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Editor: Judy Cannon - 07 3358 2623

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

Contributing Editor: Ian Mathews - 02 6281 4025

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

**EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:** [judycnnn@yahoo.com.au](mailto:judycnnn@yahoo.com.au);

**DISTRIBUTION:** [unity.unaa@gmail.com](mailto:unity.unaa@gmail.com)

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## **A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES**

**UN ACTS ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANS AFTER DISASTERS IN ASIA-PACIFIC**

**Senior UN officials deny accusations of favouritism in Afghan polls. (SEE also AIF).**

**AUSTRALIA RANKS SECOND FOR QUALITY OF LIFE**

## **B. CLIMATE CHANGE**

**PACIFIC ISLANDS 'WILL SINK': 500,000 WILL HAVE TO LEAVE**

Up to 500,000 Pacific Islanders will lose homes and countries to sea if world does not reduce greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently, say campaigners.

**DEVELOPING NATIONS ACCUSE WEST OF ENDANGERING CLIMATE PROTOCOL**

**US says it won't commit to Kyoto Protocol targets**

US says it will not commit to the targets laid out by the Kyoto protocol, supported by EU.

## **C. HUMAN RIGHTS**

## **D. PEACE & SECURITY**

**UN calls for women to help solve conflict and build peace**

**PALESTINIAN U-TURN ON GAZA REPORT**

Palestinian Authority has now backed UN Security Council talks on alleged war crimes in Gaza (Goldstone Report).

**MOBILE MUSIC BRINGS AFGHANS OUT DANCING**

## **E. HEALTH & MEANS**

**UN MOBILISES AGAINST DISEASE IN INDONESIA AND PHILIPPINES**

**SG MESSAGE ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY October 10**

**MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION - October 14**

## **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

## **G. OTHER NEWS**

## **H. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

## **I. ARTICLES IN FOCUS**

**GALBRAITH SPEAKS OUT ON DISMISSAL (SEE also UN & Agencies).**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE COUNTDOWN**

Australia's Chief Scientist Penny Sackett, in March 2009, said the world had only six years to radically lower emissions or face calamitous, unstoppable global warming.

**A weekly UNITY CLIMATE CHANGE COUNTDOWN monitors time passing.**

**This week there are 287 weeks left in which to radically lower emissions.**

## A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

### **UN ACTS ON LONG-TERM RECOVERY PLANS AFTER DISASTERS IN ASIA-PACIFIC**

United Nations agencies are mobilising to provide longer-term recovery aid to a raft of countries in Asia and the Pacific, where a relentless barrage of tropical storms, earthquakes and tsunamis have hit millions of people in recent days (5/10/09).

“Within hours after the catastrophes hit, UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began working in support of national authorities to respond to the immediate humanitarian needs in these countries,” said UN Development Program (**UNDP**) Administrator Helen Clark in Bangkok.

“UNDP is now preparing to support countries’ plans for longer-term recovery after waters recede and rubble is cleared,” she said. Rapid support teams had already been sent to Cambodia, Laos and the Philippines, which have been inundated by typhoon-spawned flood waters, and Bhutan, Indonesia, Samoa and Tonga, which were hit by earthquakes and/or subsequent tsunamis.

In the Philippines, Typhoon Parma reached the far northern province of Cagayan over the weekend, a week after Typhoon Ketsana (also known as Ondoy) inundated Manila, the capital, and affected more than 3.1 million people. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, (OCHA) said nearly 870,000 people are in more than 720 evacuation shelters. The UN World Food Program (**WFP**) is mounting a three-month emergency operation.

In the Indonesian island of Sumatra the confirmed death toll from three earthquakes last week stands at 603 but is expected to rise significantly, since thousands are trapped and feared dead in the collapsed buildings in Padang, the provincial capital. A nine-member UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) team has been deployed there.

Nevertheless, nearly 70,000 children have returned to classes in Padang, according to local education authorities, after the UN Children’s Fund (**UNICEF**) rushed school supplies to the region, rapidly erecting the first of 250 classroom tents, as part of its initial support to re-starting education, along with school materials and recreational equipment.

“This is an important sign that life will return to normal for children affected by this tragedy,” UNICEF Country Representative in Indonesia Angela Kearney said. “Many children I have met amidst the shattered buildings of Padang expressed their fears for the future – they are worried about more shocks, about losing their homes, and about never going back to school again. Today, children can see that schools will re-open, and that they will be able to continue their learning. It’s a first step towards bringing the comfort and reassurance that these children so desperately need.”

Food, tents and emergency shelter, medical supplies, hygiene kits, petrol, generators, heavy equipment, water and sanitation assistance, education and post-traumatic counselling have been identified as priority needs in Sumatra.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32429&Cr=Philippines&Cr1=>

### **BAN URGES INVESTMENT IN WOMEN - PARTICULARLY IN ECONOMIC CRISIS**

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged countries not to waver in their commitments to women and girls in the midst of the ongoing economic crisis, particularly in ensuring their basic human rights (2/10/09). In his **report** on the girl child, Mr Ban said economic crises can exacerbate the impacts of poverty on the lives of children, particularly girls, who are highly vulnerable to their negative effects.

In previous financial and economic crises, such as those in Asia and Latin America during the 1980s and 1990s, child mortality rates rose and school enrolment dropped. Past crises have also witnessed higher levels of crime and violence, child labour and other forms of hazardous work, including sex work, and infants being placed in institutions.

“Already limited legal benefits and protection, lack of decision-making authority and limited control over financial resources are likely to leave girls and women even more vulnerable to the impact of crises than boys and men,” he wrote.

Therefore, a gender-sensitive response to the current economic crisis is “essential,” he stated. “National commitments that support and protect girls’ rights through basic health care and nutrition, clean water, basic education, child protection services and aid flows must be upheld and, where possible, expanded.” Investing in and ensuring human rights for girls and women was not only a legal and moral obligation but was also likely to prevent intergenerational cycles of poverty and yield high economic and societal returns.

“Maintaining national commitments to children and women and enhancing social protection will not only help to ensure a more rapid recovery from the crisis but will also build a foundation for equitable growth and sustained progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” he said, MDGs are globally agreed targets reduce poverty, hunger and other ills by 2015.

His wide-ranging report also addressed progress and challenges regarding discrimination against the girl child, including the right to education, health and adequate food, HIV and AIDS, and violence and exploitation, and highlighted efforts to end female genital mutilation.

**REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32409&Cr=economic+crisis&Cr1=women>

**KOSOVO FAMILIES TO BE COMPENSATED BY UN**

The UN will compensate the families of two Kosovo men shot dead by Romanian special forces using expired rubber bullets to suppress a protest. The Romanian officers served under the UN mission that governed Kosovo until 2008: [Reuters](#) (1/10/09).

**SENIOR UN OFFICIALS DENY ACCUSATIONS OF FAVOURITISM IN AFGHAN POLLS**

The top UN envoy to Afghanistan has only ever sided with electoral institutions in the country’s recent presidential ballot, and never with any of the candidates, UN officials said as they refuted allegations of bias (7/10/09).

The Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) and Independent Election Commission (IEC), both established under Afghan law, began an audit of the disputed election results on Monday, with all political parties monitoring the process, including representatives of the two main presidential candidates.

But the former UN Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, Peter Galbraith, has in recent days accused his erstwhile boss – the Secretary-General’s Special Representative Kai Eide – of favouring incumbent Afghan President Hamid Karzai in the run-up to and after the country’s August 20 election by allowing voting irregularities to occur, reported UN News.

“What Kai Eide did, what he was supposed to do and what he did very faithfully, is side with the institutions,” a Director of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), Wolfgang Weisbrod-Weber, told reporters in New York.

“He was always keen and he still is keen to let the institutions work out the process,” said Mr. Weisbrod-Weber, who runs the Asia and Middle East Division of DPKO.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32457&Cr=afghan&Cr1=>

**UN TO HELP SUPPORT FAMILIES OF KILLED PERSONNEL**

A fund will be established to help support the families of UN personnel who have been killed in the line of duty, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced as he unveiled plans for the first event to raise money for the cause (3/10/09).

Speaking in Copenhagen, at the XIII Olympic Congress, Mr. Ban said the details of how the fund will operate are still being determined, but the funds raised will go to the relatives of staff killed as they performed their official duties in humanitarian and peace operations worldwide.

"We have so many United Nations [personnel], international or national, who are unfortunately [killed in action]. They need your help," he said. Mr Ban and International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge signed a soccer ball – made from paper and wrapped up in plastic bags and tied with strings gathered from a slum in Kenya – that will be auctioned at an upcoming fundraising event hosted by Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein, a UN Messenger of Peace. That fundraiser is being held for the benefit of families of national UN staff members killed in action.

#### **TALIBAN CLAIMS SUICIDE ATTACK ON UN AID PROGRAM**

Monday's deadly suicide bomb attack against the UN World Food Program in Islamabad was claimed by Taliban militants who reportedly were seeking revenge for the August killing of their leader. "The UN and other foreign [aid groups] are not working in the interest of Muslims," said a Taliban spokesman, who warned of more attacks, reported [Google/The Associated Press](#) and [BBC](#) (6/10/09).

#### **UN OFFICE SECURITY UNDER REVIEW**

Security at UN offices in Pakistan is being reassessed as the nation prepared for further attacks in advance of a military offensive on the Taliban's mountain bastions. "We have no intention of giving up or stopping giving the help that people need so desperately at the moment," UN Humanitarian chief John Holmes said after Monday's suicide bombing of World Food Program offices in Islamabad: [Google/The Associated Press](#) (10/10/09).

#### **ATTACKS ON AID WORKERS**

The attack on the World Food Program headquarters in Islamabad was a tragedy and a crime, reports [Mark Leon Goldberg](#) in the UN Dispatch (5/10/09). It was also symptomatic of a deadly trend in international security. Last year, 268 humanitarian aid workers were killed, kidnapped, or seriously injured in violent attacks. This represents a 61 per cent increase of attacks on aid workers over the past decade. This increase is not just because there are more aid workers in the field today. Rather, the relative number of aid worker victims is steadily increasing. According to data compiled by the [Overseas Development Institute](#), there were about nine aid worker victims per 10,000 workers in the field in 2008 compared to about 4 per 10,000 in 1997. **REPORT:** <http://www.undispatch.com/node/8970>

#### **UN INDEX SHOWS DEEP INEQUALITIES BETWEEN COUNTRIES RICH AND POOR**

The world's countries continue to record substantial improvements in human development but vast inequalities still exist between rich and poor States, the UN Development Program (UNDP) warned as it unveiled its annual measure of progress in human well-being (5/10/09).

The Human Development Index (HDI), which combines measure of life expectancy, literacy, school enrolment and gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, was this year calculated for 182 countries and territories – a record number – and released as part of the annual Human Development **Report**. The report's lead author Jeni Klugman said "progress has been uneven" worldwide, despite significant overall improvements over the past 30 years.

"Many countries have experienced setbacks over recent decades, in the face of economic downturns, conflict-related crises and the HIV and AIDS epidemic," Ms Klugman said. "And this was even before the impact of the current global financial crisis was felt." Some countries had made particularly strong progress since 1980 in health and education, especially compared to incomes.

"While the closing of the gaps in many health and education indicators is good news, the persistent inequality in the distribution of world incomes should continue to be a source of concern for policy-makers and international institutions." Norway, Australia and Iceland remain the top-ranked countries on the HDI, which is based on data gathered in 2007, the most recent year that full statistics were available. Canada, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden, France, Switzerland and Japan complete the top 10.

#### **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32428&Cr=human+development&Cr1=>

### **AUSTRALIA RANKS SECOND FOR QUALITY OF LIFE**

Australia has the second-best quality of life in the world and could pip Norway for top spot, the author of a UN report on migration and development says. Australia was ranked second among 182 countries on a scale measuring life expectancy, school enrolments and income in the UN Development Program's *Human Development Report 2009*, released this week. The US slipped a spot to 13, while Britain remained steady at 21, based on the most recent internationally comparable data from 2007. Niger ranked lowest, followed by Afghanistan.

In Australia, life expectancy was extended three months and income rose 4 per cent on a year earlier, report author Dr Jeni Klugman said. But the scale does not account for inequality within a country and is not a direct representation of its allure to migrants.

