 'catchment' of large mining enterprises.

Desert Biz™ will help develop the scope for integrated desert economies based on art, cultural tourism, food products, and pastoral enterprise futures. This research program is about developing sustainable livelihoods and economies in desert regions.

Regional Wealth will explore the infrastructure, employment and other needs of the mining, pastoral, tourism, small business and service sectors and, in particular, the way wealth today can be translated into infrastructure, prosperity and livelihoods tomorrow for the remote areas of the continent.

Sharing Knowledge will take an original approach to overcoming one of the desert's greatest challenges: how to deliver quality education, learning and practical skills to all communities fairly and well across a vast area.

Community Identity will help to perpetuate the ways of thought and understandings of people within desert landscapes, particularly the management of, access to and use of the cultural wealth of the world's oldest living cultures.

Environmental Opportunity develops better ways to care for the natural resource of the desert as an integral part of pastoral and mining economies, but also makes sure the deserts play a major role in the future carbon economy.

The proposed CRC will incorporate student researchers in all its core research programs, which will also each explore the implications of climate change in its respective area.

"There has been talk of the deserts negatively for too long; we have a lot to offer," Jan Ferguson says. "While some communities face great challenges, we do not believe such terms as failed state do justice to the enormous enterprise, industry, courage, creativity and spirit of the people who inhabit the dry three-quarters of Australia or to the vibrancy and resilience of many communities.

"The aim of the proposed new CRC is to use evidence-based research to discover new ways of thought and practical means for building resilient desert communities capable of coping with change and enriching our nation culturally, economically and ecologically.

"We will help to share that knowledge across the Australian deserts, the nation and around the world," Ms Ferguson says.

**DETAILS:**

Jan Ferguson, Managing Director, DKCRC, 08 8959 6041 or 0401 719 882

Jenny Cleary, DKCRC Rebid Coordinator, 08 8648 5160 or 0429 699 387

Dr Craig James, DKCRC GM Communications, ph 02 6242 1509 or 0408 838 194

Prof. Julian Cribb, DKCRC media, 0418 639 245

<http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au>

For more media resources on this story:

<http://www.desertknowledgecrc.com.au/news/media.html>

### **INDIGENOUS ENTERPRISES NOW OPEN FOR BUSINESS**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs released its new report *Open for Business: Developing Indigenous Enterprises in Australia* this week.

The report is the product of a short but probing inquiry inspired by the view that increased economic participation will assist Australia's Indigenous peoples close the unacceptable life expectancy gap of 17 years that exists between them and other Australians.

Indigenous business participation is relatively low, at only six per cent compared with 17 per cent for non Indigenous self employed. Non Indigenous people are also three times more likely to own and run their own business than Indigenous people, whose low outcomes are exacerbated with remoteness.

However, during the inquiry the committee heard that Indigenous Australians—young and old, from urban to remote regions—increasingly see business as an opportunity to benefit their communities and are keen to engage with the mainstream economy. The range and diversity of Indigenous owned businesses currently in operation was also impressive.

Committee Chairman Richard Marles said, "The committee proposes a package of measures which it believes will build real pathways for Indigenous Australians to self sufficiency and self determination. More Indigenous-run businesses will reduce welfare dependence, create positive role models for the young and deliver social benefits across the generations."

The report's 15 recommendations aim to improve existing arrangements and introduce new measures. There are proposals for data collection, new obligations under Indigenous Land Use Agreements (ILUAs), better coordination of government services and improved access to advice and microfinancing. Three key initiatives are:

the Australian Government pilot an Indigenous Supplier Development Council (Recommendation 13); a series of target levels be established for Government procurement from Indigenous businesses (Recommendation 9);

the Commonwealth Science and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) receive a boost in funding for its work in natural resource management and carbon emission abatement in partnership with Indigenous communities (Recommendation 6).

