

# UNITY

## THE NATIONAL PUBLICATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA

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

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

### **SECRETARY-GENERAL ON ASIAN TOUR – HONOUR IN PHILIPPINES**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon this week arrived in the Philippines, the first stop on a four-nation Asia tour that will also take the United Nations chief to India, Nepal and Bangladesh (28/10/08).

Upon their arrival in Manila, Mr and Mrs Ban were greeted by a guard of honour and a military band, and welcomed by Foreign Secretary Alberto G. Romulo, other senior government officials and heads of UN offices based in the Philippines.

Mr Ban Was scheduled to address the opening session of the second Global Forum on Migration and Development and meet with President Gloria Arroyo and other senior officials, and to receive the Order of Sikatuna, the highest honour given to a non-Philippine national that is usually reserved for current or former heads of states or governments.

While in the South-East Asian nation, Mr Ban will also receive an honorary doctorate from the University of the Philippines. He is the first Secretary-General to visit the Philippines in nearly three decades.

### **BAN DEPLORES ‘OUTRAGEOUS’ ATTACK ON UN OFFICE IN SOMALIA**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has vehemently condemned the multiple attacks in northern Somalia, which included a suicide car bombing at the UN Development Program (UNDP) compound in Hargeisa that killed two UN staff and seriously injured six others, two of them critically (29/10/08).

“The Secretary-General deplores these outrageous acts of violence deliberately targeting innocent civilians and United Nations personnel who work tirelessly to alleviate the dire suffering of Somali citizens,” Mr Ban’s spokesperson said in a **statement**.

### **WOMEN’S ROLE IN PEACE AND SECURITY SHOULD BE BOOSTED: BAN**

Countries need to take more action to increase the role of women in the search for peace and justice and enhance their input in decision-making, even though positive steps have been made in recent years, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in a new **report**.

“There is growing support for women’s equal participation in peace processes,” as well as “enhanced capacity-building efforts for women’s empowerment,” he said, adding that greater attention is being paid to sexual violence in conflict situations (24/10/08).

“However, the noticeable gap that remains between policies and their effective implementation must be closed,” he said. The report to the Security Council called for more action to be taken at the country level to increase the role of women in all stages of conflict prevention, resolution and management, as well as peace-building.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28709&Cr=women&Cr1=>

### **WOMEN VITAL TO PEACE IN POST-CONFLICT ZONES, SECURITY COUNCIL HEARS**

A comprehensive and sustainable peace is not possible in post-conflict situations unless women’s security and participation is a primary objective for peacekeepers, senior United Nations officials told the Security Council (29/10/08).

Gender issues must be addressed in conflict mediation as well as in the deployment of peacekeepers, and women must participate in promoting peace and security, UN Development Fund for Women (**UNIFEM**) Executive Director Inés Alberdi told the **meeting**.

“This is particularly important in conflicts in which sexual violence is used as a tactic of war,” said Ms. Alberdi, addressing the Security Council debate on women, peace and security. “If

abuses of women's rights are tolerated through de facto impunity for perpetrators, efforts to restore the rule of law lose their credibility," she told the 15-member panel.

She noted that Security Council resolution 1820 – which states that rape and other forms of sexual violence can constitute war crimes and crimes against humanity – acknowledges the importance of women's security in assuring a durable peace areas experiencing conflict.

She warned the council that if direct measures are not taken by national authorities to prevent the widespread and systematic targeting of women, the violence will spill over in the post-conflict environment.

"We know that in some contexts attacks on women increase after conflict. If countries and the international community do not respond decisively to violence against women, they raise the cost of peace-building," she warned. "The cost is in delayed stabilization and reconciliation in countries where the rule of law cannot take root." **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28758&Cr=women&Cr1=peacekeeping>

### **UN DAY HELPS RECOGNISES 'UNRECOGNISED WORK OF UN'**

United Nations Day celebrated the much needed, but sometimes unrecognised, work that the UN undertakes every day in some of the most challenging circumstances on the planet, the UN Foundation reported.

It reported that the United Nations Foundation, a partner in the UN's fight against hunger, disease, injustice, poverty, and conflict, said over the past 10 years, had worked with the United Nations to:

- Deliver 10 billion doses of polio vaccine to 2 billion children, virtually eliminating the crippling childhood disease;
- Support 19 deployments of emergency telecommunications capabilities to disaster-stricken countries;
- Raise \$21 million from 85,000 people to distribute more than 1 million bed nets for malaria prevention in Africa;
- Provide support to more than 50 World Heritage sites in over 30 countries;
- Award \$140 million dollars to help empower girls and women;
- Create more than 50 clean energy enterprises in developing countries, serving more than 300,000 people; and
- Mobilise 35,000 people and 40 organisations in support of UN peacekeeping funding.

"We at the United Nations Foundation want to thank the UN for saving and improving millions of lives around the world," the foundation said. **DETAILS:** <http://www.unfoundation.org/>

### **ECONOMIC WOES FORCE NGOS TO VARY 2009 PLANS**

Some of the biggest development and humanitarian NGOs are laying off staff or revising programs for 2009 as their income streams flatten because of the global financial crisis, the IRIN News reported (27/10/08).

Fundraising experts of three of the world's top NGOs – Oxfam GB, Save the Children UK and World Vision USA – said program growth will slow in 2009 as a result of the squeeze.

"The growth we had assumed when putting plans together a year ago is not materialising," John Shaw, director of finance and information systems at Oxfam GB, told IRIN. "The overall picture is essentially flat." Oxfam had envisaged five to six percent growth over 2009-10, but has now revised this to zero.

Some of the biggest reductions are coming from corporate donors in the financial sector, NGO staff told IRIN. "The fall-off with corporate started six to nine months ago," said Tanya Steele, supporter relations and fundraising director for Save the Children in London.

**REPORT:** <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=81147/> [IRINNews.org](http://www.irinnews.org/)

## **SBS AND ABC TOP UNAA MEDIA PEACE AWARDS**

SBS and ABC Television both featured heavily, taking away three awards apiece, as winners of the 2008 UNAA Media Peace Awards this week.

The Australian Financial Review, Time Magazine, ABC Radio, Sydney Morning Herald, Screen Australia and the Fraser Coast Chronicle also won awards. The presentations were made at a gala dinner at the Arts Centre, Melbourne.

The Age, the Australian Women's Weekly, Channel Nine and production company Pony Films were also recognised with Special Commendations.

The Media Peace Awards seek to promote understanding and awareness about humanitarian and social justice issues by recognising journalists who stimulate public awareness and influence policy change.

The award judging panel was jointly chaired by Justice Philip Cummins, of the Victorian Supreme Court, and Michael Smith, former editor of The Age, said the standard of this year's entries was outstanding and demonstrated the commitment of Australian journalists to quality reporting. "Some of the best work produced by Australian journalists has featured in these awards over the last 30 years, and 2008 proved to be no exception," they said.

Investigative journalism dominated the awards again this year, with some exceptional pieces on subjects ranging from international child trafficking and its connections to adoptions in Australia, to the realities of domestic violence. International reports publicised the plight of Syrian and Iraqi refugees, and several winning entries focused on national Indigenous issues.

The 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Media Peace Awards Presentation Dinner was hosted by Kerry O'Brien, of the ABC.

## **UNAA MEDIA PEACE AWARDS 2008 WINNERS**

### **WINNERS – Major Categories**

#### **BEST PRINT**

News:

Winner: Jill Margo & Steve Georgopoulos – 'The terminally ill deserve better', The Australian Financial Review

Features:

Winner: Rory Callinan – 'Stolen Children', Time Magazine

Special Commendation: David Leser – 'Children Overboard: Two Women, Two Stories', The Australian Women's Weekly

#### **BEST TELEVISION**

News:

Winner: Auskar Surbakti – 'Rebuilding Aceh Series', SBS World News Australia

Current Affairs:

Winner: Matt Brown, Brant Cumming & Simon Brynjolfsson – 'Syria – Iraqi Refugees', ABC TV Foreign Correspondent:

Special Commendation: Jane Hansen & Nick Farrow – 'From Behind the Razor Wire', Channel Nine Sunday Program

Documentary:

Winner: Aaron Lewis, Ashley Smith, David Potts & Raphael Tenthani – 'The Heroes Are Tired (Africa's Deadly Brain Drain)', SBS TV Dateline

Special Commendation: Eric Campbell, Ian Altschwager, David Martin, Brant Cumming & Bryan Milliss – 'Armenia – Ghosts of the Past', ABC TV Foreign Correspondent

#### **BEST RADIO**

Winner: Damien Carrick & Anita Barraud – 'Central Australia', ABC Radio National, Law Report

### BEST PHOTOJOURNALISM

Winner: Stephen Dupont – ‘Inside a Suicide Blast’, Sydney Morning Herald/The Age

### BEST ONLINE

Winner: Rob Wellington & Anna Grieve – ‘Mabo Website’, Screen Australia

### **WINNERS – Special Categories**

#### Newmont Asia Pacific Promotion of Aboriginal Reconciliation:

Winner: Nancy Bates, the Butchulla people, Phil Murphy, Hervey Bay RSL & Zonta – ‘Let’s Learn Butchulla: Hands in Time, Journeying Together’, APN News & Media’s Fraser Coast Chronicle

Special Commendation: Rachel Landers, Dylan Blowen – ‘A Northern Town’, Pony Films

#### Office of Senior Victorians Promotion of Positive Images of the Older Person:

Winner: Kent Gordon, Colin Cosier, John Bean & Angela Trabucco – ‘Bomber & Roy’, ABC TV Australian Story

#### Office of Women’s Policy Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Women’s Rights and Issues:

Winner: Wendy Page, Ian Harley, Mike Chirgwin & Colin Cosier – ‘Before You Leap’, ABC TV Australian Story

#### Office for Children and Early Childhood Development Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Children’s Rights and Issues:

Winner: Jane Hansen & Nick Farrow – ‘From Behind the Razor Wire’, Channel Nine Sunday Program

#### Victorian Multicultural Commission/Australian Multicultural Foundation Promotion of Multicultural Issues:

Winner: Jenny Brockie, Lisa Main & Anne Worthington – ‘Another Country’, SBS TV Insight  
Special Commendation: Farah Farouque, Dewi Cooke – ‘Ganging up on Africans’, The Age

**DETAILS:** UNAA Victoria Executive Director, Patricia Collett:

On 03 9670 7878/mob 0418 544 315; [office@unaavictoria.org.au](mailto:office@unaavictoria.org.au)

### **REVAMPED WEBSITE TELLS UN STORY IN 130 LANGUAGES**

The Department of Public Information marked United Nations Day by launching a redesigned website for UN Information Centres (UNICs) that aims to tell the organisation’s story in 130 languages (24/10/08).

The website will serve as a portal to the Department’s network of 63 UNICs worldwide, most of which are located in developing countries.

“This website enables our Information Centres to bring the UN story to people around the world and to do so in their local languages,” said Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyoo Akasaka.

The website features information on both current activities and milestone agreements such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as on the globally agreed anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

“The site reflects the invaluable contribution of the United Nations and its network of Information Centres to this year’s observance of the International Year of Languages, highlighting the importance of preserving linguistic diversity,” stated Mr Akasaka, who was also appointed UN Coordinator for Multilingualism by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in May.

New features of the site include content explaining the public information work of the UN and an interactive “Voices from the field” section, which features short video clips in local languages of UN staff describing their work. **DETAILS:** <http://unic.un.org/>

## **AUDIOVISUAL LIBRARY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW LAUNCHED**

The UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) has launched the 'Audiovisual Library of International Law'. The website has three main parts: the Historic Archives; the Lecture Series; the Research Library.

The Audiovisual Library aims to provide free, scholarly resources to students and practitioners around the world, particularly in regions where there are few resources for the study of international law.

The UN website describes the Audiovisual Library as a unique, multimedia resource which provides the United Nations with the unprecedented capacity to provide high quality international law training and research materials to an unlimited number of recipients on a global level.

The Audiovisual Library consists of three pillars:

- (1) the [Historic Archives](#) containing documents and audiovisual materials relating to the negotiation and adoption of significant legal instruments under the auspices of the United Nations and related agencies since 1945;
- (2) the [Lecture Series](#) featuring a permanent collection of lectures on virtually every subject of international law given by leading international law scholars and practitioners from different countries and legal systems; and
- (3) the [Research Library](#) providing an on-line international law library with links to treaties, jurisprudence, publications and documents, scholarly writings and research guides. The Audiovisual Library is available to all individuals and institutions around the world free via the Internet.

**AUDIOVISUAL LIBRARY OF INTERNATIONAL LAW:** <http://www.un.org/law/avl/>

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

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

### **TREASURY SETS 'SCENE FOR STRONG 2020 TARGETS'**

The Commonwealth Treasury modelling released on Thursday paves the way for the Federal Government to adopt scientifically and internationally credible 2020 pollution reduction targets, the independent Climate Institute said (30/10/08).

Treasury modelling shows that Australia can address dangerous climate change while experiencing continued economic growth and rises in incomes," said Erwin Jackson, the Climate Institute's Director Policy and Research.

"Treasury has set the scene for the government to adopt strong, credible 2020 pollution reduction targets and position Australia to tap into the emerging trillion dollar low-carbon global economy.