"Most migration, internal and international, reap gains in the form of higher incomes, better access to education and health, and improved prospects for their children," the report said. While Australia is largely a migration success story, the toll on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders has been high, Dr Klugman said. "It clearly had large and unacceptable costs for indigenous people," she said.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theage.com.au/national/australia-ranks-second-for-quality-of-life-20091005-gjej.html>

### **UN WARNS AGAINST IMMIGRATION CRACKDOWNS**

The UN Development Program published a study warning nations with high immigration rates that efforts to restrict immigration was short-sighted from an economic perspective. Though the tendency during a recession was to close the door to immigrants, nations that permit and tax immigrants regardless of their legal status benefitted from the increased income, particularly if they attracted immigrants with a wide range of skills. [Financial Times](#) (5/10/09).

### **UN CALLS FOR NEW RESERVE CURRENCY**

The UN called on Tuesday for a new global reserve currency to end dollar supremacy which has allowed the United States the "privilege" of building a huge trade deficit, AFP reported. "Important progress in managing imbalances can be made by reducing the reserve currency country's 'privilege' to run external deficits in order to provide international liquidity," UN undersecretary-general for economic and social affairs, Sha Zukang, said, at the annual meetings of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Istanbul. **REPORT:**

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5glxkD4gVqrrAaL\\_byxq75287MWHg](http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5glxkD4gVqrrAaL_byxq75287MWHg)  
**SEE ALSO:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32020&Cr=financial+crisis&Cr1>

### **UN LOGO DESIGNER DIES AT 102**

The architect involved in designing the original UN logo and other graphics for the 1945 United Nations Conference on International Organization has died at 102. Donal McLaughlin Jr., who served on the OSS team headed by architect and industrial designer Oliver Lundquist, came up with the blue design of the continents bracketed by two olive branches signifying peace. [The Washington Post](#) (10/2)

### **CAN THE UNITED NATIONS BE TAUGHT?**

Michael Platzer reports that on October 8, *'Proceedings of a Colloquium on Innovative Approaches to Teaching the UN System: CAN THE UNITED NATIONS BE TAUGHT?'* was presented at Vienna International Centre. The event was co-organised by Academic Council of United Nation System (ACUNS) and ASO Ljubljana and Diplomatic Academy in Vienna, Austria, in November 2008.

**BOOK** (free): <http://aso.zsi.at/sl/publikation/3331.html?lang=en> Some copies available at Canberra UN Information Centre.

**COLLOQUIUM PROGRAM:** <http://www.aso.zsi.at/sl/veranstaltung/3038.html>

**DETAILS:** [michaelkplatzer@yahoo.com](mailto:michaelkplatzer@yahoo.com); [www.aso.zsi.at](http://www.aso.zsi.at); on 00 386 0 1 5684 168; mob 00 43 0 664 4203648.

## B. CLIMATE CHANGE

### PACIFIC ISLANDS 'WILL SINK': 500, 000 WILL HAVE TO LEAVE

Up to half a million people in the Pacific will lose their homes and their countries to rising sea levels because small island nations cannot persuade the rest of the world to reduce greenhouse gas emissions sufficiently, campaigners say.

The Alliance of Small Island States ([AOSIS](#)) is calling for a significant reduction in global emissions so the world's temperature does not rise more than 1.5 degrees centigrade above pre-industrial levels, IRIN News reported (5/10/09) .

But after a week of negotiations in Bangkok before the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December, developed and developing world countries have been unable to agree anything at all on emissions cuts, AOSIS said.

"We are not working through the options as negotiations, we are simply restating our positions. So we may arrive in Copenhagen with the parties still very far apart. It's really setting up Copenhagen for failure or an inadequate result," Leon Charles, chairman of the AOSIS negotiating team, who is from the Caribbean island of Grenada, told IRIN.

AOSIS, whose members are among the most vulnerable to climate change, "can't live with" global temperature rises of two degrees, a possible target mentioned in the Bangkok talks, Charles said. "We want 1.5 degrees centigrade in terms of mitigation and significant scaled-up and easily accessible finance. It's about our survival," he said.

An [AOSIS statement](#) issued after a preliminary meeting in New York in September said members were "profoundly disappointed" by the lack of will in the negotiations to protect small island developing states from climate change impacts.

Campaigners said AOSIS's prospects were dim, calling instead for more attention on how and where people from submerged countries would be relocated.

"Copenhagen won't be enough. The islands will sink. In the Pacific region, we are looking at about 500,000 people who will need to move. But the islands aren't talking about the migration issue," said Marstella Jack, a Micronesian former attorney-general, who was in Bangkok with observers from the Climate Action Network.

Jack said leaders were "too chicken" to address the issue. "They don't have the leverage to fight the issue with the developed world. Migration will hit us in the face before we realise it. But what happens to the sovereign country of Tuvalu, for example, if the land is gone?"

Tuvalu, with a population of less than 12,000, is heavily flooded every spring by ever more destructive tides. The total land surface of Tuvalu, which comprises nine small coral atolls, is 26 sqkm and on average, it is less than 2m above sea level. "We are just waiting, and when the time comes, we won't be Tuvalans any more, just climate change refugees," said Taukiei Kitara, of the Tuvalu Association of NGOs.

**REPORT:** <http://www.irinnews.org/Report.aspx?ReportId=86430>

### KYOTO DEBATE FLARES AS COPENHAGEN DEADLINE LOOMS

With just two months before world leaders assemble in Copenhagen to draft a new treaty on climate change, scrutiny of the Kyoto protocol - the standing binding agreement on carbon emissions - has flared into a fierce debate. The US, which signed but never ratified the treaty and refuses to ratify it even under the Barack Obama administration, argues instead a new legal framework should be built to take its place. China, India and other developing nations not originally bound by the terms of the Kyoto protocol believe it is unfair to build a new climate treaty before a framework is in place that holds industrialised nations accountable for their emissions: [Google/Agence France-Presse](#) (7/10/09).

## **DEVELOPING NATIONS ACCUSE WEST OF ENDANGERING CLIMATE PROTOCOL**

The US and other developed countries are attempting to "fundamentally sabotage" the [Kyoto protocol](#) and all-important international negotiations over its next phase, according to coordinated statements by China and 130 developing countries at UN climate talks in Bangkok, the London Guardian reported (5/10/09).

As 180 countries started a second week of talks, the developing countries showed their deep frustration at the slow pace of the negotiations on a global climate deal, which are planned to be [concluded in two months' time in Copenhagen](#).

"The reason why we are not making progress is the lack of political will by [Annex 1 \[industrialised\] countries](#). There is a concerted effort to fundamentally sabotage the Kyoto protocol," said Ambassador Yu Qingtai, China's special representative on climate talks. "We now hear statements that would lead to the termination of the protocol. They are introducing new rules, new formats. That's not the way to conduct negotiations," said Mr Yu. He was echoed by Lumumba Di-Aping, Sudanese chair of the [G77, the UN's largest intergovernmental organisation of developing states](#) which represented 130 countries at the talks. The angry statements followed a revelation by Barack Obama's energy adviser, Carol Browner, that she [did not expect the US Senate to vote](#) on its crucial global warming bill before the Copenhagen talks.

**REPORT:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/2009/oct/05/climate-change-kyoto>

## **US SAYS IT WON'T COMMIT TO KYOTO PROTOCOL TARGETS**

The US stepped up to a challenge issued by China and threatened to derail the upcoming Copenhagen talks altogether instead of committing to the Kyoto protocol - whose guidelines China and other nations consider the non-negotiable basis for a future climate treaty. The US says it will not commit to the targets laid out by the Kyoto protocol, a stance supported by the European Union. Some diplomats suggested the US could sign a separate agreement that developing nations found acceptable that nevertheless did not bind the US to the terms of the Kyoto protocol: [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (7/10/09).

## **FOSSILISED POLICY**

G-20 leaders voted to end subsidies for fossil fuels in the medium term in a bid to slash carbon gas emissions and curtail wasteful consumption. Each country will need to examine its own subsidy programs and arrive at the next G-20 meeting in 2010 with a plan to end their current systems, reports [The Economist](#) (1/10/09). SEE Articles in Focus

## **BAN LOOKS AHEAD TO FINAL NEGOTIATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE TREATY**

The frozen positions preventing governments from making progress in negotiations for a new greenhouse gas emissions treaty were beginning to thaw, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in speeches in Copenhagen, aimed at cranking up the pressure on nations to finalise an ambitious new pact in December (3/10/09).

In an address to the University of Copenhagen, Mr Ban highlighted the success of the largest climate change summit in history, held at the United Nations last week and attended by 101 heads of State and government.

"Climate change – and the imperative to reach agreement at Copenhagen – is now at the top of the international agenda. This is where it belongs," he said. "Tackling climate change can set us on the road to peace and prosperity for all."

He said the summit helped "turn up the heat" on world leaders and focus their attention on the urgent need for action, especially on finalising a deal on global greenhouse gas emissions when the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol expires in 2012.

**REPORT:** [http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32412&Cr=Climate + change&Cr1=](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32412&Cr=Climate+change&Cr1=)

### **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES 'VITAL TO TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE'**

Information and communication technologies are vital to tackling climate change, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told a global forum in Geneva, urging participants to think of creative ways to use the latest technology to usher in a green economy (5/10/09).

Organised by the UN International Telecommunication Union (**ITU**) every few years, Telecom World is a unique event for the information and communication technology (ICT) community which brings together the top names from across the industry and around the world.

"We all know that ICTs have revolutionised our world," Mr Ban **said**. "My main interest is how these technologies are creating new possibilities for the UN to achieve its goals of peace, human rights and development.

Mr Ban gave as an example how the UN teamed up with mobile phone companies and other partners to instal 5,000 new weather stations across Africa. The weather stations will monitor the impact of climate change, and when there is news, text messages will be sent immediately to farmers' mobile phones.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32421&Cr=technology&Cr1=>

### **AUSTRALIA'S BOTTOM END TARGETS 'DRAGGING DOWN GLOBAL ACTION'**

Prime Minister Rudd's bottom end targets were now dragging down global action and should be scrapped immediately, the Australian Greens said (1/10/09).

The released US Senate draft climate bill increased the US unconditional commitment on emissions reductions to the equivalent of 19% below 1990 levels by 2020, up from 16% offered only months ago. While this still lagged dangerously behind what the science demands, it leapfrogs both Australia's 4% unconditional offer and the 14% target which is the maximum Australia would commit to under the kind of weak agreement that is now being negotiated, the Greens said.

With the EU offering 20% unconditional cuts, moving to 30% with global action, Japan now offering 25% cuts, and the science clearly demanding at least 40% cuts from rich countries, Mr Rudd must move immediately to drop his 4% and 14% targets.

"Mr Rudd's 4% and 14% targets are a global embarrassment and must be immediately scrapped," Australian Greens Deputy Leader, Senator Christine Milne, said. "Although the world is still far from the kind of bold action we need to avert the climate crisis, China, Japan, India and now the US Senate are inching in the right direction.

"Mr Rudd's bottom end targets - 4% and 14% below 1990 levels – are holding back global action. Mr Rudd should scrap them immediately and make a 25% good faith offer, with the prospect of the 40% cuts the science demands if the world does commit to strong action."

**DETAILS:** Tim Hollo on 02 6277 3588.

### **HISTORY OF CLIMATE CHANGE SINCE 1712**

In a concise history of climate change, the BBC outlines major developments since 1712 that have led to the upcoming UN summit on global warming in Copenhagen. The effect of water vapour and other greenhouse gases was first noted in 1861 by Irish physicist John Tyndall, while a Swedish researcher determined in 1896 that coal burning heightened the effect. By 1927, the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the consumption of fossil fuel had reached an annual one billion tons, reports [BBC](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8285247.stm) (5/10/09)/ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8285247.stm>.

### **INVITATION TO INFLUENCE US OPINION**

The US Better World campaign writes:

"When President Obama delivered his first speech before the UN, he made it clear that the US will no longer pursue a foreign policy of going it alone. Instead, he recognised that the US and the world must "embrace a new era of engagement based on mutual interests and mutual respect. "President Obama's remarks at the UN General Assembly focused on four pillars that are fundamental to our future - one of which is working together to preserve our planet.

"With the UN-sponsored climate change negotiations in Copenhagen less than two months away, it is paramount that the US show leadership and support a global reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. We've been closely following congressional action to address climate change and have impressed upon the Administration and Congress the need to finish the job.