**REPORT:** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/atsia/indigenouenterprises/report.htm> ;

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

### **COMMITTEE HEARING WITH NATIONAL PEAK ORGANISATIONS**

The House of Representatives Family and Community Committee arranged to hear evidence from two national peak organisations, the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA) and the National Council on Intellectual Disability (NCID), at a public hearing in Parliament House, Canberra, on October 22.

In its submission to the inquiry, the MHCA recommends the introduction of national mental health legislation that "...enshrines the rights of carers to formal recognition".

Committee Chairperson Annette Ellis said that "evidence presented to the committee has highlighted the particular challenges facing those that provide care for people with a mental illness, due in part to the often unpredictable and episodic nature of mental illness".

The submission from the NCID has a strong focus on the role of parents and family members caring for children with an intellectual disability. The NCID emphasises the need for parents and families to have ready access to information on the services and supports available noting that "... ease of access to relevant information has been identified frequently by parents as having a significant impact on their and their families' stress levels and capacity to cope with the role of caring for a person with a disability."

"Difficulty navigating the complex maze of services and supports available has emerged as a complex issue," Ms Ellis said. "The committee is keen to hear suggestions for practical measures that will assist families caring for people with a disability to access information more easily and when they need it."

**DETAILS:** Committee Chairperson Annette Ellis on 02 6293 1344.

### **MOVES TO IMPROVE POLITICAL FINANCING TRANSPARENCY SUPPORTED**

Federal Parliament's Electoral Matters Committee has supported proposals to improve the transparency of funding and expenditure in the political system in a report tabled in the House of Representatives today.

The joint committee was asked by the Senate in June to review the Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Political Donations and Other Measures) Bill 2008.

"The proposals included in the Bill will lead to greater openness and transparency in political party funding and bring back some public confidence in the funding system," Committee Chairman Daryl Melham said.

The Bill proposes amendments to the Commonwealth Electoral Act that will:

- reduce the disclosure threshold from \$10,900 (CPI-indexed) to \$1000;
- prohibit foreign and anonymous donations to be received by registered political parties, candidates and members of Senate groups and also prevent the use of foreign and anonymous donations for political expenditure;
- introduce a claims-based system to tie public funding to electoral expenditure;
- establish a biannual disclosure framework in place of annual returns and reduce the timeframes for the return and publication of disclosure returns; and
- introduce new offences and increase penalties for a range of existing offences.

The committee has made two recommendations to amend the Bill. The first is to expand the definition of 'electoral expenditure' to allow for reasonable administrative expenses related to campaigning. The second is to apply a cap of \$50 below which anonymous donations can be received to avoid imposing an administrative burden on small-scale fund raising activities.

“While the proposed changes may lead to some additional compliance costs they achieve the appropriate balance between transparency and the freedom to participate in the political process,” Mr Melham said.

**REPORT** <http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/em/taxlawbill%202/report.htm>

**DETAILS:** Secretary on 02 6277 2374; [jscem@aph.gov.au](mailto:jscem@aph.gov.au); <http://www.aph.gov.au/em>

### **IMPACT OF THE US-AUSTRALIA FREE TRADE AGREEMENT: FIVE YEARS ON**

Five years after its controversial signing, the economic and relationship impact of the Free Trade Agreement between Australia and the United States will be the focus of a two-day symposium to be held in Canberra in August next year.

The 2009 Fulbright Symposium on the Australian and United States Free Trade Agreement (AUSFTA), organised by the University of Queensland, will bring together policy-makers, industry and academics from Australia and the United States.

Organisers Dr Robert Burrell and Kimberlee Weatherall from UQ's TC Beime School of Law, said the symposium would assess the real impact of the agreement and raise debate over whether such an agreement has any economic or political relationship benefits.