"Decisive carbon pollution reduction targets of at least 25 per cent reduction off 1990 levels by 2020 will not only make Australia's economy competitive in the 21st century but would enable us to play a leadership role in delivering a global agreement to reduce global emissions which is very much in our national interest."

The modelling also shows that the average Australian will be \$4,300 better off by 2020 even while reducing our carbon pollution by 25 per cent (off 2000 levels) over the same timeframe.

"Treasury modelling has now discredited the irresponsible claims by some of the big polluters, undermining suggestions that early, strong action should be delayed," Mr Jackson said.

"The door has been pushed wide open now for government to deliver decisive pollution reduction targets in its December White Paper that will drive multi-billion dollar investments in

Australia creating new jobs and positioning Australia to play a positive role at international climate talks.

“Australia has spent 15 years dithering about action on climate change and there is now no time left for so-called ‘soft starts’ or further delays.”

**REPORT:**

[http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=311:treasury-sets-scene-for-strong-2020-targets&catid=39:media-releases&Itemid=36](http://www.climateinstitute.org.au/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=311:treasury-sets-scene-for-strong-2020-targets&catid=39:media-releases&Itemid=36)

### **GNP GROWTH ONLY ONE TENTH OF 1% LESS: SAYS TREASURY REPORT**

*Australia's Low Pollution Future: The Economics of Climate Change Mitigation* report was launched in Brisbane by Treasurer Wayne Swan and Climate Change and Water Minister Penny Wong (30/10/08).

The report contains Treasury's detailed modelling of the costs and opportunities of acting decisively to meet the challenge of climate change.

A Federal Government media release stated it provides fresh evidence that early action to tackle climate change will sustain growth, create new jobs and protect Australia's economy into the future.

It said the report - which measures the economic impact of cutting carbon emissions through the Government's Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme - has three key conclusions:

The Australian economy will continue to grow strongly as we reduce carbon emissions;  
The earlier Australia acts, the cheaper the cost of action. The longer we delay, the more damage we risk to the Australian economy; and  
Many of Australia's key industries will become more, not less, competitive.

Included in the report are findings that average annual GNP growth will only be one tenth of one per cent less than it would be in a world without action to tackle climate change.

The report shows that taking early action will allow an orderly and gradual adjustment to a low-carbon economy. However delaying action, and then playing catch up, will deliver a sharper shock to the economy in the years ahead. It confirms that it is in our economic interests to take early and decisive action on climate change.

The modelling indicates that economies that act early face lower long-term costs - around 15 per cent lower than if Australia delay until internationally agreed action.

Putting in place the necessary economic reforms through the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme would also allow Australia to capitalise on emerging opportunities and gain a competitive advantage, the report claims, saying it contains the most complex, comprehensive and rigorous analysis of its kind ever undertaken in Australia.

It is a key part of the government's commitment to implementing the Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme in a measured and economically responsible way which is affordable for families and pensioners and supports future economic growth.

**REPORT SUMMARY/ REPORT:** <http://www.treasury.gov.au/lowpollutionfuture/>

**KEY FINDINGS FACT SHEETS:** <http://www.treasury.gov.au/lowpollutionfuture/factsheets/>

### **SEA-LEVEL RISE THREAT TO COAST**

Sydney's iconic beaches, coastal houses, commercial property and roads will be threatened by rising sea levels by 2050, while the city's temperature is expected to rise by at least 2 degrees, a new scientific study, launched by the Premier, Nathan Rees, reveals(29/10/08).

The study commissioned by the NSW Department of Climate Change, and adopted by the NSW Government, was carried out by NSW University and uses research from the UN peak scientific body, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. It examines the effect of

climate change from the Central Coast to Wollongong, along with other regions in rural NSW. The full state study is expected to be released in January.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/28/1224956039688.html>

### **ANU POLL REVEALS NATION WORRIED ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE**

Australians view global warming as the most serious threat to the future well-being of the world and see drought as the most immediate environmental problem for Australia, according to the findings of the 3rd ANU poll (released 29/10/08). However, the poll also shows that fewer are prepared to change their behaviour to protect the environment or to support the government's Emissions Trading Scheme.

A large majority of Australians consider themselves well informed about climate change and a small majority support the introduction of an Emissions Trading Scheme.

According to Professor Ian McAllister, who leads ANUpoll, despite the scientific complexities and debates surrounding the whole topic of global warming, a large majority of the public—77 per cent—feel that they understand the issue 'very well' or 'fairly well.'

On nuclear power, Australians are less supportive of it than US counterparts, a majority of whom support it, he said. Around half of the Australian public opposes the use of nuclear energy. Over the last two decades, public support for nuclear energy had declined, while support for uranium mining had remained relatively stable.

**ANU POLL:** <http://www.anu.edu.au/anupoll/>.

**DETAILS:** Jane O'Dwyer on 02 6125 5001 or 0416 249 231.

### **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

#### **UN DEBATES WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

The UN Security Council was due to hold an open debate on implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security this week, October 30. The theme of the council debate was heralded as *Women and Armed Conflict*.

A 'Common Message' by the Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, was issued in advance of the debate.

Earlier this year, resolution 1325 was enhanced and complemented with the adoption of Security Council resolution 1820, which determined that sexual violence in conflict can be a threat to peace and security. The resolution set out a framework in which the UN is to work to reduce and prevent sexual violence in conflict and post-conflict situations.

Julia Dean, of the National Information Officer, UN Information Centre, has forwarded a 'Common Message' by the Task Force on Women, Peace and Security [SEE BELOW](#). There is also the concept note from the Permanent Representative of China to frame the Security Council debate.

**DETAILS:** Julia Dean on 61-2-62738200/ 61-2-62738205(d); F on: 61-2-62738206.

#### **A 'COMMON MESSAGE' BY THE TASK FORCE ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY**

The UN Security Council was due to hold an open debate on implementation of Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on Women, Peace and Security. The theme of the Council debate will be *Women and Armed Conflict*. A 'Common Message' by the Task Force on Women, Peace and Security, issued in advance of the debate, has as objectives:

Effective and appropriate interventions to support women affected by war and violent conflict are hampered by a general lack of reliable information and analysis regarding the situation of women in many post-conflict counties, although some inroads are being made into this information gap. Concerted efforts at the international and national level are needed to stimulate research and knowledge sharing in the field of women, peace and security to inform effective policy and program interventions.

Experience around the world suggests that women's contribution during conflict emergencies can make a critical difference to community survival and reconstruction. Women's contributions to post-war reconstruction expand the scope of 'peacemaking' itself, since their activism addresses the psychosocial, relational and spiritual as well as the political and economic, dimensions of conflict transformation.

In many countries, women's potential contribution to peace negotiations and to reconstruction has not been recognized at the national level. However, at the local and community level, women have held families together during crises, and have been critical in maintaining household economies through their involvement in agriculture and informal sector, even when men's employment and trade options were closed off. Women have often demonstrated their ability to set up networks with other women and transcend the dividing lines of conflicts.

Women's advocacy groups and the national women's machineries have been active in translating the resolution into action. They have been active in advocating for greater participation of women in decision-making, and in particular in preparing women for participation in post conflict elections. Together with the UN, civil society groups have trained women in leadership, and carrying out civic and electoral education programmes, with the intention of increasing the number of women in public office.

Evidence from many countries suggests that an overarching goal of crisis recovery and reconstruction efforts must be the reform of political institutions so that women (and other previously excluded groups) can participate actively in democratic structures at all levels. It is critical to recovery that women should live free from violence and unjust treatment; critical to this goal is the establishment of political, economic and juridical systems, which protect women's rights. Legislative reform processes and development and/or strengthening of the judicial system should aim at eliminating gender specific inequalities and discriminations. Further efforts are needed to also address cultural and institutional barriers to women's participation in decision-making.

Sadly, even though many member states have actively supported Resolution 1325, the practical implementation of its goals remains a huge challenge. Many countries still often lack the political will to effectively implement the resolution. In addition to lack of political will, many countries coming out of conflict lack serious capacities on the ground to improve women's position.

Very few instruments are available to assess the impact that conflict and reconstruction have on women and women's rights. Common standards are needed to assist member states and civil society organizations to establish monitoring systems that track the progress on the resolution. Currently arbitrary reporting on the resolution does not provide an effective direction on the real progress made nor the serious gaps in implementation.

The adoption of the goals of the resolution requires a sustained advocacy effort, technical expertise and understanding of gender equality at international, national and local levels. Furthermore, international attention and funding for women's issues have decreased in recent years. Members of the Security Council and other Member States are thus encouraged to exert political pressure to keep the issue of women's rights on the agenda of the peace and security discourse by providing concrete recommendations to assist the Council, providing political support, financial resources and strengthening cooperation in order to accelerate the implementation of Resolution 1325 (2000).

### **WOMAN WINS CASE AGAINST NIGER FOR SLAVERY**

West African judges fined the state of Niger the equivalent of 15,000 euros for failing to protect a woman sold into slavery at the age of 12, in a landmark ruling with implications across the region, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (28/10/08).

The Court of Justice of the Economic Community of West African States recognised that the young woman, Adidjatou Mani Koraou, now 24, had been "a victim of slavery." It held "the Republic of Niger responsible for the inaction" of its administrative and legal services, in a ruling read out by a court official.

Rights campaigners welcomed the ruling, which was the first time the ECOWAS regional court had been asked to rule on a case of slavery. Its verdict will be binding on all member states.

Ms Koraou was sold into slavery for the equivalent of 330 euros in the south of the country, and over the next decade was forced to carry out domestic and agricultural work. She also lived as a sexual slave, or sadaka, to her master, who already had four wives and seven other sadakas, according to the NGO Anti-Slavery International, which backed her case.

Anti-Slavery International believes there are still at least 43,000 slaves in the country.  
**REPORT:** <http://news.smh.com.au/world/woman-wins-case-against-niger-for-slavery-20081028-59vd.html>

### **VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REMAINS ENDEMIC: UN EXPERT REPORTS**

Women around the world continue to endure violence, abuse and discrimination and often have no recourse to justice, an independent UN human rights expert told the General Assembly urging member states to make greater efforts to record and publicise violations (24/10/08).

"In spite of considerable achievements, violence against women persists in every country as a pervasive and universal violation of human rights and a major impediment to achieving gender equality," said Yakin Ertürk, the outgoing Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences.

Addressing the assembly's third committee (social, humanitarian and cultural) for the last time, Ms Ertürk said the problem of violence against women had become so complex that laws and policies worldwide needed to be changed to adjust to the reality.

"To enhance the effectiveness of this mandate in promoting and supporting endeavours to combat violence against women, I would like to emphasise the need to complement the mandate with a substantial funding source from which funds can be channelled to the implementation of the recommendations made following official country visits," she said.  
**DETAILS:** <http://www.un.org>

### **INTERVENTION IS WORKING, SAYS WARLPIRI ELDER**

Peggy Brown, OAM, has no doubts about the emergency intervention or having half her income managed. "It's working, no doubt about it," she said. The traditional owner delivered much the same message to the Indigenous Affairs Minister, Jenny Macklin, when they met for private talks, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (28/10/08).

Ruby Williams, another Warlpiri woman, said she told the minister that women wanted the quarantining to stay. "We don't want any change," she said. The Warlpiri community is split over the intervention on gender lines: the men, led by community spokesman Ned Hargraves, are bitterly opposed to the principle of income management and the women swear by it.  
**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/27/1224955948648.html>

### **STILL RIDING FOR FREEDOM 40 YEARS LATER**

Gaps in our legal system around human rights protection continue to have a real and devastating effect on the life chances for Aboriginal people in Australia more than 40 years after Aboriginal leader Charlie Perkins first undertook the freedom ride, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma said while delivering the 2008 Dr Charles Perkins Memorial Oration at the University of Sydney (23/10/08).

Commissioner Calma said the current Federal Government's commitment to working in partnerships with Indigenous peoples rather than treating them as 'passive recipients' made the next few years critical in the struggle for equality.

"While we may see the first black candidate elected to the presidency of the United States of America in two weeks time, reflecting on our own progress in Australia presents us with a markedly different picture," he said. "Unlike all other western democracies, we have no

Charter or Bill of Rights in Australia – not for Aboriginal people, not for anyone,” he said.

Mr Calma pointed to state and federal government service delivery to Indigenous people that struggled to provide the most basic of services, as a sign of the pressing need to question inequality in Australian society. His oration outlined the need to treat poverty as a human rights issue and to formally protect human rights in our legal system.

He also called for the First Nations status of Indigenous Australians to be embedded in the Constitution, with a revamping of the ‘racism power’ (section 51 (26)), to prevent the federal parliament from enacting laws that racially discriminate against Indigenous peoples – something currently allowed.

Mr Calma called for a Charter of Rights that provided comprehensive recognition of human rights consistent with Australia’s international obligations and for a strengthening of human rights protections in our legal system. **ORATION:**

[http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social\\_justice/2008/20081023\\_still\\_riding.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/about/media/speeches/social_justice/2008/20081023_still_riding.html)

### **SENIOR UN OFFICIAL SPOTLIGHTS PROTECTION NEEDS OF CHILD REFUGEES**

More than 1.6 million children who – either as refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs) or migrants – have become separated from their parents or guardians, and they need asylum and migration policies that take into account their special needs, a senior UN said (24/10/08).