"The House passed [its climate change bill](#) in June, and Senators John Kerry (D-MA) and Barbara Boxer (D-CA) just introduced their companion legislation last week. Both bills provide a solid foundation, but more work remains to get them enacted.

"Here's where you come in. Though long associated with polar bears on ice floes, climate change is just as much about people - our decisions, our homes, our lives. And we're all in danger of losing things we love because of climate change. That's why our sister organisation, the UN Foundation, created [It's Getting Personal](#) - a climate initiative where you can share your story with the world and join others in showing world leaders the full scope and impact of climate change ahead of Copenhagen.

"As we get closer to the Copenhagen climate talks, we'll be providing more information about the UN conference and what you can do to help Congress pass meaningful climate change legislation this year. In the meantime, we hope you will share your story at [It's Getting Personal](#) and join us in calling for action.

"As Obama said to the UN, 'Now is the time for all of us to do our part.' You can influence the future of climate change. Thank you for sharing your story!"

[Submit your personal story here.](#)

- The Better World Campaign Team  
<http://www.BetterWorldCampaign.org/>

## C. HUMAN RIGHTS

### LANDMARK REPORT BACKS HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

The Australian Government was urged to enshrine human rights in legislation, in a landmark report on people's rights, the ABC reported (8/10/09). A national human rights act was among the key recommendations in the report by a government-appointed committee.

The committee received 35,000 public submissions, with more than 80 per cent supporting the idea. Federal Attorney-General Robert McClelland said there were strong views about the value of federal human rights legislation.

"However, as the report clearly shows, there are many other ways to protect and promote human rights, including through enhanced education and improved parliamentary scrutiny," he said. "The report shows that too many Australians are not informed about what human rights are or how they are currently protected."

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/08/2708702.htm>

The National Human Rights Consultation Committee handed its report to Attorney General Robert McClelland on September 30. In a statement the committee said it would like to thank the many thousands of people who have contributed to the consultation by sharing their views at 66 community roundtables, providing us with in excess of 35,000 submissions and attending the three days of public hearings.

"The fabulous response to this consultation suggests that the time is right for our elected leaders to take new steps to protect and promote human rights. The committee looks forward to the Australian Government's response."

The committee's recommendations included that education be the highest priority for improving and promoting human rights in Australia; that there should be a readily comprehensible list of Australian rights and responsibilities, including commitments, such as the responsibility;

that the Federal Government conduct an audit of all federal legislation, policies and practices to determine their compliance with Australia's international human rights obligations, regardless of whether a federal Human Rights Act is introduced.

The government should amend legislation, policies and practices, so that they become compliant; that the Australian Federal Government give priority to anti-discrimination legislation, policies and practices, national security legislation, policies and practices, immigration legislation, policies and practices and policies and practices of Australian agencies that could result in Australians being denied their human rights when outside Australia's jurisdiction;

recommends that a 'statement of impact on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' be provided to the Federal Parliament when the intent is to legislate exclusively for those peoples, to suspend the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* (Cth) or to institute a special measure; and

recommends that, in partnership with Indigenous communities, the Federal Government develop and implement a framework for self-determination, outlining consultation protocols, roles and responsibilities (so that the communities have meaningful control over their affairs) and strategies for increasing Indigenous Australians' participation in the institutions of democratic government.

The report is available in HTML on this site from the [Contents](#) page and also in DOC and PDF formats from the [Report Downloads](#) page. Due to the large size of this report (30MB) there are copies on CD, or in hard copy (limited supply). **DETAILS:** Attorney-General's Department on 02 6141 3415 or Human Rights Branch, Attorney-General's Department, 3-5 National Circuit, Barton ACT 2600.

**REPORT:** [Read the National Human Rights Consultation Committee's Report](#)

### **GetUp ORGANISES HUMAN RIGHTS ACT PETITION**

The government has just announced the results of its National Human Rights Consultation. Australians overwhelmingly demand we join the rest of the democratic world and protect our rights through a Human Rights Act: an instrument to prevent so many of the wrongs we've campaigned against together, says GetUp (9/10/09).

"But just because the consultation has recommended an Act doesn't make it a foregone conclusion - many in government want to avoid greater scrutiny of laws they make that may curtail our rights." The government was currently deciding how to respond to the recommendations.

"Australia has spoken up for human rights. Over 35,000 Australians told the consultation their views - with over 85 per cent asking for a Human Rights Act," says GetUp.

**GetUp PETITION:** [www.getup.org.au/campaign/EnactOurAct](http://www.getup.org.au/campaign/EnactOurAct)

### **HR REPORT WELCOME: BUT NEED FOR PEOPLE TO BE ABLE TO TAKE ACTION**

The Australian Human Rights Commission has welcomed the release of National Human Rights Consultation Committee's Report. AHRC President, Cathy Branson said the committee's report was the result of one of the largest public consultations in Australia's history.

"The report emphatically demonstrates that human rights matter to Australians, wherever they live, and that they want our government to make sure that rights are better protected and better understood," she said. "We must now act on the report's findings to bring human rights home."

Ms Branson welcomed the report's major recommendations that the Australian Government focus on human rights education and adopt a federal Human Rights Act. However, Ms Branson said she was disappointed with the committee's recommendations relating to economic, social and cultural rights.

"These rights, such as the right to the highest attainable standard of health care, adequate housing and education, touch the every day lives of all Australians," she said. "As the report details, these issues were consistently raised across the country as major areas of concern. They should not be treated differently from other human rights.

"What we want is very simple: a nation where the basic human dignity of all people is respected, where our government decision-makers always think about the human rights impacts of their decisions, and where people whose human rights are breached can do something about it.

**AHRC submission** to the National Consultation:

[www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2009/200906\\_NHRC.html](http://www.humanrights.gov.au/legal/submissions/2009/200906_NHRC.html);

**DETAILS:** Louise McDermott on 0419 258 597.

### **TRAFFICKED WOMEN WHO CAN'T STAY BUT CAN'T GO HOME**

Representatives of a number of civil society organisations and agencies met at a roundtable, organised through UNAA Victorian Division and the UNAA Status of Women Network in Melbourne this week, to share information about progress under the National Action Plan on Trafficking, Sheila Byard, UNAA Convenor, Status of Women, reported.

Christine Carolan, now working with ACRATH, spoke on Complementary Protection, which is a matter of particular interest to UNAA Status of Women Network members.

She reported that the current ACRATH Vic project was to lobby senators to vote for the Complementary Protection legislation due in the Senate in the last week of October. The Migration Amendment (Complementary Protection) Bill 2009, if passed in the Senate, would mean Australia would offer protection to people at risk of the most serious forms of harm if returned to their home country but who do not fit the tight definition of the Refugee Convention.

Over the past few years ACRATH has found that for a number of women trafficked into Australia, it was too dangerous for them to go home but they were not eligible for a refugee visa in Australia. ACRATH Vic has invited people to lobby senators.

**COMPLEMENTARY PROTECTION:** <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/pdfid/435e198d4.pdf>

**DETAILS:** Christine Carolan: [christine@the.inter.net.au](mailto:christine@the.inter.net.au); Sheila Byard: [unaa.sown@gmail.com](mailto:unaa.sown@gmail.com)

### **UN CALLS FOR STEPS TO SAVE CHILDREN FROM TRAFFICKING AND ABUSE**

Millions of children worldwide are subject to trafficking, sexual abuse or child labour, lack parental care or documents needed to access schools and health care, or face violence in their homes, schools or communities, according to a new UN report released (6/10/09).

"A society cannot thrive if its youngest members are forced into early marriage, abused as sex workers or denied their basic rights," UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) Executive Director Ann M. Veneman said in Tokyo on the release of the report, which calls for improving child protection systems and promoting social change.

"Understanding the extent of abuses of children's rights is a first step to building an environment where children are protected and have the opportunity to reach their full potential," she said. The report covers issues ranging from sexual abuse and child marriage to physical punishment and genital mutilation.

While progress is being made in reducing some violations of children's rights, not enough is yet known about the extent of abuses against children and violence and exploitation remain a harsh reality, according to the report, *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Child Protection*.

Some abuses, such as sexual exploitation and trafficking, are usually committed in conditions of secrecy and illegality, which makes collection of accurate data challenging. Child labour reaps a particularly heavy toll with 150 million youngsters aged between five and 14 in the workforce.

The report gathers together for the first time data on a range of issues, including sexual abuse and trafficking, child marriage, physical punishment of children, child labour, birth registration, the harmful traditional practice of female genital cutting, and attitudes toward violence against women inside marriage.

Some progress is evident. For example, in Bangladesh, Guinea and Nepal, where child marriage is prevalent, the median age of marriage is rising, although it is still below 18. It also cites a slow decline in female genital mutilation in countries where such abuse is common.

It finds that more than half the children in detention worldwide have not been tried or sentenced, while in some regions, the births of two out of three children were not registered in 2007, with less than 5 per cent of births registered in Somalia and Liberia. Without a birth certificate youngsters are more vulnerable to sexual exploitation, trafficking and illegal adoption.

Another finding shows that more than half of women and girls in developing countries think that wife-beating is acceptable and, younger women are as likely to justify wife-beating as older women. In most regions, neglecting the children is the most commonly cited justification for wife-beating. "The evidence of continuing harm and abuse must inspire the world to greater effort to guarantee the rights of all children, everywhere," Ms. Veneman said.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32437&Cr=unicef&Cr1=>

#### **CONCERN OVER POSSIBLE EXPULSION OF SRI LANKAN BOAT PEOPLE**

Security officials may move to expel some of the Sri Lankan boatpeople detained at Christmas Island over concerns they are Tamil Tiger fighters and could pose a risk to the community, The Australian reported (6/10/09).

Some young men are believed to have raised suspicions because they have injuries consistent with warfare, such as shrapnel wounds. Officials are concerned they could be Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam fighters trying to pass themselves off as asylum-seekers. While not proscribed in Australia, the LTTE has been listed as a terrorist organisation here since 2001.

Several Sri Lankan detainees at Christmas Island aroused the suspicion of guards with their regimented behaviour, such as exercising in small groups at first light. Some, understood to be young and fit, are also said to carry injuries similar to those suffered in combat.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26170994-601,00.html>

#### **PALESTINIAN AUTHORITIES BEGIN TRIAL OVER TORTURE OF HAMAS SUSPECT**

Palestinian authorities have begun a rare military trial of security officers accused of torturing a [Hamis](#) suspect to death at a time of an intensifying crackdown in the West Bank against the Islamist movement, the London Guardian reported (5/10/09).

Haitham Amr, 33, a nurse, was arrested by the Palestinian intelligence services, led by the Fatah political faction, at his home near Hebron, in the occupied West Bank in June. Four days later he was dead, his body showing extensive bruising and swelling. He had been suspected of membership of the armed wing of Hamas, the rival Palestinian faction.

**REPORT:** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/05/fatah-hamas-torture-trial>

#### **ASYLUM SEEKERS DEPORTED TO COLOMBO**

Indika and Sumith, deported on a Sunday to Colombo, have been beaten and charged with people smuggling, claims Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). She says they were being sent to Negombo Prison which has a deplorable human rights record.

She lists a record of events which "describes the circumstances of their present incarceration and the means we have of being able to confirm the abuse." She says this highly publicised deportation in Sri Lanka and subsequent charges of 'Sending groups to Australia Illegally' coincided with the Australian taxpayer funded advertising campaign to tell Sri Lankans not to consider seeking asylum in Australia.

The ASRC is asking the [Department of Immigration and Citizenship](#) (DIAC) to: halt the deportation of the other Sri Lankans booked to go on Wednesday; and to take urgent action at the highest levels to ensure that the men are not physically abused, beaten or tortured.

**DETAILS:** Pamela Curr Campaign Coordinator Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) on 03 93266066/ fax 0393265199/mob 0417517075; <<http://www.asrc.org.au>>

**LOCKED OUT:** ASRC new position paper on the homelessness of asylum seekers:

[Download the report \(PDF - 4.0 MB\)](#)

### **SRI LANKAN DEPORTATION HALTED**

The High Court issued on Wednesday an interim injunction until 4pm of October 16 to then consider a request for an extension of time to allow the Federal Magistrates Court to then consider a review of a RRT decision. Recent amendments to the Migration Act have closed the ability of the Federal Court to review out of time issues in the Federal Magistrates Court, which necessitated the High Court action.