**DETAILS:** Teola Marsh on 07 3365 2523; [t.marsh@law.uq.edu.au](mailto:t.marsh@law.uq.edu.au).

### **APPEAL BRINGS NEW SAXOPHONE FOR VIRTUOSO PERFORMER**

When Michael Rogers (trumpet/vocals) and Will Eager (percussion), of Doch Gypsy Orchestra, visited Serbia to further their studies, they were blown away by the virtuosity of Serbian musician Branislav Illic (Bane). But Bane, living in a poor country, had to play on a virtually homemade saxophone held together by rubber bands.

After the two Australians returned home, they launched an appeal and many patrons chipped in, together with Macquarie Bank. Bane now has a brand new saxophone. At a recent concert at Brisbane Powerhouse, Bane - having been also given an air ticket to Australia by an anonymous donor - performed on his new instrument to the delight of the audiences. While here he was also working with local artists; most Doch orchestra members, which number 27, are Australian. Doch Gypsy Orchestra's music, led by Nick Lavers, is greatly inspired by gypsy music from the Balkan region of Eastern Europe. Back home, Bane is a professional gypsy musician in the heart of Serbia's Roma music community.

## **H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

### **BARACK OBAMA FOR PRESIDENT**

Mr Obama is a man of supple intelligence, with a nuanced grasp of complex issues and evident skill at conciliation and consensus-building, says the Washington Press. At home, we believe, he would respond to the economic crisis with a healthy respect for markets tempered by justified dismay over rising inequality and an understanding of the need for focussed regulation. Abroad, the best evidence suggests that he would seek to maintain US leadership and engagement, continue the fight against terrorists, and wage vigorous diplomacy on behalf of US values and interests. Mr. Obama has the potential to become a great president. Given the enormous problems he would confront from his first day in office, and the damage wrought over the past eight years, we would settle for very good.

**EDITORIAL:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/16/AR2008101603436.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

### **POWELL'S ENDORSEMENT PUTS SPOTLIGHT ON HIS LEGACY**

Former Secretary of State [Colin L. Powell](#)'s endorsement of Senator [Barack Obama](#) represented his own transformative moment in a lifelong journey through war and politics, Elizabeth Bumiller writes in the New York Times (18/10/08). Colin Powell, on 'Meet the Press,' said it would be up to the next president "to fix the reputation that we've left with the rest of the world." Mr Powell's Obama endorsement was seen in part as a way to reshape his own legacy. It was not only an embrace of a presidential candidate from the other party, but also an effort to reshape a legacy Powell considers tainted by his service under President Bush.

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/20/us/politics/20powell.html?th&emc=th>

### **KEEPING AN EYE ON THE SPIES - URANIUM**

The Age newspaper, Melbourne, has recently published a number of articles which describe alleged spying activities, such as an ex-undercover officer believed to have spied on green groups for uranium miners. Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie, of The Age Investigative Unit (17/10/08), in an exclusive story, THE SPYING GAME claim mine owners paid a former undercover Victoria police officer to infiltrate environment and Aboriginal groups in Melbourne.

ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/keeping-an-eye-on-the-spies-20081017-53aq.html>

OTHER DETAILS: David Noonan, Nuclear Free Campaigner, Australian Conservation Foundation, on 08 8211 6838/ 0408 821058; d.noonan@acfonline.org.au; [www.acfonline.org.au](http://www.acfonline.org.au).

### **KEEPING AN EYE ON THE SPIES - ANIMAL ACTIVISTS**

"His time was up, and he knew it. In the face of increasing suspicions from several community groups about who he really worked for, it was time for the Victoria Police Security Intelligence Group undercover officer to disappear," Nick McKenzie and Richard Baker also claim in The Age (18/10/08). "So he invented one last lie; a sick relative in Cambodia whom he needed to visit. And then he was gone ..."

ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/keeping-an-eye-on-the-spies-20081017-53aq.html>

### **THE SPYING GAME**

"It was a simple mistake. The quiet, polite young activist who had been working every Tuesday as a volunteer in Animal Liberation Victoria's Melbourne office did not shut down his computer properly before leaving," write Richard Baker and Nick McKenzie in The Age (16/20/08). "The man had left his personal email account open. For those in the group who had nagging doubts about the bona fides of the eager young man who had turned up out of nowhere in February 2007, it was an opportunity too good to resist."

ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/the-spying-game-20081015-51lr.html>

### **PAKISTAN, THE TALIBAN AND AUSTRALIA**

Christopher Snedden of Deakin University writes that on the basis of his record, Pakistan's new president, Asif Zardari, has neither the skills nor the aspiration to effectively address Pakistan's deep-rooted and threatening problems. With more than a thousand Australian troops in neighbouring Afghanistan, Snedden argues that "there also appears to be little that Australia can do to encourage or help Pakistan to confront the Taliban with greater effectiveness. One serious option, therefore," he concludes, "is for foreign governments and their forces to engage the Afghan Taliban in dialogue in order to try to understand its point of view, to attempt to influence and moderate it, and to engage it in a political process. While this may be unpalatable, it is practical and not harmful to non-combatants. It could also assist Pakistan, and it would be playing to one of the West's strengths."

ARTICLE: [Pakistan, the Taliban and Australia](#) Austral Policy Forum 08-10A, 11 September 2008. DETAILS: Richard Tanter, Austral Policy Forum 08-01A, Nautilus Institute at RMIT on +61 3 992 53170; [austral@rmit.edu.au](mailto:austral@rmit.edu.au).

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **UN TO PUBLISH WORLD MAP OF UNDERGROUND FRESHWATER RESOURCES**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) will publish the first-ever world map of underground aquifers, which account for some 96 per cent of global freshwater resources, the agency said in a press release (22/10/08).

Despite their strategic importance, no global inventory of aquifers – most of which straddle international boundaries – had been compiled before UNESCO started work on its online map, which will be launched to coincide with the submission to the General Assembly of a draft Convention on Transboundary Aquifers next week.

The UNESCO is presenting a detailed map identifying underground water resources that are shared by at least two countries, using data compiled since 2000 by UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme for a groundwater database.

The map will include information about the quality of water and rate of replenishment of the 273 transboundary aquifers – 68 in the American continent, 38 in Africa, 65 in Eastern Europe, 90 in Western Europe and 12 in Asia.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28673&Cr=water&Cr1=unesco>

### **PM SUPPORTED ON NUCLEAR INITIATIVE**

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd's International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament has received support from the Australian Greens (17/10/08).

"This is a very welcome initiative which has the potential to lead to a breakthrough in the lead up to the crucial meeting of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 2010 which I will be attending," said Greens nuclear spokesperson Senator Scott Ludlam.

"It is essential that this initiative is not sabotaged by the commercial nuclear and uranium mining industries, as we have seen with Australia's regrettable support for the US-India nuclear deal.

"Countries like Japan and Australia are also in a great position to now take up their own advice on nuclear disarmament. Their primary focus should be to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in security policies worldwide, with the first step being putting down the nuclear umbrella," said Senator Ludlam.

Nuclear umbrella states are middle powers lending bases, ports and infrastructure for the US nuclear war fighting apparatus, while also lending weight and credence to the idea that nuclear weapons bring security.

"By participating in the US nuclear umbrella, Australia endorses nuclear terror by sending a message that nuclear weapons have security utility and symbolic power. Australia's diplomatic efforts towards nuclear disarmament have a dramatically reduced credibility or hope of success while this remains our policy," he said.