“No matter their status, children must be treated as children first and their best interests professionally identified and respected,” Assistant High Commissioner for Protection Erika Feller told a US conference on the protection of unaccompanied and separated children.

The three-day gathering, at the George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia, aimed at improving the timeliness and effectiveness of protection for unaccompanied child refugees, many of whom have undertaken extremely difficult and dangerous journeys to escape persecution, human rights violations and violence.

Ms Feller noted that current asylum and migration procedures were designed primarily for the needs of adults. Those that did exist to address separated or unaccompanied children varied greatly from country to country. One European country, for example, recently had enforced fast-track airport procedures aimed at blocking children’s arrival. **REPORT:**  
<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28689&Cr=feller&Cr1=> (23/10/08).

### **CHIEFS REJECTED CALL FOR DR HANEEF TO BE RELEASED**

Queensland Police and Australian Federal Police who interviewed the terrorism suspect Mohamed Haneef last year formed the view that there was insufficient evidence to charge him but were overruled by a decision at the most senior levels of the AFP, ABC TV’s *Four Corners* reported (28/10/08).

### **NO MORE TIME BEHIND BARS**

Melbourne resident Jack Thomas, 35, has been spared from having to serve more time behind bars, Yahoo News reported (29/10/08). He was sentenced to a nine-month jail term on Wednesday for possessing a falsified passport - a charge that carries a maximum two-year jail term. He was immediately released on an order after having already spent that time in custody. He had been cleared by a Victorian Supreme Court jury last week of terrorism charges after it found him not guilty of receiving funds from al-Qaeda.

### **TORTURE STANDARD PRACTICE IN MANY COUNTRIES: UN EXPERT**

Torture was still a frequent or even standard practice in many nations, six decades after the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, a UN expert said (24/10/08).

“Today, human rights form the only universally accepted system of the world, but the implementation gap is growing,” Manfred Nowak, Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, told reporters in New York.

He said torture had decreased significantly in several parts of the world, with the practice being reduced sharply after the military dictatorships of Latin America were replaced by democratic governments.

"But on the global level, I still come to the conclusion on the basis of many fact-finding missions and other forms of evidence that torture and ill-treatment is still practised on a widespread, partly even systematic and routine level in many countries of the world, and the conditions of detention have even gotten worse in many countries of the world."

Addressing the General Assembly, he said millions of people worldwide were deprived of their liberty, living in conditions of detention amounting to inhuman and degrading treatment. Torture occurred behind closed doors and that the lack of public scrutiny allowed for the abuses of detainees to continue. He called for transparency in both public and private institutions.

Mr Nowak, an Austrian human rights lawyer who has served as Rapporteur since 2004, presented a report to the Assembly's Third Committee on the connection between torture and the treatment of people with disabilities.

People with mental disabilities were very often just excluded," he said. "They are put in a single cell without any adequate health or psychological care and we have found in various prisons persons in a deplorable and appalling state from a hygienic point of view who are just neglected, forgotten by the outside world."

#### **COMMITMENT TO END DISCRIMINATION WELCOMED BUT WHY THE DELAY?**

The Federal Government's announcement that it would modify the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER) so it is consistent with the Racial Discrimination Act is long overdue, but its decision to delay key elements of this by at least 12 months is deeply problematic, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma said (24/10/08).

"Effectively, we have ended up with a situation where it took two weeks to design a suite of discriminatory measures, but will end up taking more than two years to remove them. This is despite the Minister for Indigenous Affairs having the ability to exercise her administrative powers to remove substantial elements of the discrimination with immediate effect," he said.

"While I applaud the government for announcing that the NTER measures cannot rely on the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act (RDA) in the long term, the delays involved in moving to this arrangement will continue what the NTER Review Board described as the 'sense of betrayal and disbelief' among Indigenous peoples, and will continue to 'undercut the potential effectiveness of its substantive measures'".

The recommendations of the (NTER) Review Report provided an opportunity to refocus the Federal Government's efforts from an emergency to community development approach in improving the lives of Northern Territory Aboriginal children.

"While I accept that such changes may require an intermediate period to transition from the present scheme, the planning of this transition should begin immediately and be tailored to the specific and varying needs of different communities," he said.

He urged the government to use the framework outlined in the Social Justice Report 2007 to make the transition to a community development approach, which proposes the development of Community Partnership Agreements to introduce a tailored response to the needs of individual NT communities.

#### **ANGELINA JOLIE URGES GREATER SUPPORT FOR AFGHAN RETURNEES**

International film star and UN Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie has appealed for greater support for Afghan returnees, particularly as the harsh winter approaches, at the end of her first visit to the strife-torn nation.

Although this was her first visit to the country, she is familiar with the Afghan repatriation operation – one of the biggest carried out by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – having met with Afghan refugees in neighbouring Pakistan twice in recent years.

She visited recent returnees in the eastern province of Nangarhar, where almost 20 per cent of all Afghans who return to the homeland have settled since 2002. Living on desolate, desert land in tattered tents and makeshift shelters, they told her they could not return to their places of origin due to a lack of land and poor security. She also visited UNHCR income-generating projects for vulnerable women in Jalalabad city.

“The courage, resilience and quiet dignity of returnee families rebuilding their lives against the kind of adversity few of us can imagine shows the human spirit at its best,” she **said**.

### **HUMAN RIGHTS AWARDS PRESENTATIONS**

Australian Human Rights Commission President Catherine Branson QC will deliver her first human rights oration at the 2008 Human Rights Medals and Awards Ceremony in Sydney on December 10.

“This year’s awards ceremony is particularly relevant as it is also celebrating the 60th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights passed by the United Nations in 1948,” she said. In keeping with the anniversary, the theme for this year’s awards is the UN Human Rights Day theme for 2008, *Dignity and justice for all of us*.

“The Human Rights Medals and Awards were set up 21 years ago to recognise the selfless and often uncelebrated efforts these people make in their day-to-day lives protecting human rights and fighting for social justice and equality.”

The following categories for the 2008 Human Rights Awards and Medals will be presented: Human Rights Medal; Young People’s Human Rights Medal; Community (Individual) Award; and Community (Organisation) Award.

Awards are also awarded in the categories of Law (sponsored by the Law Council of Australia), Literature (Non-fiction), Print Media, Television and Radio. The gala lunch will be at Sheraton on the Park Hotel, Sydney. **DETAILS:** 02 9284 9618; [www.humanrights.gov.au](http://www.humanrights.gov.au)

### **HOUSE PETITIONS COMMITTEE’S FIRST PUBLIC HEARING WITH PETITIONERS**

The House of Representatives Petitions Committee is holding its first public hearing with petitioners in Melbourne on Thursday, 30 October. People who have already presented petitions to the House will speak to the Petitions Committee about their concerns.

Petitions received so far from Victoria have raised issues such as pension levels, the apology to indigenous Australians, school funding for students with disabilities, and income support for asylum seekers.

The Committee expects to hear from petitioners about water management, community radio in regional Victoria, and the fight to ban cluster munitions and anti-vehicle mines, as well as other issues. **BACKGROUND:** 02 6277 2152.

### **HINCH TO CHALLENGE SUPPRESSION ORDERS**

Broadcaster Derryn Hinch will challenge charges against him for allegedly naming sex offenders in defiance of court orders, the ABC reported (29/10/08).

Mr Hinch appeared in Melbourne Magistrates Court charged with contempt of court for allegedly breaching five Victorian County Court suppression orders which prohibited him from naming sexual offenders. His lawyer, Peter Faris QC, said Mr Hinch would challenge the suppression orders in the Victorian Supreme Court, arguing they were a breach of his human rights and freedom of speech and were not in the public interest.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/29/2404578.htm?section=australia>

## **RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT OVERRIDES NATIONAL SOVEREIGNTY?**

ANU seminar convenor Professor Charles Sampford, from the Institute of Ethics, Governance and Law, said one of the hottest topics in international relations this decade was the responsibility of the international community to protect vulnerable populations from human rights violations.

Debates over how to respond to atrocities such as Rwanda, or Darfur in Sudan, had tended to focus on what right the international community has to militarily 'intervene' in these countries.

A forum was scheduled to address these issues on October 30 by debating the topic 'Should the responsibility to protect override national sovereignty?'

This debate is organised by the Socratic Forum, a joint initiative of Professor Ashley Goldsworthy and Dr Barry Jones. [DETAILS](#): Sandy Hawke on on 6125 5002.

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

### **WHITE HOUSE BACKS OFF**

The White House has backed away from using American commandos for further ground raids into [Pakistan](#) after furious complaints from its government, relying instead on an intensifying campaign of airstrikes by the [Central Intelligence Agency](#) against militants in the Pakistani mountains, the New York Times reported (26/10/08).

According to American and Pakistani officials, attacks by remotely piloted Predator aircraft have increased sharply in frequency and scope in the past three months. Through Sunday, there were at least 18 Predator strikes since the beginning of August, some deep inside Pakistan's tribal areas, compared with 5 strikes during the first seven months of 2008.

At the same time, however, officials said that relying on airstrikes alone, the United States would be unable to weaken [Al Qaeda](#)'s grip in the tribal areas permanently. Within the government, advocates of the ground raids have argued that only by sending Special Operations forces into Pakistan can the United States successfully capture suspected operatives and interrogate them for information about top Qaeda leaders.

The decision to focus on an intensified Predator campaign using Hellfire missiles appears to reflect dwindling options on the part of the White House for striking a blow against Al Qaeda in the Bush administration's waning days.

[REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/washington/27intel.html?th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/27/washington/27intel.html?th&emc=th)

### **PAKISTAN USES TRIBAL MILITIAS IN TALIBAN WAR**

The use of tribal militias is a new tool for the Pakistani Army, which has met resistance from militants, the New York Times reported (24/10/08). Two tribal elders lay stretched out in an orthopedic ward here last week, their plastered limbs and wincing of pain grim evidence of the slaughter they survived when a suicide bomber blew himself up in the midst of their tribal gathering.

These wounded men, and many others in the hospital, were supposed to be the backbone of a Pakistani Government effort to take on the [Taliban](#), and its backers, [Al Qaeda](#), with armies of traditional tribesmen working in consultation with the Pakistani military.

The tribal militias, known as lashkars, have quickly become a crucial tool of Pakistan's strategy in the tribal belt, where the army has been fighting the Taliban for more than two months in what army generals acknowledge is a tougher and more protracted slog than they had anticipated.

[REPORT: http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/world/asia/24militia.html?th&emc=th](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/world/asia/24militia.html?th&emc=th)

## MIDDLE EAST

### **UN TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT ARM JOIN WORK TO HELP RECONSTRUCT IRAQ**

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) signed an **agreement** giving it access to a fund of \$1.3 billion for the reconstruction and development of Iraq (24/10/08).

The UN Development Group Iraq Trust Fund (UNDG ITF) is one of two funds created in 2004 to help donor nations channel their resources and coordinate their support for rebuilding the violence-ridden country.

UNCTAD, which joined 21 other participating UN Organizations in providing support to Iraq within a common UN framework, will access UNDG ITF resources to support its key assistance programs – the Automated System of Customs Data programme and a science, technology and innovation policy review (STIP).

The STIP review will provide policy support to Iraq for shaping and establishing a national science, technology and innovation system to help reconstruct the nation's economy and accelerate its development, with a view to becoming a functioning knowledge-based, globalized economy.

While Iraq's efforts in science, technology and innovation were once among the best in the region, the troubled country's intellectual infrastructure has been decimated in more recent years. UNCTAD estimates that 80 per cent of the country's universities and research institutions are not fully operational, and large numbers of Iraqi engineers and scientists have left the country.

A memorandum of understanding on the project was signed at a formal ceremony – attended by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – in Geneva on 1 September by Iraqi Minister of Science and Technology Raid Fahmi and UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi. At the event Dr. Supachai expressed continuing readiness to provide UNCTAD-wide support in favour of Iraq to “help this country participated effectively and gainfully in today's globalized world economy and the multilateral trading system.”

The STIP review will be prepared by experts working under the direction of UNCTAD and in partnership with Government officials, private-sector interests, academics and researchers. It will provide a basis for comprehensive Iraqi plans to encourage and capitalize on science, technology and innovation as a way of spurring long-term economic growth, according to a press release issued by UNCTAD.

## AFRICA

### **BAN WELCOMES LATEST EFFORT TO RESOLVE ZIMBABWEAN IMPASSE**

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has welcomed the initiative of regional leaders in Southern Africa to hold a summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, to resolve the outstanding issues to a power-sharing deal for a new government in the troubled and impoverished country, warning of the humanitarian consequences if the impasse does not end soon (27/10/08).

The summit of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) security troika “provides a critical opportunity for the leaders to finalize in good faith the formation of the new government based on an equitable division of power, and to move swiftly to implement the 15 September agreement on resolving the many serious challenges facing Zimbabwe,” his spokesperson said in a **statement**.

“The Secretary-General reiterates the United Nations' willingness to support Zimbabwe throughout this delicate transition process and to work with regional leaders and the international community to provide immediate relief to the suffering of its people.”