Sadly the reason for all this is not even mentioned but this is the mechanism needed to save Mr Roshan from suffering the same fate as Indika Mendis who has been beaten and tortured on return (to Colombo), says Pamela Curr Campaign Coordinator Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC). An injunction to stop Indika Mendis' removal to Sri Lanka failed on Sunday. He was deported and was handed over to CID in Colombo Airport where he was beaten and questioned. He has been charged with people smuggling.

"The Australian immigration authorities say that a country has the right to charge whom it chooses. We do not dispute this but we believe that Australia has a responsibility not to deport a person to a place where they may suffer 'cruel and degrading treatment', be beaten or tortured," she says. "We feared that this man would suffer and sadly our worst fears have been realised. Latest report today says that Indika is in Negombo Prison and that he was visited today by 'an official' who was seen to be distressed and weeping when she left Indika because of his injuries."

**DETAILS:** Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC), on 03 93266066/ fax 0393265199/mob 0417517075; [www.asrc.org.au](http://www.asrc.org.au)

### **SHUT OUT: EXPERIENCES OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES AND THEIR FAMILIES**

Dr Rhonda Galbally, Chairperson of the People with Disabilities and Carers Council, who chaired national consultations leading to publication of the *Shut Out* report, addressed the National Press Club in Canberra on Wednesday (7/10/09).

*SHUT OUT: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia* was prepared by the National People with Disabilities and Carer Council and presents a picture of the lives and experiences of many people with disability and their families.

Dr Galbally, who said some of the things she heard during consultations were "shocking and shameful," took the opportunity to press for the establishment of a national disability insurance scheme to cover people with a disability from birth as well as those who had acquired disability through an accident or illness. A feasibility study into costs needed to be undertaken. She said the important thing was for people to obtain what they needed, when they needed it.

She believes such a scheme would be economically responsible because it would result in individuals' maximum independence, participation in society and productivity. She foresaw savings in health costs and income security. Saying that sometimes, present disability services impeded a person's progress rather than assisted, she said early intervention was vital, particularly for young children. The idea for a national insurance scheme had the support of the ACTU, Australian Medical Association and the Pharmacy Guild of Australia.

The *Shut Out* report looks at the issues of social exclusion and discrimination; lack of services and support; the need for a lifetime care and support scheme; the employment experiences of people with disabilities; negotiating the built environment and accessing information; the

education experience of people with disabilities; the social experience of disability; and the way forward – implications for the development of the National Disability Strategy.

**REPORT:** [SHUT OUT: The Experience of People with Disabilities and their Families in Australia](#)

### **SOUTH AND NORTH KOREAN FAMILIES MEET AGAIN**

Korean family members separated after the 1953 armistice were again permitted to see each other under a reunion program recently resumed by North and South Korea. But some critics say it takes too long for some of the elderly participants to reunite under the program, and too few families were offered the opportunity, reported [Los Angeles Times](#) (4/10/09).

### **WRONGFUL DETENTION WAS 'SERIOUS ERROR'**

Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith has described the three year wrongful detention of a Vietnamese man as a "serious administrative error", the ABC reported (3/10/09). Van Phuc Nguyen was detained in 2002 and held in Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre for more than three years.

He is a permanent resident of Australia but immigration officials at Sydney airport did not recognise his visa. Mr Smith says it should not have happened. "It's a very bad event, a serious administrative error and a terrible circumstance," he said.

Mr Nguyen's lawyer Robert Sutherland says it was a bureaucratic bungle. Mr Sutherland says the \$70,000 compensation offer to his client was grossly inadequate. Once the government's legal fees were taken out, the final sum would be just under \$58,000.

Commonwealth Ombudsman John McMillan said Mr Nguyen's case was the longest term of wrongful detention in recent history and highlighted a more serious problem across government departments. He said the system needed to be overhauled.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/03/2704050.htm>

### **AID WORKERS FREED IN KENYA**

Three foreign aid workers kidnapped in Kenya by Somali gunmen three months ago have been freed, their employer says, the BBC reported (4/10/09). The three employees of the French agency Action Against Hunger (ACF) were being flown to Nairobi from Somalia, the agency reported. They were said to be in good health. It was not clear if a ransom was paid for the release of the hostages, who were seized in a cross-border raid.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8288386.stm>

### ***No One's Son***

Teddy Fekadu's book, *No One's Son*, describes Tewodros (Teddy) Fekadu's extraordinary life story as he traversed three continents, four languages, and multiple ethnicities, beliefs and cultures. The book was scheduled to be launched in Brisbane on October 9.

His memoir, *No One's Son*, traces his journey from life with his mother in a traditional Ethiopian rural village, as a street kid in Addis Ababa, to final refuge and freedom in Australia.

Separated from his Ethiopian mother by poverty and circumstance, and disowned by his Eritrean father, Teddy recounts his childhood loneliness and yearning for love and belonging that fed his determination and resilience to survive, to flee Africa and civil war, seeking asylum and freedom. Media guru Phillip Adams has written a foreword.

The launch was scheduled in Brisbane Square Library, George Street, Brisbane, at 6pm. The event will include the author's photographic exhibition of Ethiopia and Eritrea and artist, Libby Woodham's work in those countries.

**DETAILS:** [www.noonesson.com](http://www.noonesson.com); [order@noonesson.com](mailto:order@noonesson.com); on 0416 264538; or Maree Klemm on +61 (0)7 3391 1559; [mareeklemm@chienoir.com.au](mailto:mareeklemm@chienoir.com.au).

Fr Frank Brennan SJ AO, chairperson of the National Human Rights Consultation Committee, will address the National Press Club, Canberra, on October 14 on 'The Findings of the National Human Rights Consultation'.

The committee was due to present its report to the Attorney General on September 30. Father Brennan's address will outline the key findings of this national inquiry which received over 35,000 submissions and conducted community roundtable discussions all around Australia.  
**DETAILS:** <http://www.humanrightsconsultation.gov.au/>

#### **CANBERRA FORUM ON POVERTY**

To promote the MDGs campaign and recognise the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, United Nations Information Centre and Amnesty International are organising a one-hour forum on poverty, when key speakers will be Claire Mallinson, National Director of Amnesty International Australia; Marc Purcell, Executive Director of the Australian Council for International Development and Professor John Langmore, Professorial Fellow in Political Science Department, at the University of Melbourne, and former national president of the UNAA. The forum will be on October 14, 6-7pm, at the Theo Notares Multicultural Centre Function Room (North Building, Level 2, 180 London Circuit, Canberra).

**DETAILS:** <mailto:Bede.Carmody@Amnesty.org.au>

#### **PROTECTING AND PROMOTING WOMEN'S RIGHTS**

A seminar for lawyers and barristers on using the optional protocol to the UN Women's Convention will be organised for November 17 in Melbourne, an Australian Human Rights Commission media release stated.

In December 2008, Australia became a party to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. This treaty establishes two procedures – a communication procedure and an inquiry procedure – to enforce women's rights to non-discrimination and equality.

The seminar will examine how the communication and inquiry procedures can be used to better protect and promote women's rights, both domestically and internationally. It will explain how these procedures operate and provide detailed information on how to use them. The seminar will consider key jurisprudence decided under the Optional Protocol and reflect on lessons for advocates. It will be held at Allens Arthur Robinson, Level 27, 530 Collins Street, Melbourne, at 9.30am.

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

#### **UN CALLS FOR WOMEN TO HELP SOLVE CONFLICT AND BUILD PEACE**

The UN Security Council unanimously urged all countries and international bodies to take further steps to ensure full participation of women in all stages of conflict resolution and peace-building, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon calling it "a top priority for the United Nations" (5/10/09).

The 15-member body voiced deep concern about the under-representation of women at all stages of peace processes, particularly the very low numbers in formal roles in mediation processes, nearly nine years after it passed an earlier resolution calling for increased female representation at all decision-making levels in preventing, managing and resolving conflict.

"A growing body of evidence suggests that bringing women to the peace table improves the quality of agreements reached, and increases the chances of successful implementation," Mr. Ban told the Council in a message to a day-long open session on Women, Peace and Security delivered by Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro.

"Women are likely to put gender issues on the agenda, set different priorities and possibly bridge the political divide more effectively. Experience also suggests that women's contributions in post-conflict situations can make a critical difference to community survival and reconstruction."

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32424&Cr=Gender&Cr1=>

## **US GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR CIVILIANS OPERATING DURING CONFLICT**

The US Institute of Peace and the US Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute have unveiled the first strategic 'doctrine' produced for civilian actors involved in peace operations. The [Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction](#) (S&R) is a practical roadmap for helping countries transition from violent conflict to peace, a media release stated (7/10/09).

"The question du jour is what the strategy in Afghanistan should be," said [Beth Cole](#), lead writer for the manual. "This manual provides a strategic framework that can help guide that strategy."

Strategic guidance for civilian planners and practitioners engaged in these missions was long overdue, the media release stated. While the military for decades had been equipped with a doctrine that guides its decisions and actions, civilian actors still operated today without any unifying framework or principles of action. It said the '*Guiding Principles*' seeks to fill this gap by introducing a comprehensive set of shared principles and a shared strategic framework.

### **[GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR STABILIZATION AND RECONSTRUCTION:](#)**

<http://www.usip.org/resources/guiding-principles-stabilization-and-reconstruction>

## **MIDDLE EAST**

### **ARAB STATES PRESS FOR GAZA REPORT DEBATE**

Arab states are pressing for discussion of a report on war crimes allegedly committed by Israelis and Palestinians in Gaza to take place at the Wednesday UN Security Council meeting, called at the behest of Libya. The UN Human Rights Council had postponed its discussion of the Goldstone Report until March at the request of Palestinian Authority President Abbas, who reportedly bowed to pressure from the US: [BBC](#) (8/10/09).

### **PALESTINIAN U-TURN ON GAZA REPORT**

The Palestinian Authority has backed UN Security Council talks on alleged war crimes in Gaza, days after seeking the deferral of a UN debate on the issue, the BBC reported (7/10/09).

The UN Security Council is set to discuss whether to hold an emergency session on the Goldstone report, which accuses Israel and Hamas of war crimes. A senior PA politician has said last week's request to defer discussion of the report was a "mistake". The PA decision sparked an outcry among Palestinians. Libya, the only Arab state on the 15-member body, will request the UN session in a closed-door meeting.

PA politician Yasser Abed Rabbo, has said the leadership had erred by seeking the deferral of the debate at the Human Rights Council until next March.

REPORT: [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8294880.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8294880.stm)

### **ABBAS FACES MORE ANGER OVER UN WAR CRIMES REPORT**

In five turbulent years in office, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has never faced as much outrage as over his decision to suspend efforts to get Israeli officials put on trial for war crimes in Gaza, Google/AP reported (8/10/09). On Wednesday, Gaza professors threw shoes at his defaced image and West Bank commentators called for his resignation, the latest signs Mr Abbas may have miscalculated in bowing to what Palestinian and Israeli officials say was intense US pressure.

At the centre of the uproar was a 575-page UN report about Israel's three-week war in Gaza last winter, which alleges that both Israel and Hamas committed war crimes, something both sides deny. Last week, Mr Abbas withdrew Palestinian support for a vote in the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva to have the report sent to the UN General Assembly for possible action — the first of many steps toward possibly establishing war crimes tribunals. With the Palestinians out of the picture, the council set the report aside for six months.

The anger over Mr Abbas' decision was intense because many Palestinians felt he chose not to pursue a rare opportunity to win justice for Gaza's war victims, said Mustafa Barghouti, an independent Palestinian legislator.

"Finally, there was a moment, in front of the international community, to hold Israel accountable," Mr Barghouti said. "What he (Abbas) did, or his government did, it's now perceived that they gave Israel the leeway to escape from that."

**REPORT:**

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ioi\\_0jtO9RjMwPNRoXNCndRPRq3gD9B6FS600](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ioi_0jtO9RjMwPNRoXNCndRPRq3gD9B6FS600)

**ELBARADEI ANNOUNCES INSPECTION DATE FOR IRAN SITE**

International Atomic Energy Agency director Mohamed ElBaradei announced an inspection of Iran's recently revealed nuclear facility at Qom will take place October 25, expressing concerns about the future of Iran's nuclear program but welcoming a new spirit of cooperation from Tehran after high-level nuclear talks in Geneva.