**DETAILS:** Tim Norton on 0418 401 180; [senator.ludlam@aph.gov.au](mailto:senator.ludlam@aph.gov.au); [www.scottludlam.org.au](http://www.scottludlam.org.au); [www.greensmps.org.au](http://www.greensmps.org.au)

### **PETITION ON THE MURRAY-DARLING**

Referring to the ABC's 4 Corners program on Monday on the Murray-Darling crisis, Get Up reports that the last great hope for our mighty river system, which accounts for over 40 per cent of Australia's agricultural production, is for the Federal Government to urgently take control of the Murray-Darling without being held to ransom by states' demands. It is running a petition. **DETAILS:** [www.getup.org.au/campaign/BuyMeARiver](http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/BuyMeARiver)

### **STANDING FORESTS 'A GLOBAL PRIORITY'**

Greens Senator Christine Milne, returned from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Congress in Barcelona, reported that there protection of standing forests was seen as a global priority in the climate effort (21/10/08).

Investment in the ecosystem and climate services mature forests provide is central to the 'New Green Deal' launched this week in Europe by top global economists and UN leaders.

"As the world recognises that old growth forests provide hugely valuable services in providing clean air and water and storing carbon, Tasmania's government is moving to destroy our most valuable resource and the rich biodiversity forests contain," Senator Milne said.

"The world is changing. The old economic model of short term profit, of 'chop it down, dig it up and ship it overseas', is being swept aside by the tide of the new, green economy. Just as Franklin D Roosevelt restored economic stability in the wake of the 1929 stock market collapse with his New Deal, so too the Green New Deal is designed to inject global

investment spending into securing the environment for future generations,” she said.  
**DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on 0437 587 56220; [www.tas.greens.org.au](http://www.tas.greens.org.au)

### **FORESTRY EXPERTS PUT ON TRAINING SESSION IN SABAH**

Forestry experts are heading to Malaysia to ensure that the timber imported is secure and sustainable for the future. The consortium of Australian universities that offers the National Forestry Masters Program (NFM) is to deliver sustainable forest training in Sabah, Malaysia, during late October and early November.

The training aims to improve forest management. Participants will come from Indonesia, Malaysia, Laos, Vietnam, Fiji, PNG and Australia.

“This is an exciting opportunity to share Australia’s expertise in sustainable forestry with our neighbours in the region,” said Professor Peter Kanowski, NFM spokesperson.

“Australians use a lot of timber from the Asia Pacific region in products like decking and outdoor furniture. We have a responsibility to help these countries produce this timber in a sustainable way so that future generations also have access to this important resource.

“The training will be hands-on, and the location, Deramakot Forest, was chosen because it is recognised as the first well managed tropical rainforest in the world.”

Professor Kanowski said another timely benefit of sustainable forestry is that forests sequester or absorb carbon.

Clearing forests by burning – a common practice around the world – is a major producer of carbon dioxide, so managing forests sustainably is an important part of the international response to climate change, he said.

The training program is in response to requests from forest managers in the region and is funded by the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under its Asia-Pacific Forestry Skills and Capacity Building Program. The National Forestry Masters Program is a joint initiative of the ANU, Southern Cross University, University of Melbourne, University of Queensland and University of Tasmania. **DETAILS:**  
<http://www.forestry.org.au/masters/>

### **23 000 SIGN PETITION ON BATTERY HEN FARMING**

The Tasmanian Greens have received a petition of over 23 000 signatures calling for battery hen farming to be banned in Tasmania, which Greens leader Nick McKim said that he believed was one of the largest to be tabled in the House of Assembly

As shadow animal welfare spokesperson, he plans to bring the Animal Welfare (Ban Battery Hens) Amendment Bill 2008 on for debate to ban battery hen farming in Tasmania.

### **SWIFT PARROT ‘CLOSE TO EXTINCTION’**

Over the eight years of operation of the nation's Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act a major species, the Swift Parrot, has moved rapidly closer to extinction because of federal and state policy, Australian Greens leader Bob Brown said (17/10/08).

“It is not unlike the government-deliberated extinction of the Tasmanian tiger a century ago,” he said. releasing a new report on the Swift Parrot.

Senator Brown said deliberate logging of its only known nesting and feeding habitat, near Tasmania's coasts, is seeing its population crash to, now, only 1,000 pairs.

**DETAILS:** Ebony Bennett on 0409164603.