Mr. Ban said in the statement that he was alarmed that the ongoing political crisis, which dates back to disputed elections early this year involving the incumbent President Robert Mugabe and the opposition figure Morgan Tsvangirai, is taking a "growing human cost." He added that signs indicate Zimbabwe's humanitarian situation may only worsen through next year.

"He is deeply concerned that the population of Zimbabwe in both rural and urban areas faces many challenges, including critical shortages of all food, essential drugs, basic services, and clean water. It is urgent to resolve the ongoing political impasse so that recovery can begin."

Earlier this month the UN World Food Program (**WFP**) appealed for \$140 million to provide vital rations over the next six months to Zimbabweans, with estimates that more than five million residents are now facing severe food shortages.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28734&Cr=zimbabwe&Cr1=>

### **TRUTH COMMISSION FOR KENYA**

Kenya's parliament has approved a Truth, Justice and Reconciliation Commission (TJRC) to probe human rights abuses since independence in 1963, the BBC reported this week.

Those found guilty of genocide and other human rights violations will not be eligible for amnesty.

The move comes amidst debate on how to deal with those implicated in the violence that broke out after the disputed elections in December 2007.

An international tribunal has been urged to try those behind the clashes.

More than 1,500 people were killed and some 300,000 more fled their homes in the unrest.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7688505.stm>

### **UN EVACUATES AID WORKERS AS REBEL FORCES CLOSE IN ON CONGO TOWN**

Thousands of civilians fleeing the provincial capital of Goma in Congo jammed the roads as rebels closed in, resisting the attacks of UN peacekeepers in helicopters. Mobs hurled stones at UN soldiers in frustration, angered over the failure of some 17,000 UN peacekeepers to protect civilians from the often brutal rebel forces.

UN officials prepared to evacuate some 50 foreign aid workers from Rutshuru and the surrounding area, several dozen miles from Goma. Lt Gen Vicente Diaz de Villegas, the UN commander of the DR Congo peacekeeping mission, resigned as fighting erupted, having held the job for seven weeks. Mail & Guardian (South Africa), Google/The Associated Press, AlertNet.org (26/10/08).

WFP was able to distribute food to key nutritional centres and hospitals inside Goma on Wednesday, despite tension in the town and conflict in the surrounding countryside.

In an effort to prepare for a potential movement of refugees from Goma, WFP Rwanda has pre-positioned enough food for 2,000 people at the Nkamira transit centre in Gisenyi, just across the border from Goma. UNICEF, UNHCR and UNFPA have also pre-positioned non-food items.

WFP remains unable to move any food at all outside Goma given the intensity of the fighting.

### **UN WARNS ON EASTERN CONGO**

The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) voiced its concern over the situation in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), where many more people have been displaced following a recent upsurge in fighting between Government and rebel forces (28/10/08). **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28739&Cr=Democratic&Cr1=Congo>

### **TRUST MAIN CHALLENGE IN SUDAN: UN REPORT**

A lack of mutual trust between the signatories remains the main challenge to implementing the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the long-running north-south civil war in Sudan, says a new United Nations report released (28/10/08).

“This lack of trust consequently permeates into all major pending benchmarks set under the Agreement,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon writes in his latest **report** to the Security Council on Sudan, which the 15-member body will discuss next month.

He urges the leaders of both the National Congress Party (NCP) and the Sudan People’s Liberation Movement (SPLM) to make an effort to improve their relationship, saying the “onus of improving mutual trust and confidence lies with the leadership of both sides.”

One of the things that Mr Ban says will significantly contribute to confidence-building between the parties is successful implementation of the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration program, which is “critical to peace in the Sudan.”

But disarmament and demobilisation alone cannot lead to a durable peace, he adds, stressing the need to provide ex-combatants with the opportunities they need to successfully reintegrate into society. In this regard, he urges donors to be generous with their pledges at a round-table conference to be held in November.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28744&Cr=sudan&Cr1=cpa>

## GENERAL

### **EXPLAINING THE WORLDWIDE DECLINE IN POLITICAL VIOLENCE**

Professor Mack’s presentation will examine the recent decline in the incidence of terrorism around the world and the dramatic drop in support for the loose-knit Islamist terror network associated with Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda in Muslim countries. This shift is part of a broader decline in overall political violence – armed conflicts as well as terrorism. But while both warfare and Islamist terrorism have declined the drivers of change are very different at the ANU on October 31.

The decline in fatalities from Islamist terrorism owes little to the US-led Global War in Terror but a great deal to the growing revulsion in the Muslim world against the ideology, policies and gratuitous violence against civilians that have been the hallmarks of Islamist strategy. Al Qaeda has become its own worst enemy.

While the decline in terrorism is good news it is less important than the global decline in armed conflicts – Islamist terror groups kill only a tiny fraction of those killed in warfare. The extent of this decline has been extraordinary. All forms of conflict are down by 40 percent since the early 1990s – high intensity conflicts are down by 80%.

Unlike terrorism, this change has a great deal to do with security policies pursued by the international community – though not with conflict prevention policies which are more talked about than practised. Nor does it owe much to shifts in slow-changing ‘structural’ variables like income per capita or unemployment rates among marginalised youth in poor countries that have been the focus of much recent statistical research by Paul Collier and others.

Professor Mack will argue that the decline in political violence has come about in part because the end of the Cold War removed a major driver of armed conflict from the international system, but that it is due mostly to the fact that the ‘peacemaking’ and ‘peacebuilding’ policies of the much-maligned UN. These have helped stop ongoing wars – and prevented them from restarting again.

### **CLUSTER MUNITION COALITION CALLS FOR SOUTH-EAST ASIAN SOLIDARITY**

The Cluster Munition Coalition has called on all states in South East Asia to show solidarity with Lao PDR and Cambodia and to sign up for the Convention on Cluster Munitions to ban cluster munitions.

Lao PDR will host a three-day conference in a continued campaign for the widespread signing of the Convention on Cluster Munitions to ban the weapons internationally. The host is the most cluster bomb affected province in the world.

The conference will be in Oslo on December 3 when the Convention on Cluster Munitions will be open for signatures. Australia has co-sponsored the conference with Norway and UNDP.

Most if not all of the 107 states that adopted the treaty in Dublin are expected to sign in December and over 50 states have already publicly indicated an intention to do so.

According to UXO-Lao, since 1996 only 364,000 sub-munitions have been cleared in Laos. Handicap International says some 4,837 people are reported to have been killed or injured by cluster munitions, many decades after the bombing ended. Many others have been killed or injured without being recorded.

Between 1964-1973, the US military dropped more than 2.4 million tons of bombs on Laos, including around 270 million cluster bomblets. Overall this was more tonnage than was dropped on Germany and Japan combined during the Second World War. According to Handicap International: at least 26 million sub-munitions were delivered in Cambodia by some 80,000 cluster munitions between 1969 and 1973; at least 260 million sub-munitions were delivered in Laos by over 414,000 cluster bombs between 1965 and 1973; nearly 97 million sub-munitions were dropped in Vietnam by over 296,000 cluster munitions between 1965 and 1975.

Cluster munitions caused more civilian casualties in Iraq in 2003 and Kosovo in 1999 than any other weapons. Currently no provision in international law specifically addresses the problem.

Israel's massive use of the weapon in Lebanon in August 2006 resulted in more than 200 civilian casualties in the year following the ceasefire and served as the catalyst that has propelled governments to attempt to secure a legally-binding international instrument tackling cluster munitions in 2008.

**DETAILS:** Natalie Curtis: Laos on +856 (0)202 598 547: International +44(0)7515 575 174  
Thai speaker, Susan Walker: Laos on +856 (0)202 547 2054.

## ASIA

### **DALAI LAMA GIVES UP ON CHINA**

The Dalai Lama said he has given up on efforts to convince Beijing to allow greater autonomy for Tibet under Chinese rule (27/10/08). The Tibetan spiritual leader said he would now ask the Tibetan people to decide on how to take the dialogue forward.

China has repeatedly accused the Dalai Lama of leading a campaign to split Tibet from the rest of the country. The Dalai Lama has denied the allegations, saying he is only seeking greater autonomy for the Himalayan region to protect its unique Buddhist culture - a policy he calls the "middle way".

"As far as I'm concerned, I have given up," he said in an unusually blunt statement. "The issue of Tibet is not the issue of the Dalai Lama alone. It is the issue of six million Tibetans. I have asked the government-in-exile, as a true democracy in exile, to decide in consultation with the Tibetan people the future course of action." A new round of talks between his envoys and Chinese officials is due to begin at the end of the month. Most Tibetans have supported the Dalai Lama's push for autonomy for the region. The Tibetan Youth Congress is the only major activist group that backs full independence for Tibet.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/26/1224955853376.html>

### **NORTH KOREA THREATENS TO TURN SOUTH INTO 'DEBRIS'**

North Korea is threatening to turn South Korea into 'debris' unless it stops activists sending anti-North propaganda leaflets across the border, Radio Australia reported (28/10/08). North Asia correspondent Shane McLeod reports that activists from the South have been sending the leaflets into North Korea attached to balloons. **REPORT:**

<http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200810/s2403919.htm?tab=latest>

ABC TV's Foreign Correspondent Program: Peacekeepers in Darfur outmanned and outgunned in conflict between the Sudanese army & rebel groups.

**DETAILS:** <http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/broadband.htm>

[Win broadband](#); [Win dialup](#); [Flash](#)

## **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

### **FINANCIAL CRISIS AN OPPORTUNITY TO IMPROVE WORLD HEALTH**

The global financial crisis provides governments worldwide with an opportunity for course correction by putting health, equity and sustainability as the focus of government policy, according to an ANU researcher.

Dr Sharon Friel, Fellow at the ANU National Centre for Epidemiology, outlined her role as Principal Research Fellow on the World Health Organisation's Global Commission on Social Determinants on Health and said the commission challenged governments worldwide to close the health gap in a generation. Dr Friel argues that the Australian Government's intervention in the financial crisis has created policy space in which to position health equity and sustainability as central policy goals.

"The toxic combination of poor social policies, unfair economic arrangements and bad politics is, in large measure, responsible for the fact that a majority of people in the world do not enjoy the good health that is biologically possible – social injustice is killing people on a grand scale," said Dr Friel.

"The poor health of the poor, the social gradient of health within countries and the marked health inequities between countries are caused by the unequal distribution of power and income," she says. The consequent unfairness peoples' lives – their access to health care, schools and education, their conditions of work and leisure, their homes, communities, towns or cities – and their chances of leading a flourishing life together constituted the social determinants of health.

"Departments of health at federal and state level and international health organisations have a moral responsibility to champion social determinants of health approach. But neither can they, nor should they be solely responsible. Health may not be the aim of all social policies but it will be a fundamental result."

She said the underlying determinants of health inequity and of environmental change overlapped substantially: "They reflect, in particular, an economic system predicated on growth and competition, shaped by market forces that mostly disregard health and environmental consequences and limits rather than by values of fairness and support," she said. **DETAILS:** Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office, on – 0) 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

### **WHO RELEASES GLOBAL BURDEN OF DISEASE STUDY**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) released a new assessment of the Global Burden of Disease, a study that provides a comprehensive picture of the global and regional state of health (27/10/08).

Drawing from extensive data across the WHO, it features comparisons between deaths, diseases and injuries whether by region, age, sex or country income for the year 2004. It also provides projections of deaths and burden of disease by cause and region to the year 2030.

The study contains details of the top ten causes of death and estimates for over 130 disease and injury causes. Striking findings include:

- Worldwide, Africa accounts for 9 out of every 10 child deaths due to malaria, for 9 out of every 10 child deaths due to HIV/AIDS, and for half of the world's child deaths due to diarrhoeal disease and pneumonia.

- The top five causes of death in low- income countries are: pneumonia, heart disease, diarrhoea, HIV/AIDS and stroke. In high- income countries the list is topped by heart disease, followed by stroke, lung cancer, pneumonia, and asthma/bronchitis.

- Men between the ages of 15 and 60 years have much higher risks of dying than women in the same age category in every region of the world. This is mainly due to higher levels of heart diseases and injuries, including those from violence and conflict. This difference is most pronounced in Latin America, the Caribbean, the Middle -East and the Eastern European region.

- Depression is the leading cause of years lost due to disability, the burden being 50% higher for females than males. In both low- and high -income countries, the harmful use of alcohol is among the 10 leading causes of disability.

The production and dissemination of health information for action is one of WHO's core mandated activities. The study provides Member States with key health information for health decision-making, planning and priority setting.

"It is vital that we have a global and regional picture of deaths, disease and disability", says Colin Mathers, Coordinator for Epidemiology and Burden of Disease at WHO and lead author of the study. " It enables policy makers and countries to identify the gaps and ensure that help and efforts are directed to those who are most in need. Countries can use the information to create strategies and cost-effective interventions aimed at improving health across the world." The study contains information on:

- Causes of death in the different regions of the World Health Organization
- The leading causes of death by age and sex
- The numbers of people with various diseases and disabilities
- The causes of loss of health and the actual loss of years of good health- these are measured in disability-adjusted life years (DALYs). One Daly is equivalent to the loss of one year of full health.