Mr ElBaradei said Iran should have revealed the existence of the nuclear facility during planning stages, while Iranian authorities argued they were not required to reveal the facility before nuclear material was brought into production: [Los Angeles Times/The Associated Press](#) and [Financial Times](#) (tiered subscription model) (4/10/09) and [The Washington Post/The Associated Press](#) (5/10/09).

**IRAN: SHIFT TOWARDS COOPERATION**

The US and the UN have given an upbeat assessment of the possibility of settling the nuclear dispute with Iran, the BBC reported (4/10/09). US National Security Adviser Jim Jones said Tehran was now "willing to come to the table", following talks this week between Iran and major powers.

The head of the UN's nuclear agency, who is in Tehran, said there had been a "gear shift" towards co-operation. He announced that inspectors would visit a newly revealed nuclear site in the Iranian city of Qom, on 25 October.

**REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8289673.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8289673.stm)

**TWO NUCLEAR SCIENTISTS ALLEGED TO HAVE DEFECTED FROM IRAN**

Iran's nuclear program has suffered a serious setback if reports of the defection of two Iranian scientists are accurate. An Arabic daily based in London has reported the defections of Sharam Amiri, a scientist associated with the recently discovered Qom uranium-enrichment plant who disappeared during a July pilgrimage to Mecca, and a man identified only as Ardebili who reportedly was arrested recently in Georgia. Iran's foreign ministry has denied the reports: [Ha'aretz \(Tel Aviv, Israel\)](#) (7/10/09).

**ASIA**

**NORTH KOREA MAY RETURN TO SIX-PARTY INTERNATIONAL TALKS**

North Korea says it may be willing to return to six-party international talks on its nuclear weapons program, state media have reported, the BBC reported (6/10/09).

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is said to have made the announcement to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao before he left Pyongyang after a three-day visit. But Mr Kim said the return would be dependent on the progress of its planned bilateral talks with the US.

The US says it remains ready to engage with North Korea. Highlighting the urgency of restarting talks, a South Korean source said the North appeared to be in the final stages of restoring the nuclear program at Yongbyon that it had shut down before abandoning the six-party process. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8291882.stm>

**PAKISTANIS RESIST US INFLUENCE AS OPERATIONS WIDEN**

Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari has agreed to conditions on a \$US1.5 billion aid package that is unpopular in Pakistan, especially among the nation's army. The US intends to greatly

expand the presence of its embassy - and private security forces - in Pakistan, in part to monitor the distribution of the aid package. The widened US operations come at a time when the Pakistani military is poised to launch a major operation in the mountainous terrain of South Waziristan in an effort to seek out Osama bin Laden and his al-Qaida colleagues, reported [The New York Times](#) (5/10/09) and [The Independent \(London\)](#) (6/10/09).

#### **PAKISTAN'S NEW TALIBAN LEADER MEETS WITH JOURNALISTS**

In an apparent effort to strengthen the wavering morale of insurgents in other areas, the new Taliban leader in Pakistan met with a handful of journalists to quell speculation he had died along with his predecessor in an August missile attack by the US. Reports of the meeting with Hakimullah Mehsud coincided with news a suicide bomber had attacked the UN offices in Islamabad. [BBC](#) (5/10/09).

#### **MOBILE MUSIC BRINGS AFGHANS OUT DANCING**

You're listening to W.IED 102.5 FM the bomb," joked Staff Sergeant Todd Bowers as he slotted another cassette of religious chants into his portable radio station, the ABC reported (6/10/09). While most of the battles fought by US Marines in restive Farah province are against improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and guns, Sergeant Bowers, 30, is fighting a war of words to win the hearts and minds of people in rural western Afghanistan.

The radio station - a portable deck and 14-metre antennae at the military base in Golestan - began as a chance to give local villagers a taste of the music they were banned from hearing under the hardline Taliban rule.

"Ever since word got out, I've had people bringing me cassettes. To have this music now has such a strong impact on the people," Sergeant Bowers, who heads the Marines' civil affairs team, said. "When I drive through the valleys and play local Pashtu music on the loud speaker, people out in the village are singing and dancing. A lot can be said for music changing things." **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/06/2706402.htm>

### **AFRICA**

#### **GUINEAN TROOPS ATTACK, RAPE WOMEN DURING DEMONSTRATION**

Guinean soldiers given the task of suppressing a political demonstration of some 50,000 people assembled at the stadium in Conakry focused their efforts primarily on women, many of whom were beaten, raped and killed. The brutal attacks against women, many of which were irrefutably recorded on mobile phone cameras, shocked the Muslim population and hardened the determination of opponents who want to oust the military junta leader Captain Moussa Dadis Camara: [The New York Times](#) reported (5/10/09).

#### **AHMED STATES SOMALIA'S URGENT CASE**

Beleaguered Somalian President Sharif Ahmed said he has received only a fraction of the \$200 million pledged by UN donors to support his government's efforts to fight back an insurgency linked to al-Qaida - one he says will require foreign backing if it is to be successful. President Ahmed's government - which follows more than a dozen attempts to establish authority since the state fell to warlords in 1991 - nearly collapsed in May after a concentrated offensive launched by al-Shabaab. The terrorist organisation had weakened in recent months because of splintering and strong Somalian support for a more moderate form of Islam, but he fears al-Shabaab is gaining ground: [The Washington Post](#) (3/10/09).

#### **OIL MILITANTS ACCEPT NIGERIAN OFFER OF AMNESTY**

A prominent military commander accepted the Nigerian Government's promise of amnesty in return for relinquishing weapons used to attack oil industry operations in the western Niger Delta. Two other military leaders who had been active in the eastern delta also surrendered their arms: [Los Angeles Times/Reuters](#) (5/10/09).

#### **MADAGASCAR RIVALS AGREE CABINET POSTS**

Madagascar's political rivals have agreed on cabinet posts in a new unity government, officials at power-sharing talks have said, the BBC reported (6/10/09).

The announcement follows weeks of discussions aimed at ending a political crisis that began earlier this year. Under the agreement, Andry Rajoelina remains president, delegates said. Mr Rajoelina ousted the former President Marc Ravalomanana in March with the backing of the army, after months of anti-government protests. He and his allies accused the deposed president of being a tyrant who misspent public money.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/8293862.stm>

## EUROPE

### **MILLIONS LIVE IN MAFIA'S SHADOW, REPORT FINDS**

The Mafia's grip on Italy has been starkly illustrated by a report that 13 million people live in areas where the mob exerts influence over everyday life (3/10/09). Commissioned by the parliamentary anti-Mafia commission, the report by the research institute Censis used crime statistics to find the number of urban and rural districts where clans are active in the Italian south.

The Italians living in the 610 districts identified, even if law-abiding, "are in some way conditioned by a presence that draws its strength from the ability to exert a capillary control in the area", the report said. Giuseppe Pisanu, head of the parliamentary commission, said the Mafia was "silently prospering, moving on from spectacular crimes and massacres to business and politics, with a prudent dose of intimidation and violence in a bid to take over the fundamental role of the state".

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/world/millions-live-in-mafias-shadow-report-finds-20091002-ggjn.html>

### **CRIMEA FOCUS OF TENSION BETWEEN UKRAINE AND RUSSIA**

With Ukraine's presidential election looming and Russia ratcheting up pressure on the nation's Western-leaning government, experts are concerned Crimea might be the scene of future conflicts: [The Washington Post](#) (6/10/09).

## E. HEALTH & MEANS

### **SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MESSAGE ON WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY - October 10**

As defined in the constitution of the World Health Organisation, health is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity, it is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being. Mental disorders contribute more to disease burden and disability in developing countries than any other category of non-communicable disease, yet only a small minority of people with mental disorders in these countries have access to mental health services. The need is high, and care is inadequate.

World Mental Health Day is an important opportunity to mobilise international resources to meet the goal of providing adequate mental health care. Governments and public health organisations, civil society, multilateral agencies and donors must combine join hands to make this happen. Effective treatments exist for a wide variety of mental disorders. Let us unite to scale up mental health services and involve primary health care systems in delivering mental health services worldwide.

The WHO Mental Health Gap Action Program (mhGAP) seeks to narrow the distance between needs and services by providing treatment packages for mental disorders that can be implemented on a large scale in low- and middle-income countries. With limited available human and financial resources, delivering these services means involving community-based primary care facilities. Providing effective mental health services in primary care settings would help to reduce the stigma associated with mental disorders and could prevent unnecessary hospitalisation and human rights violations of people with mental health problems.

Such a strategy makes good economic sense. Mental disorders impair the ability of children to learn and the ability of adults to function in families, at work and in society at large. It is also a pro-poor strategy. Research shows that mental disorders are overwhelmingly concentrated in lower income groups. Poverty and its associated stresses, which include

unemployment, violence, social exclusion and constant insecurity, are closely linked to the onset of mental disorders.

Health is an important human right. Let us this year resolve to reduce the public health burden and the individual suffering of people with mental health problems worldwide.

- **Ban Ki-moon**

#### **MESSAGE FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR DISASTER REDUCTION - October 14**

Beyond their practical importance, hospitals and health facilities have a unique value as symbols of public well-being. Making them safe from disasters is essential. That is why this the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, along with the World Health Organisation and the World Bank, marks the International Day for Disaster Reduction by highlighting the 2008-09 World Disaster Reduction Campaign dedicated to Hospitals Safe from Disasters.

When disaster strikes, hospitals are the most critical infrastructure. They represent – quite literally – the lifeblood of a community. If hospitals are severely damaged, efforts to save lives are seriously impeded. With weather-related disasters on the increase, it is critical to ensure that health facilities are prepared for emergencies and able to provide life-saving care in their wake. This is particularly true in countries where weak health systems already struggle to meet the health needs of populations. In Burkina Faso, flooding forced the evacuation of the patients from the main hospital in the capital city. In Indonesia, hospital collapses during the earthquake in Sumatra caused additional loss of life. In L'Aquila, Italy, the collapse of a newly built hospital provided a grim reminder that health systems in richer nations are also at risk.

The Safe Hospitals campaign involves practical steps to make hospitals safer. For example, the Hospital Safety Index, a checklist for assessing hospital preparedness, has been applied to many facilities in Latin America and elsewhere, including as Oman, Sudan and Tajikistan.

I call on governments and all decision-makers, including town planners, to review hospital safety. Health facilities must be better prepared to respond to local hazards. They must be designed, built and maintained so they can better protect health workers and patients alike when disaster hits. The cost of making hospitals safe from disasters is relatively small. The most expensive hospital is the one that fails.

- **Ban Ki-moon**

#### **INDONESIA: UN MOBILISES TO PREVENT EPIDEMICS AFTER EARTHQUAKE**

UN emergency personnel in Indonesia's province of West Sumatra mobilise to prevent the outbreak of epidemic diseases and get children back to school two days after a massive earthquake killed at least 1,100 people, trapped and injured many thousands more, and destroyed numerous buildings, the UN reported (2/10/09).

"Everyone of those children is acutely vulnerable to potential disease, lack of shelter, disruption to education, and the traumatic effects of living through such an experience," UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) Country Representative Angela Kearney said, noting that up to a third of those affected were believed to be youngsters.

UNICEF is working with the government and other UN agencies to aid up to 50,000 families with water pumps, water storage equipment, 40,000 jerry cans and 40,000 hygiene kits, as well as supplying 250 school tents, schools-in-a-box and recreational kits to help children re-establish a sense of normalcy after the tragedy. These initial supplies are expected to reach the quake zone in the next 24 hours.

"Children are always the most affected by emergencies, and it is critical that they have access to clean water, and are protected from the threat of diarrhoeal diseases, acute respiratory infections and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable diseases such as measles, polio and tetanus," she said. **DETAILS:** <http://www.unicef.org/>

## **STANDING WATER POSES THREAT TO MANILA**

The storms that have swamped Manila in recent weeks left inches of fetid floodwater that is raising fears of water-borne diseases and concerns the Philippines government isn't bringing relief fast enough. "All the children have diarrhea," one resident said. Meanwhile, Typhoon Parma, which inundated the area with 36 inches of rain, is expected to remain in the vicinity for another day, reported [CNN](#) (6/10/09).

The World Health Organisation (WHO) responded on multiple fronts to the natural disasters recently hitting countries in the Western Pacific region (2/10/09). The move follows the earthquake-driven tsunami that hit coastal areas of Samoa and American Samoa, an earthquake in Tonga, and flooding in the Philippines caused by Typhoon Ketsana, which later also wreaked havoc in Vietnam and Cambodia.