**DETAILS:** Natalie Boudou-Jacobs, WHO, Geneva on 41 22 791 1036; [boudoun@who.int](mailto:boudoun@who.int)  
The Global Burden of Disease Study:  
[http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global\\_burden\\_disease/2004\\_report\\_update/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/2004_report_update/en/index.html)  
WHO Fact Sheets/WHO information: [www.who.int](http://www.who.int)

### **GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS AND AUSTRALIAN POLICY OPTIONS**

New president of the International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP), Ajay Vashee of Zambia , and former Executive Director of the UN World Food Program and head of the Australian aid program, James Ingram, will be guest speakers at the National Press Club in Canberra on November 11. The special gathering will be hosted by the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists.

Mr Vashee is the first farmer from a developing nation to lead IFAP, the world's peak organisation for farmers. Under his leadership, Mr Vashee said the IFAP priority will be to address the world food crisis and the sustainable production of biofuels. He is also promoting a global approach to climate change to address the negative impacts and potential benefits for farmers worldwide.

Mr Ingram heads the Crawford Fund Food Crisis Task Force, made up of eminent Australians with international experience in agriculture and development. His address will present the key policy options open to the Australian Government to help address both the causes and impacts of the world food crisis.

The Crawford Fund, an initiative of the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, is an NGO that works to raise awareness of the benefits to developing countries and to Australia that accrue from international agricultural research (IAR) and development

The task force report *A food secure world: how Australia can help* will be released and at: [www.crawfordfund.org](http://www.crawfordfund.org); Cathy Reade on 0413 575 934.

**DETAILS:** [http://www.crawfordfund.org/publications/pdf/taskforce\\_pr.pdf](http://www.crawfordfund.org/publications/pdf/taskforce_pr.pdf)

### **ACTION CALL OVER MATERNAL DEATHS**

Urgent action is needed to reduce the number of women dying during pregnancy and childbirth, the World Health Organisation has said, the BBC reported (24/10/08).

Its director of maternal health, Dr Francisco Songanem, said funding needed to be better co-ordinated. And he admitted the 2015 target to reduce maternal deaths by 75% from 1990 levels was likely to be missed. Analysis in 2007 show rates have changed little - latest figures show 500,000 women are dying each year.

The research by Harvard University, shows that between 1990 and 2005 mortality rates fell at less than 1% per year. The study said unsafe abortions, haemorrhaging and problems delivering were the major causes.

Dr Songane, director of the WHO's Partnership for Maternal, Newborn and Child Health, said maternal deaths were still far too common and the 2015 target was "unlikely to be met".

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/7690434.stm>

### **POLIO ON INCREASE AGAIN**

Polio infections are increasing and spreading to new countries, according to case counts recently released by the World Health Organization.

Since April, outbreaks have been found in 10 countries beyond the 4 in which polio is considered endemic — Afghanistan, India, Nigeria and Pakistan. And in those four countries, the number of cases is more than double the number found by this time in 2007.

In Africa, cases have been found as far south as Angola and as far east as Ethiopia. Each detected case implies another 200 cases with few or no symptoms, experts say.

**REPORT:**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/28/health/28glob.html?\\_r=1&ref=world\\_&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/28/health/28glob.html?_r=1&ref=world_&oref=slogin)

### **WFP ASSISTS HURRICANE-AFFECTED COMMUNITIES IN CUBA**

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) is gearing up to assist 1.78 million Cubans affected by hurricanes Gustav and Ike, which pummelled the island in late August and early September. The newly approved emergency operation will support the Cuban Government as it responds to communities needing food assistance in areas that bore the brunt of hurricane damage (28/10/08).

Over the next six months, WFP will provide food rations - comprised of rice, beans, vegetable oil, canned fish and CSB (a blended food compound of maize and soy fortified with vitamins and minerals) – at a cost of US\$5.7 million. As well as providing rations to communities that have been affected by the hurricanes, WFP will supply temporary food storage warehouses and liquid gas stoves to people who lost cooking facilities in the storms. **DETAILS:** <http://www.wfp.org/english/?n=999>.

Fears that the financial crisis will have an immediate impact on the food crisis are beginning to manifest as gains made in the fight against hunger in Latin America have largely evaporated. The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation said that growing food prices have pushed millions back toward starvation in a single year. [The Toronto Star/Reuters](#) (28/10/08).

### **LATIN AMERICA/CARIBBEAN EXPORTS RISE IN FACE OF GLOBAL CRISIS: UN**

Exports from Latin America and the Caribbean are on track to grow at an estimated 23 per cent this year, despite the global financial crisis, according to a report released by the United Nations office for the region (28/10/08).

Higher commodity prices during the first half of the year, particularly in metal and fuel, led to a 25.5 per cent increase in the value of exports, compared to a 10 per cent increase for the same period in 2007.

The "Latin America and the Caribbean in the World Economy" report, released in Mexico City, also noted that the value of imports to the region will rise by an estimated 22 per cent, leading to an expected trade surplus of \$51 billion at the end of 2008.

However, the global economic slowdown and the drop in commodity prices in the third quarter of this year combined with a falling demand for Latin American products, primarily from the United States and to a lesser extent the European Union (EU) and Japan, will lead to lower growth rates and less favourable trade balances in 2009.

The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (**ECLAC**) report stressed that the looming recession and current credit crisis means that states in the region will have to deal with restricted access to external financing, higher interest rates, tumbling stock exchanges and a shift of capital to safer destinations, as well as lower remittances and direct foreign investment in the coming year.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28743&Cr=eclac&Cr1=>

### **UN RUSHING AID TO YEMEN AFTER SEVERE FLOODING DISPLACES 10,000**

The UN has begun providing assistance to Yemenis affected by recent severe flooding, which has killed 180 people and displaced some 10,000 from their homes (28/10/08).

The flooding which followed heavy rains on October 24/25 led the government to declare Hadramout and Al-Mahara governorates in eastern Yemen disaster areas, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which reported that six other areas in the south were also affected.

In addition to those killed and uprooted from their homes, about 2,000 houses have been destroyed and infrastructure, including power lines, roads, water supplies and phone lines, have been seriously damaged.

The international response is being closely coordinated by the Yemeni Government through the governor's office, other UN agencies, and non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Urgent needs include food, tents, blankets, utensils, water pumps, mobile health units and electricity generators.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28736&Cr=Yemen&Cr1=>

### **TAKING THE STING OUT OF INSECT DISEASE**

University of Queensland researchers have made a discovery that could open up a new front in the fight against insect-transmitted diseases, the Queensland University stated(30/10/08).

Insect virologist Dr Karyn Johnson, and her colleagues from UQ's School of Integrative Biology, have found a certain type of bacteria, *Wolbachia*, can actually protect flies from mortality caused by pathogenic viruses.

The study will be published in prestigious scientific journal [Science](#) (31/10/08).

"This is the first time such an interaction has been found," Dr Johnson said. She said the team used *Wolbachia* infected vinegar flies (*Drosophila melanogaster*) and injected them with a virus that is fatal to the insects.

"Usually we would expect a bacterial infection may compromise the fly making it more susceptible to other pathogens, but what we found was *Wolbachia* protected the insects," she said. "This interaction is particularly interesting as *Wolbachia* is very common in insects. If this type of interaction is wide-spread there could be significant implications for the way viruses are maintained in insect populations.

"The potential impact of this research on the transmission of insect-borne disease is exciting." Dr Johnson said the next stage of the research would be to find the mechanism of how the bacteria protects the flies from the virus.

**DETAILS:** Andrew Dunne at UQ Communications on 07 3365 2802/ 0433 364 181.

## F. MEDIA MATTERS

### PACIFIC TV CHANNEL AN ELECTION STUNT: NZ OPPOSITION

New Zealand's opposition National Party says funding the set up of a television channel focused on Pacific island content was risky in the current global financial climate, Radio Australia reported (29/10/08). New Zealand's ruling Labour Party says it plans to set up a free-to-air domestic Pacific Island television channel.

New Zealand Pacific Island Affairs Minister Luamanuvao Winnie Laban told Radio Australia the channel would help strengthen Pacific languages in New Zealand and help the country reach out to the region.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/stories/200810/s2403765.htm?tab=latest>

### THE MONITOR ENDS DAILY PRINT EDITION

After a century of continuous publication, The Christian Science Monitor will abandon its weekday print edition and appear online only, its publisher announced. The cost-cutting measure makes The Monitor the first national newspaper to essentially give up on print, the New York Times reported (28/10/08).

The paper is currently published Monday to Friday, and will move online in April, although it will also introduce a Sunday magazine. John Yemma, the Monitor's editor, said that moving to the web meant it could keep its eight foreign bureaux open while still lowering costs.

The Monitor is a non-profit publication financed by a church and delivered through the mail. With seven Pulitzer Prizes and a reputation for thoughtful writing and strong international coverage, it long maintained an outsize influence in the publishing world. This declined as its circulation slipped to 52,000, from a high of more than 220,000 in 1970. REPORT: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/29/business/media/29paper.html?ei=5070&emc=eta1>

### STOPPING THE PRESSES

After 100 years of publication, *The Christian Science Monitor* will stop the presses next year. For good, writes James Erik Abels in the Forbes magazine (28/10/08).

Editor John Yemma said his Pulitzer-Prize-winning Boston-based newspaper will stop publishing a daily print edition in favour of its website and a to-be-launched weekly news magazine in April, saving \$1.5 million to \$2 million a year. The paper has been considering the move for two years and made its final decision in the last few weeks.

While other print publications have folded in favour of online in recent years, the *Monitor's* change is perhaps the most poignant acknowledgment thus far of the radical transformation in the newspaper business.

James Erik Abels says while hardly a major force in journalism anymore, the *Monitor* is the most well-known and prestigious newspaper in America to bail out of having a print edition and says it may not be alone for long. Yesterday, the [Audit Bureau](#) of Circulations released a disastrous bi-annual readership report. Daily circulation dropped another 4.6% among 507 reporting newspapers to roughly 38.2 million copies, for a period of six months ending on Sept. 30. The circulation drop was less pronounced at just 2.6% for the six months preceding it. Just yesterday, the Tribune Co.'s *Los Angeles Times* announced another 75 editorial cuts in its newsroom. It laid off a group of business employees last week and, in February, laid off some 100 to 150 people, including 40 to 50 in the newsroom.

"I don't know for sure that print is dead, but I don't think it's doing very well," says Mr Yemma. This year, his paper will cost \$25.8 million to operate, but will only bring in roughly \$12.5 million in revenue. That's quite a shortfall for the non-profit *Monitor*, which is also supported by an endowment and parent organisation, the First Church of Christ, Scientist.

The paper was founded in 1908 by Mary Baker Eddy in an attempt to silence the press from excoriating her church by offering a model of even-handed journalism.

REPORT: [http://www.forbes.com/media/2008/10/28/newspapers-christian-science-monitor-biz-media-cx\\_jea\\_1028monitor.html?partner=media\\_newsletter](http://www.forbes.com/media/2008/10/28/newspapers-christian-science-monitor-biz-media-cx_jea_1028monitor.html?partner=media_newsletter)

### **MARKETING GOVERNMENT NOW CORE BUSINESS: STUDY**

The marketing of government has extended well beyond public relations units and government advertising and invaded the core business of policy development and the everyday work of public servants, according to a study released by the ANU-based Democratic Audit of Australia (28/10/08).

Case studies in *Marketing Government*, written by former senior public servant Dr Kathy MacDermott, show how public servants have become part of the "permanent campaign" that has replaced older grass-roots styles of campaigning by political parties.

It is the first systematic analysis of the impact on public servants of being caught up in political marketing and extends previous work by the Democratic Audit on government advertising and the use of public resources for partisan purposes.

"When marketing becomes part of the fabric of public service work, what suffers is the distinction between explaining and marketing government policy; between genuine data and politically tailored data, between legal advice and political direction; between privacy and the suppression of politically inconvenient information; between confidentiality and concealment," Dr MacDermott said.

"The issue of politicisation of the public sector has become an issue of considerable debate in recent year(s). If there is a politicisation iceberg out there, then marketing is its tip, because it is the aspect of the government/public service relationship that is most available to public scrutiny and analysis.

"Given the rapidly increasing amounts of money spent by government on advertising and communication, it is in the interests of the Australian public to know whether taxpayers' dollars are being spent appropriately on public priorities, or whether, as increasingly appears to be the case, taxpayers' funds are being drawn on as a bottomless purse to replace or supplement party political campaigns.

"While there have been some significant organisational and governance changes to government advertising activities since the election of the Rudd Government, there is more that can be done."

DETAILS: *Marketing Government*. <http://democratic.audit.anu.edu.au>; [daa@anu.edu.au](mailto:daa@anu.edu.au); Jane O'Dwyer on 02 6125 5001.

### **GOOGLE SETTLES COPYRIGHT DISPUTE WITH AUTHORS, PUBLISHERS**

Google and book publishers and authors on Tuesday announced a landmark settlement to a copyright dispute that will make millions of books available for purchase online (29/10/08).

Under the terms of agreement, reached after two years of negotiations, the Authors Guild and the Association of American Publishers (AAP) agreed to drop their lawsuits against Google over its Google Book Search program.

The settlement calls for Google to pay 125 million US dollars to establish an independent 'Book Rights Registry,' to resolve outstanding claims by authors and publishers and to cover legal fees from the lawsuits against Google.

Alleging "massive copyright infringement," authors and book publishers filed a barrage of lawsuits against Google three years ago after it launched Google Book Search, a plan with several major US universities to scan and copy millions of books from their libraries and make them searchable on the web. The agreement, which is subject to approval by a US District Court in New York and only applies to holders of US copyrights, provides future revenue to authors and publishers who agree to digitise their books with the Book Rights Registry.

REPORT: <http://news.smh.com.au/technology/google-settles-copyright-dispute-with-authors-publishers-20081029-5ao4.html>

**BANGLADESH:** Local sources have informed the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) that on October 21, Bangladesh journalist Jahangir Alam Akash appeared before a magistrate in Rajshahi division of Bangladesh on two cases of alleged extortion. His request for a deferment of hearings because his senior defence counsel was unavailable was not allowed by the court (28/10/08).

Mr Akash, a reporter with the daily *Sangbad* and CSB Television, was arrested in October at his home in Rajshahi, four hours after a case of extortion was filed against him. It was stated that over four weeks he was held in custody by the fifth unit of the Rapid Action Battalion (RAB V) and the local police during which time he allegedly was tortured. Since his release on bail, he has reportedly faced continued harassment.

The IFJ has learnt from local media organisations that almost all the charges against Mr Akash have been brought by individuals who were the subject of his reports about corruption. It was also reported that he had reported on extrajudicial killings and other human rights abuses. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**SRI LANKA:** Widespread and frequent verbal and physical attacks against journalists and press freedom defenders have alarmed the IFJ (24/10/08).

According to the Free Media Movement (FMM), journalists in the troubled Eastern Province and those raising voices not favourable to either party in the violent confrontations between the Sri Lankan Government and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) were in grave danger. A series of letters was reported received by human rights defenders and lawyers associated with the current trial of senior Tamil journalist J.S. Tissainayagam, the first journalist to be charged under anti-terrorism laws for his published work. The letters, from an unknown group, threatened they could be summarily killed or suffer life-threatening injuries, the FMM reported. The incidents followed previous threats to journalists, an assassination attempt and a state-controlled *Dinamina* daily accusation that ten journalists worked for the Tamil Tigers and allegedly reported distorted interpretations of the crisis. [DETAILS:](#) IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919

**CHINA:** According to journalists who contacted the IFJ, propaganda officials in Guangdong province and the central government in Beijing tried to restrict reporting on factories being shut down in the Pearl River Delta Region, a manufacturing zone in the province, after reports appeared in newspapers (28/10/08). The affected factories include those owned by Hong Kong-based Smart Union Group (Holdings) Limited, a toy manufacturer which reportedly filed for liquidation in October causing the loss of thousands of jobs in Guangdong. Since the order from Guangdong and central government propaganda officials, newspapers have reportedly been instructed to reduce reporting on the factory shutdowns and refrain from negative commentary about the crisis.

The IFJ has applauded the news that Chinese citizen journalist and blogger Hu Jia has been awarded the European Parliament's 2008 Sakharov Prize for Freedom of Thought, and called on China to release him from prison immediately (24/10/08).

The European Parliament was reported to have described Mr Hu Jia as "a leading symbol of China's human rights problems. He represents all the other Chinese and Tibetan citizens who are repressed: lawyers, journalists, petitioners, human rights activists, writers and cyber-dissidents." However, China's Foreign Ministry spokesman condemned the European Parliament's choice and was quoted in *the London Guardian* as saying "to issue an award to such a criminal is interference in China's judicial sovereignty and totally against the initial purpose of this prize".

Mr Hu was sentenced on April 3, 2008 to three and a half years' jail and one year's denial of political rights on charges of "inciting subversion of state power" for articles and interviews critical of China's Government's record on human rights. A long-time activist on behalf of HIV/AIDS sufferers in China, he has been a persistent critic of government policies.

Mr Hu's wife, blogger Zeng Jinyan, told the IFJ that she has been prevented from visiting or communicating regularly with him in prison.

In September the IFJ wrote to prison authorities to protest over reports that Mr Hu Jia was punished by prison officers after complaining about inhumane treatment of inmates. He suffers from chronic illness and grave concerns are held for his health in prison.

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

**NEPAL:** According to the Federation of Nepali Journalists (FNJ), Ram Mani Upadhyaya, the editor of fortnightly newspaper *Basudha*, suffered serious injuries from an attack by an unidentified group in Danusha on October 24 (27/10/08). In a similar incident, journalist Kamal Sah and computer operator Jaya Kuma Chaudhari from the *Terai Times* were attacked by an unidentified group who stormed the newspaper office on October 20. The IFJ has joined the FNJ in calling on the Nepal police to immediately search for the perpetrators of this violence to send a clear message, particularly to the troubled Terai region, that this kind of erratic and abusive behaviour will not be tolerated. [DETAILS](#): IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

**PHILIPPINES:** Broadcaster Jun Digamon has been cleared of libel charges after a seven year legal battle against a former local TV celebrity (27/10/08). According to the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines (NUJ P), a Regional Trial Court Branch 17 judge found last week that there was no evidence of libel in Mr Digamon's reporting and commentary.

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

## G. OTHER NEWS

### UN OFFICIALS STRESS NEED TO PROTECT POOREST AMID FINANCIAL CRISIS

The poorest of the world's poor deserve immediate support to help them endure the global financial crisis, Mr Ban and other top UN officials said, warning that recent hard-won progress on poverty could be lost unless concerted action is taken (24/10/08).

At a meeting of the Chief Executives Board (CEB), which brings together the heads of various UN agencies and entities, including the **World Bank** and the International Monetary Fund (**IMF**), the officials said all countries must take greater steps to ensure that the most vulnerable are not left behind.

The crisis we are seeing today will impact all countries, developed and developing, but its most serious repercussions will be felt most by those who are least responsible – the poor in developing countries," the officials said in a **joint statement** issued in New York after a special CEB session devoted to the impact of the crisis on the UN's work.

"Immediate action is needed to protect people, jobs, shelter and livelihoods," they said, stressing that the grave nature of the financial crisis should not deflect the attention of leaders and policymakers from dealing with other challenges, such as climate change and the anti-poverty targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**).

"As we look to the next seven years of the implementation of the MDGs to 2015, we must ensure that hard-won gains by countries are not reversed and must act to avert the risk of millions in poor countries sliding back into extreme poverty."

Mr Ban and other UN officials called on all States, given the recent financial crisis, to reaffirm their commitments and pledges to grant official development assistance (ODA) to needy countries.

"In the face of the current crisis, ODA has become even more centrally important to the poor developing countries that are faced with financial constraints, declining liquidity and seriously worsening balance of payments positions."

The meeting stressed the importance of a successful conclusion to the so-called Doha round of trade liberalisation talks, which have stalled, and urged countries to resist the impulses of protectionism.

On November 15 world leaders – including Mr Ban – will gather in Washington for a summit to devise ways to respond to the crisis, and today's statement noted that "we reaffirm the need for meaningful, comprehensive and well coordinated reform of the international financial system."

During the meeting, Mr. Ban **told** participants that "drastic measures" will be needed to resolve the financial crisis, possibly including the IMF and the world's major central banks setting up substantial standby lines of credit so that banks in poor countries have adequate funds to draw on in an emergency.

"We can be effective only if we act together, with one voice and a common purpose," he added.

Last night, while accepting the UNA-NY Humanitarians of the Year Award, Mr. Ban said the laurel was "especially meaningful at such a critical time," and added that efforts to combat climate change must not stop because of the current financial turmoil.

"That would be a double blow," he said. "We would be failing to address one of the defining issues of our times. And we would miss out on the enormous benefits that we stand to gain in making the transition to a less carbon-intensive economy."

### **IMF SHOULD HELP CRISIS-HURT COUNTRIES: ASEM**

Leaders from across Asia and Europe have called on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to play a critical role in helping countries seriously affected by the global financial crisis. The heads of the 43 nations are meeting in Beijing, where Asian and European leaders have pledged to shakeup the global financial system, the ABC reported (26/10/08).

In a statement, the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) leaders said they would undertake effective and comprehensive reform of the international monetary and financial systems. They called on the international Monetary Fund to play a critical role in helping countries in financial difficulties.

The two-day meeting is not likely to issue concrete reform proposals, but it will lay some of the groundwork for a summit of world leaders which will meet to discuss the financial crisis in Washington next month.

French president Nicolas Sarkozy, whose country currently holds the rotating presidency of the European Union, says Asian countries will plan an important part in Washington.

"Everyone knows that at the forthcoming summit in Washington China, India, South Korea and Indonesia will all play a key role," he said. "Europe wants with them, and with Japan, to try to define a common position on measures needed to end this unprecedented and serious financial crisis."

European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso says the international community has to remain united in its approach to the global economic downturn.

"We are in a moment where we need global teamwork," he said. "As I said two days ago, we swim together or we sink together."

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/25/2401258.htm>

### **ASIAN, EUROPEAN LEADERS CLOSE RANKS ON CREDIT CRISIS**

Call for reform: China's Wen Jiabao (l), France's Nicolas Sarkozy (c) and EU Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso (AFP: Eric Feferberg), the ABC reported (26/10/08).

Leaders from Asia and Europe have ended a summit in Beijing with a call for thorough reforms in the global financial system.

The 43 nations also stressed that the International Monetary Fund should play a greater role in helping countries seriously affected by the global financial downturn.

"We must use every means to prevent the financial crisis impacting growth of the real economy," Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said at the end of the two-day meeting in Beijing.

"First of all the biggest responsibility is to stabilise the financial order as soon as possible so we can control and prevent financial risks from spreading," he said

"Secondly, we must try all we can to mitigate the effect of the financial crisis on the real economy."

But with evidence mounting that Europe is already in recession, analysts fear that cooperation in shoring up banking systems could be threatened as governments begin to turn their attention to reviving domestic demand.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2008/10/26/2401304.htm>

### **WEST IS IN TALKS ON CREDIT TO AID POORER NATIONS**

With the [financial crisis](#) engulfing developing countries from Latin America to Central Europe, raising the spectre of market panic and even social unrest, Western officials are weighing coordinated action to try to stabilise these economies, the New York Times reported (23/10/08).

The [International Monetary Fund](#), which is in negotiations with several countries to provide emergency loans, is also working to arrange a huge credit line that would allow other countries desperate for foreign capital to borrow dollars, according to several officials.

The list of countries under threat is growing by the day, and now includes such emerging-market stalwarts as Brazil, South Africa and Turkey. They have become collateral damage in a crisis that began in the American subprime housing market.

Details of the arrangement are still being worked out, but it could be supported by Japan and several oil-producing countries, a fund official said. The fund has not yet approached the [Federal Reserve](#), according to officials, although the Treasury Department has expressed interest. REPORT:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/business/worldbusiness/24emerge.html?\\_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/24/business/worldbusiness/24emerge.html?_r=1&th&emc=th&oref=slogin)

### **'FED' CUTS KEY INTEREST RATE BY A HALF-POINT TO ONE PER CENT**

The US Federal Reserve's policy-setting committee reduced its benchmark overnight interest rate, the Federal Funds target rate, by one-half point, to one per cent, the New York Times reported (30/10/08).

The 'Fed' said the move was intended to address a marked slowing in economic activity in the United States and abroad, and said it expected inflation pressures to ease. REPORT:

[http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/30/business/economy/30fed.html?\\_r=1&hp&oref=slogin](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/30/business/economy/30fed.html?_r=1&hp&oref=slogin)

### **EXECUTION OF BALI BOMBERS MENTION**

Indonesia's Attorney General said the three Bali bombers would be executed in early November, Radio Australia reported (29/10/08).

According to the office of Indonesia's attorney general, after midnight on Friday, when Saturday begins, was the earliest time that Amrozi, Mukhlas and Imam Samudra could meet with firing squads on their prison island of Nusakambangan.

### **PACIFIC SUMMIT IN JAPAN**

A summit between Japan and member states of the Pacific Islands Forum will be held in May next year in Hokkaido, Japan, Radio Australia (28/10/08).

Jointly chaired by Japan and Niue, it will include discussions on regional matters related to the Pacific area as well as climate change and other environmental issues.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/>

### **AUSTRALIA-EUROPEAN UNION PARTNERSHIP FRAMEWORK LAUNCHED**

Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith met with French counterpart Bernard Kouchner, in Paris and launched the attached Australia-European Union (EU) Partnership Framework in Paris. The launch was the centrepiece of the regular Australia-EU Presidency Consultations. France currently holds the EU's rotating Presidency.

The Australia-EU Partnership Framework is a major initiative under the third pillar of the government's foreign policy which commits Australia to working with like-minded countries, using creative middle-power diplomacy, to strengthen international institutions and address global challenges.

**REPORT:** [http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s163\\_08.html](http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2008/fa-s163_08.html)

**FRAMEWORK:** [Australia-European Union Partnership Framework](#)

**DETAILS:** Foreign Minister's office on 02 6277 7500; department on 02 6261 1555.

### **WHISTLEBLOWER PROTECTIONS HEARING FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS**

The House of Representatives Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee were due to hear from a broad range of witnesses in Sydney and Brisbane as part of its inquiry into whistleblower protections within the Australian Government public sector (27/28/10/08). The aim of the inquiry is to consider and report on a preferred model for legislation to protect public interest disclosures (whistleblowing) within the Commonwealth public service.