WHO sent technical assistance and medical supplies to Samoa and provided technical assistance to the Ministry of Health and the UN Disaster Management Team by sending Dr Rodger Doran, Regional Adviser in Emergency and Humanitarian Action, to assist with coordinating international support. WHO also distributed water to victims of the tsunami as well as assisting in transporting the evacuees and injured people.

In Tonga, WHO despatched Dr Jennie Musto, a health specialist from the organisation's Fiji office to help local health authorities. The US Coast Guard has sent relief items and workers to American Samoa, a US territory.

In the Philippines, WHO relief efforts included 10 000 water containers, first-aid kits and later zinc tablets for diarrhoeal diseases. The supplies were part of an immediate response of \$US42 000. WHO is also coordinating international health efforts.

**DETAILS:** Dr Arturo Pesigan, WHO Emergency and Humanitarian Action, on +63 2 528 9810; [pesigana@wpro.who.int](mailto:pesigana@wpro.who.int)

## **SMOKING STILL SCOURGE OF ABORIGINES AND ISLANDERS**

Smoking is a scourge and among the most important health issues facing Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner Tom Calma, was ready to tell the Oceania Tobacco Control 09, Reducing Inequality through Tobacco Control Conference, in Darwin this week.

Commissioner Calma says smoking leads to the premature deaths of thousands of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and calls on community leaders, teachers, health workers and parents to lead by example.

"Cigarettes are not part of our culture and have no cultural support whatsoever," he says. "Smoking kills one in five Indigenous people either directly or indirectly. The statistics themselves speak volumes. Indigenous people are more than one and a half times more likely to die from lung cancer than non-Indigenous people.

"Similarly, the much higher death rates from heart disease and other chronic diseases in the Indigenous community are in a large part attributable to smoking. This death and disease is 100 per cent preventable," he says.

Studies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have shown low awareness levels of the health problems caused by smoking and Mr Calma advocates that mainstream anti-smoking education programs should be made more accessible to Indigenous people, tailored to Indigenous users. **DETAILS:** Louise McDermott 0419 258 597.

## **BETTER FAMILY PLANNING NEEDED TO ADAPT**

Voluntary access to family planning should be made more easily available to poor communities in least developed countries to assist their ability to adapt to the harmful effects of a changing climate according to an ANU researcher (8/10/09).

Associate Professor Col in Butler from the National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health co-authored a report calling for increases in voluntary, rights-based family planning to

complement other climate change adaptation programs in developing countries. The findings have been published in the Bulletin of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

**REPORT COPIES:** available on request: Penny Cox , ANU Media, on 02 6125 3549/0424 016 978.

### **SHARP DECLINE OF MALARIA CASES IN ZANZIBAR**

Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Global Health Program President Tachi Yamada says that since 2000, the number of malaria cases reported in more than 25 countries has decreased by half. Working with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and the World Bank, Zanzibar was able to virtually eliminate the disease by a combination of malaria nets and insecticides. The efforts resulted in a reduction of all childhood mortality by 30 per cent, reported [CNN](#) (6/10/09).

### **SOMALIA: ICRC SENDS URGENTLY NEEDED MEDICAL SUPPLIES TO KISMAYO**

In response to ongoing armed clashes in the area of Kismayo (southern Somalia), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has sent urgent emergency medical supplies to various medical facilities in Kismayo, Marheere, Dobley, Afmadow and Jilib (5/10/09).

"This weekend the Somalia Red Crescent Society sent two war surgeons and an anaesthetist to Kismayo to support the local hospital," said Dr Ahmed M. Hassan, the Somali Red Crescent president. "They took 400 kg of surgical supplies from the ICRC with them which were urgently needed for the treatment of war-wounded patients."

Local clinics in the Kismayo, Marheere, Dobley, Afmadow and Jilib areas were provided with dressing kits for treating up to 500 war-wounded patients. Last week the ICRC sent a truck from Mogadishu to Kismayo with 1,800kg of surgical and other medical supplies to cover the needs of 100 wounded patients.

The ICRC and the Somali Red Crescent call on all parties to the non-international armed conflict to comply with the rules of international humanitarian law by taking constant care in the conduct of military operations to spare the life and dignity of those not or no longer taking part in the hostilities, including civilians, captured fighters and the wounded.

ICRC reminds all parties to the conflict of their obligation to respect and protect medical staff and medical facilities and vehicles being used to care for the wounded and sick.

**DETAILS:** Pedram Yazdi, ICRC Somalia, on +254 722 51 81 42.

### **US SUSPENDS SOMALI AID OVER RECIPIENTS CONCERN**

American and UN officials are grappling with ways to police the distribution of U.S.-funded aid in Somalia over fears some of the supplies are being diverted to militant groups. The U.S. has suspended \$50 million in planned aid shipments until agreement on new distribution rules can be reached: [The New York Times](#) (1/10/09).

### **EYE SURGEONS THREATEN STOPWORK OVER MEDICARE CUTS**

Fred Hollows' dream of performing cataract surgery in remote areas of the state is in doubt after more than 50 eye surgeons threatened to stop operating on public patients in protest against cuts to Medicare rebates, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (3/10/09). The outback eye team, run by the Prince of Wales Hospital and inspired by Hollows, has been travelling to western NSW for 14 years to treat patients, but fears it might have to stop offering cataract surgery after an Australian Government decision to halve the Medicare rebate.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/national/eye-surgeons-threaten-ban-over-medicare-cuts-20091002-ggj1.html>

### **NEW WEBSITE HELPS PEOPLE WITH DEPRESSION**

*Home and Away* star Samara Weaving promised her support to a launch at Canberra's Parliament House of a new website to help people find online treatment for depression. Ms Weaving has backed the importance of young people having access to trusted online health information. (6/10/09). Beacon is a new interactive website jointly developed by the ANU

Centre for Mental Health Research, supported by the Mental Health Council of Australia and launched during Mental Health Week.

Beacon is a world-first compilation of online mental and physical e-health programs from all over the world. It provides a portal for consumers, health professionals and members of the community to gain access to these e-programs, provides a description of each and a scientific rating of effectiveness. To date, Beacon has reviewed 100 programs across a range of categories including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, social anxiety and eating disorders. **DETAILS:** Martyn Pearce, ANU Media Office on 02 6125 5575 / 0416 249 245.

### **AUSTRALIAN, BRITISH AND AMERICAN TRIO WINS NOBEL PRIZE**

Australian-born Elizabeth Blackburn, along with British-born Jack Szostak and American Carol Greider, have won the Nobel prize for medicine or physiology, the ABC reported (6/10/09).

The three scientists, who work in America, won the 10 million Swedish crowns (\$1.63 million) prize for their discovery of how chromosomes are copied and protected against degradation. The institute said the three had "solved a major problem in biology". "The discoveries have added a new dimension to our understanding of the cell, shed light on disease mechanisms and stimulated the development of potential new therapies," it said.

The ends of chromosomes are called telomeres and if these are shortened, cells age. Scientists had speculated that this process could be the reason for ageing, not only in individual cells but also in an organism as a whole.

Elizabeth Blackburn, who was born in Tasmania, is with the University of California, San Francisco; Carol Greider is with the Johns Hopkins School of Medicine in Baltimore and Jack Szostak is at the Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/05/2705473.htm>

### **PHOTOGRAPHERS FOCUS ON PEOPLE IN WAR AND CONFLICT**

A photographic exhibition, *Our World At War*, running from October 8/28 in Sydney, is a powerful reminder of both the suffering and dignity of civilians affected by conflicts around the world, an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) media release stated (2/10/09). The exhibition is at The Gallery, Darling Park, Tower 1, 201 Sussex Street, Sydney.

"These images give a voice to those who are often not heard of during armed conflict," said Tanja Mikulic, who lived in an internment camp during the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. "They reflect the efforts by ordinary people to reduce suffering in some of the most violent parts of the world." Ms Mikulic was due to speak at the launch on October 8, along with veteran war photographer Sean Hobbs. Mr Hobbs was to speak about his own experiences while on assignment in Afghanistan, Iraq and countries in Africa, including Uganda and Ethiopia.

The project began when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) joined with the VII photo agency to send five award-winning war photographers to eight countries affected by armed conflict – the Philippines, Afghanistan, Liberia, Georgia, Colombia, Lebanon, Democratic Republic of Congo and Haiti.

The photographers, James Nachtwey, Franco Pagetti, Antonin Kratochvil, Ron Haviv and Christopher Morris, captured dramatic images of individual stories of loss, suffering and strength: stories of women struggling to recover from sexual violence, families coping with displacement and people victimised by gang warfare. *Our World At War* is now being shown in more than 40 countries around the world to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. **DETAILS:** Pauline Wall, ICRC, on 61 2 93 88 90 39; [sydney.syd@icrc.org](mailto:sydney.syd@icrc.org)

### **PREVENTING HOSPITAL VISITS THROUGH TELEMEDICINE**

In the United Kingdom, where more than a quarter of the population are living with chronic conditions, a new telemedicine program motivates and coaches people to manage themselves - making sure they attend regular checks, lose weight, exercise, stop smoking

and eat more healthily (5/10/09). This article from the *WHO Bulletin* describes the program and how it is reducing hospital admissions.

[Read the WHO Bulletin article on telemedicine](#)

[Read more about eHealth](#)

## **F. MEDIA MATTERS**

### **IFJ URGES AUSTRALIAN TRAVEL WRITERS TO RETHINK MEETING IN FIJI**

The International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) strongly urged the Australian Society of Travel Writers (ASTW) not to accept a bid for its annual meeting to be hosted in Fiji next year, in view of the Fiji military regime's strict censorship and hardline in controlling news reporting.

The IFJ wrote to the ASTW on September 23 calling for it to reconsider any meeting in Fiji while restrictions continue against local media, an IFJ media release reported (2/10/09).

The IFJ said that ASTW members would be compromising their integrity to accept the hospitality of the regime in the current circumstances.

The letter from IFJ Asia -Pacific Steering Committee member Christopher Warren, who is also Federal Secretary of the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance, noted that while ASTW "members may be encouraged by Fiji's regime to visit and report favourably on Fiji, other foreign journalists risked being banned from entry while local journalists must daily bow to the demands of the newsroom censors".

The ASTW was reminded of its code of ethics, which states that members will "encourage responsible professional standards of reporting" and "safeguard the professional independence of travel writers". The society's stated mandate is to promote "unbiased reporting of information on travel topics".

"The IFJ believes that the staging of the AGM in Fiji would risk compromising the ASTW," Mr Warren said in the letter. "While ASTW members may seek to present a realistic picture of Fiji's current circumstances in their professional work as travel writers, they would be denied this right within Fiji, and any critical commentary in their journalistic or other work would be blocked from circulation within Fiji.

"Fiji is therefore not a suitable venue in which the ASTW can reasonably promote professional travel writing in keeping with the ASTW's code of ethics and international journalistic standards that support freedom of the media, expression and association."

The ASTW has told the IFJ it will circulate the letter to members after an online survey of members about whether to accept a bid to hold the AGM in Fiji.

The IFJ reported that its concerns followed a considerable worsening of the media situation in Fiji over the past 18 months, with police raids on media offices, deportations of publishers and editors, calls by military officers for media houses to be shut down, a 'watch list', bans on foreign journalists and contempt of court rulings with hefty punishments. In April 2009, the regime imposed emergency regulations with orders that journalists and media outlets submit "sensitive" news reports to officials. Full time censors have been placed in newsrooms.

**COPY OF IFJ LETTER:** <http://www.ifj.org/assets/docs/252/131/6da56fc-c099183.pdf>

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

### **KILLING OF NIGERIAN NEWS EDITOR CONDEMNED BY UN OFFICIAL**

The head of the UN responsible for defending press freedom condemned the recent killing of a Nigerian news editor, and called on authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice (6/10/09).

Bayo Olu, the assistant news editor of the Nigerian daily newspaper, The Guardian, was shot dead in his home on September 20 as he was preparing to attend church, according to a **news release** issued by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**).

“The shooters removed the victim’s laptop and mobile phone from the house, leading to speculation that the killing may have been linked to his work as a journalist, according to the International Press Institute (IPI),” the news release added.

UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura spoke out against the killing, stating that freedom of expression is a basic human right and its corollary, press freedom, is essential for democracy and rule of law.

“Therefore, I trust that the authorities, in the interest of the whole of Nigerian society, will do all they can to bring the culprits of this crime to justice,” Mr Matsuura said.