The Committee Chairman Mark Dreyfus QC said, "It is important that the committee hears a variety of perspectives on the best means to protect the interests of those who speak out about wrongdoing in the workplace. These hearings will enable the committee to listen to academics, public integrity bodies, media organisations, unions and whistleblowers themselves.

"The integrity of our public institutions can be strengthened by a culture of disclosure that supports people who come forward when they know of improper practices around them. A responsible and comprehensive legislative approach has a fundamental role in underpinning such a culture," Mr Dreyfus said.

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

### **PASIFIKA AUSTRALIA FORUM**

The Pasifika Australia Forum was organised at the ANU for October 30 to showcase achievement in Pacific Islander communities in Australia, while at the same time facilitating discussion about issues such as racism.

A panel of prominent Pacific Islanders were to speak about their own experiences as Pacific Islander Australians, and the difficulties and opportunities they believe Pacific Islander communities encounter in contemporary Australia.

**DETAILS:** [http://asianstudies.anu.edu.au/pasifika\\_Australia](http://asianstudies.anu.edu.au/pasifika_Australia); [Katerina Teaiwa](#) on 6125 4323, [Liz Comrie-Thomson](#) on 6125 2271.

## **H. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

### **WORLD FACES NATURAL RESOURCES CRISIS WORSE THAN FINANCIAL CRUNCH**

The world is heading for an "ecological credit crunch" far worse than the current financial crisis because humans are over-using the natural resources of the planet, an international study warns, the London Guardian reports (29/10/08). Juliette Jowit writes that the Living Planet report calculates that humans are using 30 per cent more resources than the Earth can replenish each year, which is leading to deforestation, degraded soils, polluted air and water, and dramatic declines in numbers of fish and other species. As a result, we are running up an ecological debt of \$4tr (£2.5tr) to \$4.5tr every year - double the estimated losses made by the world's financial institutions as a result of the credit crisis - say the report's authors, led by the conservation group WWF, formerly the World Wildlife Fund. The figure is based on a UN report which calculated the economic value of services provided by ecosystems destroyed annually, such as diminished rainfall for crops or reduced flood protection.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2008/oct/29/climatechange-endangeredhabitats>

### **LICENCE TO FLEECE**

After working in Australia for two months, Ramesh Kumar returned to India a skint, disillusioned man. Speaking through an interpreter, Kumar says he was employed by a fellow

countryman who owns an Indian cafe in Sydney, The Australian reported (27/10/08). Mr Kumar, a sweet-maker and chef from a small town in the Punjab, says he was told beforehand he would be employed for five years, working eight hours a day six days a week. He came to Australia on a 457 temporary business visa obtained by his employer. But after the employer picked him up from the airport and took him to his new workplace, on March 4, 2006, Kumar says: "He forced me to work 15 hours in a day, and also he did not allow me to rest on Sunday." He alleges he was paid nothing ... His employer denies it but says he is too busy to provide documents such as copies of pay slips or tax records because he is opening another restaurant. He says he had also spent money bringing Kumar to Australia and providing him with lodgings.

ARTICLE: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0..24554565-28737.00.html>

### **NOT ONE SHRED OF EVIDENCE**

Federal police knew they had nothing to link Mohammed Haneef to terrorism, but pressed on regardless, writes David Marr in the Sydney Morning Herald (25/10/08). Even before charging him last year, the Australian Federal Police knew Mohammed Haneef's old SIM card was not used by a terrorist cell. In the public's mind, that card was the one sexy piece of evidence somehow linking the Gold Coast doctor to botched attempts by his cousin Kafeel Ahmed to blow up a London nightclub and Glasgow airport. The police have now admitted they knew the card was never used and never there. But it grounded the charge.

REPORT <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/24/1224351544028.html>

### **THE SEVEN YEAR STITCH**

Trying to deal with Afghanistan in isolation from its region is as futile as trying to win lasting peace through killing, writes Paul McGeough in the Sydney Morning Herald (24/10/08). These years have been so wasted. The depth of the crisis gripping Afghanistan almost a decade after its supposed liberation is a frightening measure of hubris in the capitals of the world. Reports stacked high on decision-makers' desks from Washington to London, from Brussels to Canberra, reveal the steady march of the Taliban and the other insurgency groups that now have Afghanistan by the throat. But it is only as they embark on the eighth year of conflict that political and military leaders are belatedly searching for an adequate response. Groping in a policy vacuum, it's almost as though anything is worth a try - peace talks with the Taliban and the other insurgent movements; more foreign troops for an Iraq-style "surge"; even a return to the warlordism of Afghanistan's sorry past. And for all that, in the eyes of some of the recognised experts on the region, Washington still does not get the enormity of the challenge in Afghanistan and the region.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/24/1224351544148.html>

### **MAYOR OF MOSCOW EXPORTS RUSSIA'S NEW NATIONALISM**

On a clearing in this disputed city, where enemy homes were bulldozed after the conflict in August, Mayor [Yuri M. Luzhkov](#) promised this month to build a new neighbourhood for the South Ossetian separatists here, the New York Times reported (26/10/08). Grinning widely before a boisterous crowd, which hailed him as a liberator, Mayor Luzhkov said he would spend more than \$100 million on houses, schools and shopping centers. "We are celebrating a great victory — a victory for freedom and independence," he declared. The pledge was notable for its cost — a sizable sum in this impoverished breakaway enclave of 70,000 — but also because Mr Luzhkov is the mayor of Moscow, not Tskhinvali. The money is to come from Moscow's city budget. Yuri M. Luzhkov, 72, is a mayor with a foreign policy. A former Soviet apparatchik who yearns to restore [Russia's](#) regional hegemony, he has supported ethnic Russians and stoked separatism in nations along the country's borders. He has championed a new Russian nationalism that the Kremlin effectively backed with force when it wrested [South Ossetia](#) from neighbouring Georgia this summer.

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/26/world/europe/26mayor.html?th&emc=th>

### **BITTER HARVEST: PEACE HOPES WITHER IN ORCHARDS OF VIOLENCE**

At around 10am last Saturday, Abed Hashalmoun, 45, a Palestinian news photographer who lives in the West Bank city of Hebron, followed a group of Israeli and international peace activists on an exercise to help local Palestinian farmers harvest their annual olive crop, Jason Koutsoukis reported in THE Sydney Morning Herald (25/10/08). He was accompanied by his brother Nayef, 55, a photographer for the Reuters news agency, and several other

Palestinian journalists and television news crews. The harvest was taking place in an olive grove near Tel Rumeida, a suburb of Hebron that is under the strict control of the Israel Defence Forces and has become notorious for housing some of the most extreme Israeli settlers in the West Bank. According to Nayef Hashalmoun, the harvest had begun peacefully. ... As the media separated among the olive trees to follow different groups of farmers, Nayef Hashalmoun says four Israeli settlers aged in their early 20s approached from Tel Rumeida. "They followed my brother [Abed] who was a little way away from us, on his own, and where there were no other journalists." Abed Hashalmoun says he was unaware the settlers were approaching him, and was simply photographing harvesters at work when he was struck on the head from behind.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/24/1224351544130.html>

### **FIGHTING FOR MUSLIM WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

Some of the world's leading Islamic feminists have been gathered in Barcelona for the third International Congress on Islamic Feminism, to discuss the issues women face in the Muslim world, the BBC reported (27/10/08). Some of the women taking part in the conference explained the problems in their home countries, and where they hoped to make progress. They included Asma Barlas, author, Pakistan; Rafiah-Talet, journalist, Oman, Norani Othman, scholar-activist, Malaysia; Siti Musdah Mulia, academic, Indonesia; Amina Wadud, academic, US; Fatima Khafaji, consultant, Egypt.

ARTICLE: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in\\_depth/7689897.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/in_depth/7689897.stm)

### **WOMEN, NOT MEN, WILL SAVE THE WORLD.**

First lady Laura Bush didn't say those precise words, but her remarks to a small gathering of biographers, historians and journalists implied as much, writes Kathleen Parker in the Washington Post (28/10/08). If she's right, America's first lady will have played a significant role in that evolution. Women's gains around the world, in places like Kabul and Riyadh, are occurring in no small part because of Laura Bush's quietly feminist manoeuvring as wife of the US president ... Mrs Bush said she intends to continue helping women and children through her education and health initiatives. She also hopes to include women's leadership training as part of her husband's planned Freedom Institute at Southern Methodist University. Fittingly, The Washington Post's front page Monday featured a story about [Rwandan women running the show](#) where once they were victims of systematic rape during that country's 1994 genocide. Last month, the Rwandan parliament became the first in the world with a female majority (56 per cent), and women hold a third of all Cabinet positions, including Supreme Court chief and police commissioner general. Inside the paper, Editorial Page Editor [Fred Hiatt wrote about Burma](#), where Mrs Bush has played a leading role in pushing for release of democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi ... Hiatt criticised a new International Crisis Group report that urges the West's cooperation with the human rights-abusing Burmese government. The same report also denounces Laura Bush's "megaphone diplomacy." About that megaphone. Could we possibly get the lady an amplifier?

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/10/28/AR2008102802956.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

## **I. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **LIVING PLANET ANALYSIS SHOWS LOOMING ECOLOGICAL CREDIT CRUNCH**

The world is heading for an ecological credit crunch as human demands on the world's natural capital reach nearly a third more than earth can sustain.

That is the stark warning contained in the latest edition of the World Wildlife Foundation's *Living Planet Report*, a leading statement of the planet's health. In addition global natural wealth and diversity continues to decline, and more and more countries are slipping into a state of permanent or seasonal water stress (29/10/08).

"The world is currently struggling with the consequences of over-valuing its financial assets," said WWF International Director-General James Leape, "but a more fundamental crisis looms ahead -- an ecological credit crunch caused by under-valuing the environmental assets that are the basis of all life and prosperity."

The report, produced with the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Global Footprint Network (GFN), shows more than three quarters of the world's people now living in nations that are ecological debtors, where national consumption has outstripped their country's biological capacity.

"Most of us are propping up our current lifestyles, and our economic growth, by drawing - and increasingly overdrawing - on the ecological capital of other parts of the world," Mr Leape said.

"If our demands on the planet continue to increase at the same rate, by the mid-2030s we would need the equivalent of two planets to maintain our lifestyles."

The report, published every two years, has since 1998 become widely accepted as a statement of earth's ability to remain a "living planet". In 2008, it adds for the first time new measures of global, national and individual water footprint to existing measures of the Ecological Footprint of human demand on natural resources and the Living Planet Index, a measure of the state of nature.

The Living Planet Index, compiled by ZSL, shows a nearly 30 per cent decline since 1970 in nearly 5000 measured populations of 1,686 species. These dramatic losses in our natural wealth are being driven by deforestation and land conversion in the tropics (50% decline in Tropical LPI) and the impact of dams, diversions and climate change on freshwater species (35% decline). Pollution, over-fishing and destructive fishing in marine and coastal environments is also taking a considerable toll.

"We are acting ecologically in the same way as financial institutions have been behaving economically - seeking immediate gratification without due regard for the consequences," said ZSL co-editor Jonathan Loh. "The consequences of a global ecological crisis are even graver than the current economic meltdown."

The Living Planet Report is WWF's periodic update on the state of the world's ecosystems. It describes the changing state of global biodiversity and the pressure on the biosphere arising from human consumption of natural resources.

It is built around two indicators: the **Living Planet Index**, which reflects the health of the planet's ecosystems; and the **Ecological Footprint**, which shows the extent of human demand on these ecosystems. These measures are tracked over several decades to reveal past trends, then three scenarios explore what might lie ahead.

The scenarios show how choices might lead to a sustainable society living in harmony with robust ecosystems, or to the collapse of these same ecosystems, resulting in a permanent loss of biodiversity and erosion of the planet's ability to support people.

**REPORT:** The 2008 Living Planet Report can be downloaded from [www.panda.org/lpr/08](http://www.panda.org/lpr/08);

[Living Planet Report 2008 - Full report](#) [pdf, 4.35 MB].

[Living Planet Report 2008 Executive Summary](#) [doc, 67 KB]

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### **ECO BIGFOOT NO MYTH - JUST LOOK IN THE MIRROR**

Australia's ecological footprint has just gone up a few shoe sizes. It is now the fifth-largest in the world, and expanding fast, an international report has found, the Sydney Morning Herald (30/10/08).

It takes an average of about 7.8 hectares of land to sustain the lifestyle of each Australian - significantly more than citizens of Britain, Canada or France - up from about 6.7 hectares in 2006.

The *Living Planet* report, produced by WWF, ranks nations by the level of their impact on the environment, and found that more than three-quarters of the world's population take more from the planet than they put back. The average citizen of the globe requires just under three hectares to keep consuming at the current rate.

Along with agriculture, Australia's soaring greenhouse gas emissions, largely fuelled by burning coal to generate electricity, contribute most to the nation's comparatively poor performance.

In sustainability terms, Australia ranks ahead of only the United Arab Emirates, the US, Kuwait and Denmark, and behind 146 other nations.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2008/10/29/1224956136429.html>

### **STRUGGLE IN PACIFIC TO DELIVER WATER SERVICES**

Aid agencies in the Pacific are struggling to deliver adequate sanitation and water programs to isolated communities in the region, Radio Australia reported (28/10/08).

One in three people living in rural and remote communities do not have access to water hygiene and sanitation facilities.

Pauline Komolong, a water engineer working for Oxfam in Papua New Guinea and the autonomous Bougainville province told the Sanitation and Water conference in Melbourne, the aid agency is struggling to meet the challenge of delivering services to remote communities. REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralia.net.au/news/>

### **DEAFENING SILENCE GREETES SYRIAN DROUGHT APPEAL**

The United Nations says not a single country has responded to an appeal it made two weeks ago for urgent help for Syria, which is facing its worst drought in 40 years, the ABC reported (26/10/08).

The UN says it needs \$20 million to assist the one million Syrians it says are at risk. Malnutrition is increasing and more than 100,000 people have lost at least half their livestock.

### **UN/RED CRESCENT AND RED CROSS IN RELIEF EFFORT AFTER PAKISTAN QUAKE**

United Nations agencies are taking part in emergency relief efforts in south-west Pakistan, where a powerful earthquake struck early this morning, killing and injuring hundreds of people and leaving many more homeless (29/10/08).

The quake registered 6.4 on the Richter scale – its epicentre was located in a mountainous area northeast of Quetta, the provincial capital of Baluchistan – when it struck shortly after 4 a.m. local time. Aftershocks have also been reported.

Scores of people remain trapped under the rubble of their collapsed homes, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**), which said UN agencies are now working closely with national authorities and other aid groups to bring relief. Survivors' immediate needs include food, shelter, emergency medical care and safe drinking water. Rescue efforts have been complicated by many landslides that followed the quake.

The World Health Organisation (**WHO**) is sending emergency health and trauma kits to Quetta, and staff from the agency are part of a UN assessment mission to Ziarat and Pishin districts, which are among the hardest-hit areas.

The UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) is working with authorities in Pakistan to coordinate relief efforts and is also preparing to mobilise contingency stocks. A spokesperson for Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a **statement** in which the UN chief voiced deep sadness and offered his condolences to the families of the quake victims.

Two ICRC teams have reached the affected area and are on the spot assessing the situation and needs. They say aftershocks are continuing and that frightened residents are staying outdoors in the cold.

The Pakistan Red Crescent Society (PRCS) has sent two teams to the earthquake-hit region to distribute relief supplies for 100 families. The team includes 28 staff and volunteers, as well as two mobile health teams. The ICRC intends to send medical kits to the region. A surgical and medical team will fly from Peshawar early on Thursday.

The ICRC is working closely with the PRCS and stands ready to increase its humanitarian response to those in need. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies is also sending a support team to the region, including a disaster management expert, a health specialist and an information officer.

**DETAILS:** Sydney Support Office to the Regional Delegation for the Pacific on 61 2) 9388 9039/mobile 61 2 418 485 120.

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) is providing food assistance to nearly 20,000 people who lost homes and belongings in the earthquake that struck parts of Balochistan province on Wednesday.

“We need to move fast, so we are going to start distributing food stocks from our warehouses in Quetta and Peshawar, so we can reach the people who need it most,” said WFP Pakistan Country Director, Wolfgang Herbinger, adding that WFP would be coordinating its response with the government and other UN agencies.

WFP plans to initially provide 700 tons of dry food rations to affected communities. The package includes wheat flour, pulses, edible oil and salt for two months.

An earthquake of 6.4 magnitude hit Balochistan province in south-western Pakistan leaving more than 170 dead and many hundreds injured. According to the meteorological office, the epicentre of the quake was in Chiltan mountains, some 80 kilometres northwest of Quetta.

#### **EXPERTS: WE NEED TO BUILD BACK BETTER**

The need to “build back better” and a focus on disaster risk reduction should be key elements of the post-Cyclone Nargis recovery process in Myanmar (Burma), participants at a UN-backed meeting in Bangkok agreed (28/10/08).

Some 2.4 million people were affected by the cyclone, which battered the country in early May, leaving around 140,000 dead or missing and displacing 800,000 from their homes.

The two-day meeting brought together Myanmar’s partners and disaster response experts, and drew from previous natural disasters, such as the 2004 Asian tsunami, the 2005 Pakistan earthquake and Cyclone Sidr, which struck Bangladesh in 2007.

Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which organised the meeting along with the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), said that the experience of the Asia-Pacific region would undoubtedly contribute to the formulation of recovery strategies for Myanmar and other future natural disasters.

While an effective early warning mechanism is one critical part of any sound disaster management approach, she emphasised that early action was also needed to turn early warning into real disaster preparedness.

She said the outcomes of the meeting would feed into the Post-Nargis Recovery and Preparedness Plan (PONREPP), the ongoing review conducted by the Tripartite Core Group (TCG) – consisting of the UN, ASEAN and the Government of Myanmar – as well as the ASEAN-UN Summit to be held in Thailand in mid-December. **REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28741&Cr=myanmar&Cr1=cyclone>

## **REEF SHOWS PESTICIDE AND HERBICIDE RESIDUES**

Queensland Premier Anna Bligh said the scientific evidence showed the presence of pesticide residues, especially herbicides, was widespread in water bodies of the Great Barrier Reef, including streams, wetlands, estuaries, coastal and reef waters (29/10/08).

"Pollutants are killing the reef," she said. "They are largely the result of sugar cane cultivation and cropping and while some farmers have made a concerted issue to address the issue voluntarily it is simply not enough.

"That is why we have announced \$50 million over five years to support regulation to prevent agricultural water pollution in Great Barrier Reef catchments.

Ms Bligh said her Government recognised that if nothing was done the Great Barrier Reef would be dead in thirty or forty years. "We know regulation won't be a popular decision with everyone," she said. "However good government requires action and tough decisions."

**DETAILS:** Queensland Premier's Office on 07 3224 4500.

A Reef Water Quality Summit, at Parliament House, Brisbane, this week had prompted a damning report on the health of the reef released earlier this month.

According to the report, 6.6 million tonnes of sediment had been discharged into the reef in 2007 - four times higher than estimated pre-European settlement levels. The Federal Government has set a target of reducing nutrient and chemical discharge from land to the reef by 25 per cent by 2010. The Brisbane summit brought together farmers, environmentalists, scientists and government officials.

## **UPSTREAM MURRAY-DARLING WATER TRADING RULE RELAXED**

The Murray-Darling Basin Commission announced this week that relaxation of the trading rule controlling the transfer of water allocations from upstream of the Barmah Choke downstream to other stretches of the Murray River would be relaxed until the end of February 2009.

Chief Executive Dr Wendy Craik said the 2008/09 water season has been dry with low allocations. At the end of September 2008, minimal net trades through the Barmah Choke show that there was virtually no risk of exceeding the channel capacity of the river.

"While there may be an increase in trade activity through the Barmah Choke, the outlook for the Murray system remains very serious and water use is likely to be well below the long term average, similar to the last two years," Dr Craik said.

**REPORT:** [http://www.mdbc.gov.au/\\_data/page/29/MR-Extension\\_of\\_water\\_trade\\_relaxation-Barmah\\_Choke-Oct08.pdf](http://www.mdbc.gov.au/_data/page/29/MR-Extension_of_water_trade_relaxation-Barmah_Choke-Oct08.pdf)

## **NFF FRESH APPROACH TO DROUGHT RELIEF WELCOMED**

The contribution of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF) contribution to the current debate over the future of drought relief was welcomed by ANU researchers on drought policy, Dr Linda Botterill and Professor Bruce Chapman (29/10/08).

The farm body called for an overhaul of Australia's drought policy, seeking that the government refocus support through policy instruments, such as income contingent loans.

The NFF made recommendations in a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry into government drought support. A draft report by the commission is expected shortly.

Dr Botterill, from the Research School of Social Sciences, and Professor Chapman, from the Crawford School of Economics and Government, welcomed the inclusion of income contingent loans in the NFF proposal.

"Our detailed research into the use of income contingent loans for drought indicates that such a scheme would be a major improvement on the current exceptional circumstances program," Dr Botterill said.

Professor Chapman said there would be two major benefits of such an approach. "First, farmers would be protected because in periods of hardship, there would be deferrals of loan obligations," he said. "Second, it would take some of the burden off average taxpayers who have in the past financed the entire drought relief package."

**DETAILS:** ANU Media Office: 02 6125 6125.

### **RESEARCHERS CHANGE FOCUS ON THREATENED SPECIES**

Queensland University-led research is suggesting new ways to protect threatened species. Professor Hugh Possingham, director of UQ's Ecology Centre, and colleagues from the French National Institute of Agriculture (INRA) and the University of Melbourne, used mathematical modelling and artificial intelligence methods to help make better decisions about managing cryptic threatened species, Queensland University said (29/10/08).

Their work will help threatened species managers to decide when they should stop managing species they haven't seen for a long time, and switch to looking – and then when to stop looking and give up.

His group reached the conclusion that assuming the species was still around, even though it had not been seen for some time, was the most cost-effective strategy.

Colleague Eve McDonald-Madden said a number of factors influenced just how long conservationists should wait before starting to search for a species, including the value of the species, how easy it is to find the species and of the chance it goes extinct.

French researcher Dr Iadine Chades, from INRA, said conservationists should devote more time to actively protecting unobserved threatened species rather than investing precious time and money in looking for them.

### **IVORY AUCTION – PROTECTION VERSUS POACHING?**

African nations Namibia, Botswana, South Africa and Zimbabwe are hosting the first officially sanctioned ivory sale in more than a decade. Proceeds from the controversial auction, which will offer more than 100 tons of ivory, will benefit elephant preservation groups, though some critics say that the sales will only encourage poachers. [BBC](#) (28/10/08).

### **PACIFIC RIM COUNTRIES STAGE UN-INITIATED TSUNAMI WARNING DRILL**

The staged tsunami drill, 'Exercise Pacific Wave 08,' will involve two days of testing the Pacific Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (PTWS) – a UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**) established network to promote the exchange of seismic and sea level data for rapid tsunami detection (28/10/08).

With the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami disaster providing a stark reminder of the need for preparedness, this tsunami test will be the second of such exercises, the first conducted in May 2006.

Member states will be required to make decisions and take preliminary steps short of alerting the public, thus testing current warning systems and helping to identify operational strengths and weaknesses in each country.

Participants in the tsunami drill include Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, El Salvador, France (French Polynesia and New Caledonia), Nicaragua, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand, Niue, Peru, Russian Federation, Samoa, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Thailand, the United States, the island of Yap and the Federation of Micronesia.

Following the 2004 tsunami, UNESCO's Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) helped countries of the Indian Ocean rim set up their own Tsunami Early Warning System (IOTWS), which was also followed by the creation of similar networks in the Caribbean, and the Mediterranean and Northeast Atlantic Ocean and connected seas.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=28742&Cr=tsunami&Cr1=>

### **RICE FOR OIL BARTER FOCUS**

Thailand and Iran have forged an agreement to barter rice for oil, an example of a new international trade agreement signifying the impact of the food and energy crises. Government-to-government bartering has not been seen for decades. [Financial Times](#) (27/10/08).

#### **NUCLEAR THEFTS LEVELS 'DISTURBING', SAYS EL BARADEI**

More than 250 incidents of nuclear material being stolen across the globe during the last year indicates a theft level that is "disturbingly high" and increases the chances terrorist organizations might obtain material, International Atomic Energy Agency chief Mohamed El Baradei said Monday, reported [The New York Times](#) (28/10/08).

#### **NGO APPOINTMENT TO ICAN**

Associate Professor Tilman Ruff has been appointed NGO adviser to Gareth Evans as co-chairperson of the International Commission for Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament.

This appointment is seen as a reflection of the influence and respect that ICAN has gained, and is the first step in involving NGO voices in the commission's work. Two further international NGO advisers are expected to be announced soon.

#### **BAN CHAMPIONS NUCLEAR WEAPONS CONVENTION**

A model Nuclear Weapons Convention championed by UN Secretary General UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon was outlined this week. His five key steps to disarmament include:

"I urge all NPT parties, in particular the nuclear-weapon-states, to fulfil their obligation under the treaty to undertake negotiations on effective measures leading to nuclear disarmament. They could pursue this goal by agreement on a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments. Or they could consider negotiating a nuclear-weapons convention, backed by a strong system of verification, as has long been proposed [at the UN] ... I have circulated to all UN member states a draft of such a convention, which offers a good point of departure."

The draft convention, *Securing our Survival*, was produced by ICAN in collaboration with disarmament experts and NGOs throughout the world.

REPORT: <http://www.reachingcriticalwill.org/political/1com/1com08/resolutions.html>

#### **OPEC CUTS OUTPUT BY 1.5 MILLION BARRELS A DAY**

The OPEC cartel ordered a cut in oil production of at least 1.5 million barrels a day. The reduction will come into effect on November 1, according to Ali Al-Naimi, the Saudi oil minister (24/10/08). Oil prices have more than halved since peaking at \$147 a barrel in July. After the OPEC statement, the price for Brent crude immediately dropped below \$63 a barrel.

DETAILS: <http://www.nytimes.com/?emc=na>