### **UNESCO CHIEF WELCOMES END OF PRESS RESTRICTIONS IN HONDURAS**

The decision by the de facto authorities in Honduras to lift an emergency decree imposing restrictions on freedom of expression in the wake of the surprised return of the ousted president was welcomed by Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**), the UN News reported (7/10/09).

He hoped the “wise decision” by the de facto government in the Central American country “will bear fruit for the benefit of all Hondurans.” Last week Mr Matsuura had voiced concern about the decree, which authorised the National Telecommunications Commission to suspend media outlets blamed for broadcasting messages hostile to the decisions of the authorities.

UN human rights officials have also spoken out in recent days about the suppression of civil liberties in Honduras in the months following the June ousting of President José Manuel Zelaya in a coup d’état.

Mr Zelaya made a surprise return to Honduras on September 21, and has sought shelter in the Brazilian embassy in Tegucigalpa, the capital.

Mr Matsuura said the fact that the restrictions on freedom of expression were being lifted “augurs well for the chance of a peaceful end to tensions in the country. Indeed, open and informed debate is an important condition for democracy and good governance,” he said. The Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Oscar Fernandez-Taranco has arrived in Tegucigalpa as part of a high-level mission led by the Organization of American States (OAS) to try to promote dialogue and the restoration of democracy.

### **POLICE ATTACK MEDIA PERSONNEL IN AFGHANISTAN**

The Afghan Independent Journalists’ Association (AIJA) reported that it had engaged in constructive dialogue with Afghanistan’s Interior Ministry after a series of attacks by police on journalists this week, according to the IFJ (8/10/09).

It reported that Wahkt News Agency (WNA) cameraman and photographer Mohammad Naeem was brutally assaulted by police in Kabul on October 5 while he was documenting the murder of a businessman and two security personnel by unidentified gunmen in military uniforms.

The police reportedly confiscated his camera and deleted all images related to the incident before beating him and holding him in detention for almost an hour. Mr Naeem was released and the camera returned to him after AIJA and WNA representatives complained to Interior Ministry spokesman Zalmay Bashary. Earlier, Tamadon TV journalist and cameraman Mahmood Fayeze was also reportedly assaulted by police in Kabul on October 3 as he was filming for a Tamadon TV program.

In a press conference on October 5, AIJA President Samander Rahimullah called on Interior Minister Mohammad Hanif Atmar to honour the government’s pledge to ensure better cooperation on the rights of journalists and media workers. The pledge was made in an official letter to the AIJA in which the government condemned police assaults on journalists.

"We call on the Interior Ministry to bring those responsible for the most recent attacks into account," Mr Samander said.

In unrelated incidents, two journalists from the Aman FM (Peace FM) station, situated near the military base of the US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kamdesh district in eastern Nuristan province, reportedly have been held captive by insurgents since October 3. The abduction occurred after an attack by insurgents on the district centre when eight American soldiers were reported killed.

Kamdesh officials reportedly denied knowledge of the identity of the two journalists. Peace FM has been operating for six months and is fully funded by the Nuristan-based PRT, broadcasting programs in local languages from the district. The AIJA local offices in Kunar and Nuristan are working to ensure the unconditional release of both journalists, AIJA said.  
**DETAILS:** IFJ Asia -Pacific on +612 9333 0919.

### **KUWAIT ANTI-CORRUPTION JOURNALIST ATTACKED**

The editor of a new website in Kuwait who has often criticised corruption in the Gulf state was wounded in an attack by an unidentified man, the website and a colleague have said, the ABC reported (6/10/09).

Zayed al-Zaid, editor-in-chief of Alaan, was hit on the face with a metal object in the street after attending a seminar on transparency and corruption, the site said, showing photos of a bloodied Zaid after the incident late on Sunday.

"I don't think this is a personal attack. I think this is an organised political crime," said Dahem al-Qahtani, a journalist at the website. "He wrote about corruption cases."

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/06/2705570.htm?section=justint>

**SEE ALSO: RUSSIA'S WAR ON WORDS** in [Articles in Focus](#).

### **PEOPLE, NOT LAWS, BLOCK FREEDOM OF INFORMATION**

For a standout example of what is wrong with freedom of information in NSW you cannot go past the Ombudsman's new report into the Office of the Board of Studies, reports Matthew Moore in the Sydney Morning Herald (5/10/09).

Over 120 pages the deputy Ombudsman, Chris Wheeler, has shredded the office over its handling of freedom-of-information applications made by former students seeking details of the standardised marking system that determines the marks 67,000 students are awarded each year in the higher school certificate exams.

Mr Wheeler was called in by students in 2007 to resolve a dispute that goes back to 2001, when a new HSC was introduced and several students tried to find out their actual, or raw, marks. His starting point reflects "the fundamental reason we have freedom-of-information laws: a belief that open access to information is the best way to ensure systems work as intended," says the report.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/society-and-culture/people-not-laws-block-freedom-of-information-20091004-ghu7.html>

### **WHO OWNS THE NEWS?**

It's a question no one has really been able to answer, though many try, says the ABC. A new fight for the answer is breaking out all over the place because readers are getting what they want on the internet, and copying stuff is really easy.

Stan Correy reports in [Background Briefing on ABC Radio National](#) (4/10/09) with comments from James Murdoch, of News Ltd, and Mark Scott, ABC Managing Director.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/backgroundbriefing/stories/2009/2699481.htm#t>.

### **TRADITIONAL NEWSPAPERS 'PICKING UP': MURDOCH**

News Corporation chief executive Rupert Murdoch said the traditional newspaper and television advertising markets are picking up, echoing growing sentiment that the media

industry may rebound from steep losses, The Australian reported (6/10/09). But in comments at a conference in Tokyo organised by *The Wall Street Journal*, the head of the global diversified media company said the importance of devising strategies to cope with the challenges posed by the spread of both internet advertising and free online access to news content remained paramount.

**REPORT:** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/business/story/0,28124,26171383-7582,00.html>

The rapidly growing information and communications technology (ICT) industry is set to see mobile subscriptions reach 4.6 billion worldwide by the end of the year, according to figures released by the UN telecommunications arm (6/10/09).

The data, published by the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), reveals that the ICT market continues to expand unabated, with subscriptions for mobile broadband services topping 600 million in 2009, outstripping fixed broadband by 100 million.

More than a quarter of the world's population is now online and using the Internet, according to ITU's ***The World in 2009: ICT facts and figures***.

"ICTs are vital within developing countries to ensure that ordinary people can fully participate in the knowledge economy of the 21st century," said ITU Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré. "We have seen a positive impact on services such as health and education in markets where ICT growth has been strong."

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32438&Cr=telecommunication&Cr1=>

#### **LANDMARK CASE OVER INTERNET OPENS**

The opening salvo in the landmark case by Australian and US film studios against the internet access provider iiNet over alleged illegal film downloads featured gunshots in the Australian Federal Court this week when lawyers showed a bank robbery scene from *The Dark Knight* to illustrate the copyright piracy the company is alleged to allow its customers.

The case, expected to become drawn-out court battle, threatens the survival of the nation's third-largest internet service provider after Telstra and Optus. The case will determine how far internet providers must go to police and prevent illegal downloading

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/biz-tech/illegal-downloads-case-gets-its-own-medicine-20091006-gldl.html>

#### **MICROSOFT, SYMANTEC, MCAFEE, BANKS FRONT CYBER CRIME INQUIRY**

IT industry leaders, such as Microsoft and computer security companies like Symantec and McAfee, plus consumer groups, and banks were due to appear before the Australian House of Representatives Communications Committee Inquiry into Cyber Crime over October 8/9 at NSW Parliament House, Sydney.

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), a US company that controls the domain name system, was also to answer questions on how Internet security could be strengthened. The committee was also due to hear the views of major IT companies, including Microsoft Australia, Symantec Corporation, McAfee and Lockstep Technologies on measures to promote online security and protect personal information. The NSW Police, the Privacy Commissioner for Victoria and IT professionals was to be represented, along with the Bankers Association, Commonwealth Bank and Westpac. Consumer issues were to be addressed by the Internet Society, the Australian Communications Consumers Network and the Australian Seniors Computer Clubs Association.

Committee Chairperson Belinda Neal said, "Cyber criminals are infecting the Internet with thousands of new pieces of unique malware everyday. These criminals are becoming more sophisticated, incorporating innocent PC users into massive botnets that steal credit card details and other personal information from online consumers. The Internet is rapidly expanding at the same time that broadband speeds will increase, so we must stay on top of the security issues."

“Internet services and e-commerce generates millions of dollars of profit each year. It is time for the industry to accept that, while user education is important, all the players have a responsibility towards their customers.

“The Internet performs an important public function and policy and lawmakers need to join with the Internet Service Providers, IT companies, Domain Name Registrars, law enforcement and consumers in a candid dialogue about roles and responsibilities.”

**DETAILS:** [www.aph.gov.au/coms](http://www.aph.gov.au/coms); Secretariat on 02 6277 4601.

**BACKGROUND:** Secretary on 02 6277 2300.

## **WAR 2.0: POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND NEW MEDIA**

How is new media changing the ways that conflicts around the world are fought and perceived by the public? This two-day conference featuring *Crikey's* Eric Beecher, Kate Geraghty and Paul McGeough from the *Sydney Morning Herald*, Julie Posetti and others were scheduled this week to explore the modern landscape of war.

**DETAILS:** <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/ir//Media/index.php>

## **G. OTHER NEWS**

### **SAN SUU KYI IN TALKS WITH GOVERNMENT**

Burmese pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi has met a member of the country's ruling military government for the first time since early 2008, the BBC reported (3/10/09). Ms Suu Kyi, who is under renewed house arrest in Rangoon, met labour minister Aung Kyi, her lawyer said.

The meeting came one day after a court rejected her appeal against her 18 month sentence. There was no official word on what they discussed, but Ms Suu Kyi has offered to help negotiate an end to sanctions. Ms Suu Kyi was reported to have recently made a formal offer to the military rulers to help negotiate an end to international sanctions.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8288379.stm>

### **IMF REVAMPS TO MEET NEW CHALLENGES**

Spurred by the worldwide financial crisis, the 186 member nations of the International Monetary Fund have agreed on a schedule for revamping the 65-year-old lender of last resort. In a meeting marked by contention, the nations agreed to extend the fund's mandate and grant broader voting privileges to emerging economic powers, while smaller European countries balked at the prospect of losing clout: [The Washington Post](http://www.washingtonpost.com) (7/10/09).

### **INDONESIAN UPDATE FOCUSES ON DEMOCRACY**

Experts from Indonesia, the US and Australia were gathering at the ANU to explore how Indonesia was shaping up to be one of Asia's most successful contemporary democracies.

A preview stated 2009 had been a big year in Indonesian politics, with national parliamentary elections in April and a presidential poll in July. It was also 10 years since the country held its first post-Soeharto democratic elections – but there seemed to be surprisingly few close studies of how the core democratic institutions in Indonesia actually work.

Keynote speaker Professor Larry Diamond from Stanford University was due to place the success of Indonesia democracy in a global context, reviewing the state of democratic progress and retreat in the world.

“In some respects of course, Indonesia has emerged as a surprising success story relative to countries like Thailand and the Philippines,” he said. “But many of the challenges it faces in building a vigorous and stable democracy with a strong rule of law and good governance are the same challenges that confront emerging democracies worldwide.”

**DETAILS:** <http://rspas.anu.edu.au/economics/ip/IU09>; Nurkemala Muliani on 0432 377 974.

## **PACIFIC ISLANDS SEEK GREATER 'OWNERSHIP' OVER DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS**

Pacific islands should turn the challenge presented by the global economic crisis into an opportunity to rethink the business-as-usual development approach pursued by governments in the region, decided a gathering of eminent Pacific thinkers at a recent East-West Centre workshop on the region's responses to the crisis (5/10/09).

Participants discussed problems in their various islands openly and expressed a deep conviction that only by focusing on their core values and envisioning different approaches towards growth could a desired future be realised.

The workshop, *Pacific Responses to the Economic Crisis: 'Business as Usual' or 'Getting Growth Right'?* was held in Honolulu over September 22/24 under the auspices of the East-West Centre's Pacific Islands Development Program ([PIDP](#)), in collaboration with the Oceania regional office of the International Union for Conservation of Nature ([IUCN](#)) in Suva, Fiji.

Dr Sitiveni Halapua, Director of the Pacific Islands Development Program, said that "the workshop began an open dialogue about inclusive governance mechanisms to ensure ownership of the decision-making process that prioritise Pacific islands' values in order to promote sustainable, equitable, and spiritual development of our own human and natural resources for the current and future benefit of our region's peoples."

The workshop brought together 18 participants, including former heads of government, current political leaders, development practitioners, prominent academics and civil society representatives such as church leaders and NGO representatives.

Discussions centred on Pacific values, sustainable development, aid dependency, subsistence economies, natural resource management, human development, education, alternative political and economic structures, land, climate change, and the need for equal and meaningful participation in the decision-making process that affects peoples' lives.

The workshop was seen as the first step in a critical long-term dialogue process that many feel had been missing in the region, where development decision-making has often been driven by donors, international lending agencies, or leaders perceived to be more closely tied to outside influences than their own people.

It was felt such decisions had generally been based on short-term time frames (either the election period or a donor planning cycle), made with limited knowledge and information about the ramifications of the decision, and merely reactive to a situation mostly beyond the control of the decision maker.

The discussion converged around the idea that new processes of engagement and information sharing, enhanced institutional collaboration, and more appropriate governance and economic systems must be put in place over the short, medium, and long terms to ensure Pacific Islands peoples' have the ability to more effectively shape their own, and their descendents, futures.

[EAST-WEST CENTRE](#) is an education and research organisation established by the US Congress in 1960 to strengthen relations and understanding among the peoples and nations of Asia, the Pacific and the US. **DETAILS:** Derek Ferrar, Media Relations, on 808 944-7204; [EastWestWire@EastWestCenter.org](mailto:EastWestWire@EastWestCenter.org)

## **OBAMA TO VISIT ASIA IN NOVEMBER**

US President Barack Obama will make his debut Asian tour next month, visiting Japan, Singapore, China and South Korea between November 12 and 19, the ABC reported (8/10/09). The White House said Mr Obama would first travel to Tokyo and continue to Singapore for the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation forum (APEC) summit, which will include meetings with regional leaders and the heads of government of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations bloc (ASEAN).

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/08/2707964.htm>

### **IRISH VOTERS ENDORSE EU TREATY**

Irish voters have strongly endorsed the European Union's Lisbon Treaty - 16 months after their first vote rejecting it plunged EU reforms into deadlock, the BBC reported (4/10/09). Irish Prime Minister Brian Cowen hailed the result as a "clear and resounding" endorsement. The EU Commission called it a 'vote of confidence' in the EU. Nearly all member states have ratified the Lisbon treaty. It is aimed at streamlining decision-making in the 27-nation bloc but cannot take effect until all member states have ratified it. The only other countries yet to ratify the treaty are the Czech Republic and Poland.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8288181.stm>

### **ANOTHER PAPANDREOU TO LEAD GREECE**

Greek Prime Minister Costas Karamanlis has conceded defeat to his socialist rival George Papandreou in the country's snap election, the ABC reported (5/10/09). The prime minister called the election two years ahead of schedule, as his administration became mired in scandal and was hamstrung by a one seat majority in parliament. Mr Papandreou will be the third member of his family to lead Greece since World War II.

### **NEW GREEK LEADER TO TAP DIASPORA**

Greece's socialist leader, George Papandreou, has been sworn in as Prime Minister amid clear indications his Government will seek to tap talent in the diaspora to address the crises facing the country, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (8/10/09).

The English-speaking prime minister, propelled into office by an overwhelming victory in Sunday's elections, put the finishing touches to a cabinet expected to show a change in style, with more women and younger ministers.

Mr Papandreou has promised a 100-day plan to tackle Greece's financial and economic crisis and the social malaise that generated deadly riots last winter. His background and entourage suggest an approach more open to the wider world than that of the previous administration. "Part of my identity is being a Greek of Greece and a Greek of the diaspora," Mr Papandreou said. "I think in many ways being Greek is being ecumenical, open to the world. We are a country that has always been open with ideas and contact with the rest of the world as a shipping nation and tourist destination." The US-born leader, 57, was educated in Sweden, Britain and Canada, and is a Harvard fellow.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/world/new-greek-leader-to-tap-diaspora-20091007-gn6c.html>

### **SECRET EU PLANS TO BECOME NEW GLOBAL POWER REVEALED**

The European Union has drawn up secret plans to establish itself as a global power in its own right with the authority to sign international agreements on behalf of member states, the Sydney morning herald reported (8/10/09). Confidential negotiations on how to implement the Lisbon Treaty have produced proposals to allow the EU to negotiate treaties and even open embassies across the world.

According to one confidential paper, the first pilot "embassies" are planned in New York, Kabul and Addis Ababa. A letter conferring a full "legal personality" for the EU has been drafted in order for a new European diplomatic service to be recognised as fully fledged negotiators by international bodies and all non-EU countries.

The move is highly symbolic in Britain as it formally scraps the European Community, the organisation that Britons originally voted to join in the country's only referendum on Europe 34 years ago.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/world/secret-eu-plans-to-become-new-global-power-revealed-20091007-gn6d.html>

### **FULL-FACE VEILING 'NOTHING TO DO WITH FAITH'**

Egypt's highest Muslim authority has said he will issue a religious edict against the growing trend for full women's veils, known as the niqab, the BBC reported (5/10/09). Sheikh Mohamed Tantawi, dean of al-Azhar University, called full-face veiling a custom that had nothing to do with the Islamic faith. Although most Muslim women in Egypt wear the Islamic

headscarf, increasing numbers are adopting the niqab as well. The practice is widely associated with more radical trends of Islam.

**REPORT:** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8290606.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8290606.stm)

### **ANU RECONNECTS WITH INDIGENOUS ALUMNI**

Indigenous graduates, staff and friends from the Australian National University have celebrated 20 years of the Jabal Indigenous Higher Education Centre at the university with the launch of the ANU Indigenous Alumni network, an ANU media release stated (2/10/09). ANU Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Lawrence Cram, launched the network.

“We have a wealth of talented and successful Indigenous graduates and staff from ANU that we are reconnecting with to develop a strong and active Indigenous alumni network,” he said. “We are steadfast in our commitment to advance reconciliation by building a proactive network of Indigenous students and staff to help foster a culture of shared understanding and increased participation.

“The Indigenous alumni arm will help shape the way the university moves forward with its larger commitment to reconciliation, which was formalised in July this year with the launch of the ANU Reconciliation Action Plan.”

Indigenous lawyer and PhD candidate with the ANU National Centre for Indigenous Studies, Terri Janke, presented public lecture, *Beyond Guarding Ground - A Vision for a National Indigenous Cultural Authority*. **DETAILS:** Penny Cox, ANU Media, on 02 6125 3549.

## **H. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT**

### **UN APPEALS FOR \$74 MILLION TO HELP FLOOD VICTIMS IN PHILIPPINES**

The UN has launched an appeal for \$74 million to help 1 million flood-stricken people in the Philippines – which has been hit by massive back-to-back storms – for the next six months, the UN Wires reported (6/10/09).

Some 300 people were killed when Tropical Storm Ketsana (also known as Ondoy) slammed into the South-East Asian nation last week, displacing hundreds of thousands. It brought the equivalent of one year's worth of rain in just 12 hours, and with waters rising so rapidly, people in low-lying areas sought refuge on their roofs to avoid being swept away.

The devastation wrought by that deadly storm was amplified by Typhoon Parma, which made landfall in recent days, killing at least 16 people and affecting 70,000 others. That storm struck an area focused on agriculture, resulting in a nearly \$120 million loss in crops. Pre-emptively, 35,000 people were evacuated, but the number of people sheltering camps is expected to rise to 100,000.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**), approximately 16,000 houses were destroyed by the storm and subsequent flooding, while a further 23,000 were partially damaged. Some 400,000 people were living in emergency shelters around the hard-hit capital, Manila, 80 per cent of which had been inundated. Many people expected to return to their homes once the water receded.

To jumpstart the appeal, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said he had allocated \$7 million for the Philippines emergency from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), set up to finance sudden-onset or under-funded crises.

The \$74 million flash appeal, he said, is the largest fund established for the Philippines. It was developed in partnership with the Philippines National Disaster Management Agency, and appealing organisations including UN agencies, the Philippines National Red Cross, the International Federation of Red Cross and others.

The UN World Food Program (**WFP**) is asking for \$26 million as part of the larger \$74 million appeal to fund its three-month emergency operation, already under way, to support the government's efforts by providing rice, beans and other food in the worst-hit areas of Manila

and surrounding areas. The agency is also giving logistical support to allow humanitarian agencies to access remote areas. WFP was rushing helicopters and inflatable boats to reach flood victims in remote areas with humanitarian aid. The UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) identified access to drinking water as the major and was asking for nearly \$13 million from the wider appeal. The World Health Organisation (**WHO**), sent medical supplies to nearly two dozen flooded hospitals and health centres.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32436&Cr=philippine&Cr1=>

### **NEARLY 70,000 CHILDREN RETURN TO CLASSES IN INDONESIA**

Less than one week after a major earthquake devastated the Indonesian province of West Sumatra, nearly 70,000 children have returned to classes in the city of Padang, according to local education authorities. UNICEF rushed school supplies to the region (5/10/09).

Following a call by Padang governor for children to try and go back to school wherever possible, UNICEF rapidly erected the first of a planned 250 classroom tents to provide temporary learning areas in the city; early on Monday morning, local education officials reported that just over 68,000 children - 40 per cent of students - had gone back to classes in Padang city, with more expected to follow across the region in the coming days.

**REPORT:** [http://www.unicef.org/media/media\\_51292.html](http://www.unicef.org/media/media_51292.html)

### **AID WORKERS REACH CUT-OFF VILLAGES**

Earthquake-ravaged Indonesian villages that had been cut off from rescue efforts for a week by impassable roads and landslides have been reached by aid workers who distributed food and water. Nearly 20 nations have sent aid workers to West Sumatra, with 50 tons of emergency supplies by ship and air: [Google/The Associated Press](#) (7/10/09).

### **TSUNAMI WARNING FOR PNG**

A tsunami warning has been issued for Papua New Guinea and island nations in the south-west Pacific after an 8.1-magnitude earthquake off Vanuatu, the BBC reported (7/10/09). The epicentre was 373 km (232 miles) north of Santo, Vanuatu's largest island, at a depth of 33km (20.5 miles), the US Geological Survey said. There have so far been no immediate reports of injuries or damage. More than 170 people died last week when a tsunami triggered by an quake hit Samoa, American Samoa and Tonga.

**REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8296080.stm>

### **INDIAN OCEAN NATIONS TO TEST UN-BACKED TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM**

Eighteen countries around the Indian Ocean Rim will participate in a UN-backed tsunami exercise on October 14 to coincide with World Disaster Reduction Day, the first time that the warning system set up following the devastating disaster that struck the region in 2004 will be tested (6/10/09).

More than 100 people died in Samoa last month, "providing a sober reminder that coastal communities everywhere need to be aware and prepared for such events," stated the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (**UNESCO**).

Following the 2004 tsunami, UNESCO – through its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) – helped countries in the region set up the Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning and Mitigation System (IOTWS). The upcoming drill will test the effectiveness of the system, identify weaknesses and areas of improvement, as well as aim to increase preparedness and improve coordination throughout the region.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32435&Cr=tsunami&Cr1=>

### **SUMATRA STOPS RECOVERY OF EARTHQUAKE BODIES**

West Sumatran authorities abandoned the recovery of earthquake victims' bodies in some remote villages, in a bid to avoid the spread of disease, the ABC reported (5/10/09). As torrential rain settled in, excavators were digging new holes to bury the dead again, as recovery efforts were abandoned in favour of a mass grave. It was thought thousands of people could still be buried under dirt and debris after the devastating 7.6-magnitude quake last week. In the isolated village of Tandidek, at least 200 people were killed at a wedding celebration at a restaurant. They ran outside but were swept away by a landslide.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/05/2704566.htm>

### **THREE KILLED AS FIERCE TYPHOON BATTERS PHILIPPINES**

At least three people were killed as Typhoon Parma battered the northern Philippines, the ABC reported (3/10/09). A mayor from the northern province of Cagayan said strong winds had torn off rooftops, brought down telephone lines and toppled trees. It was estimated 100,000 people had been moved to evacuation centres.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/03/2704082.htm>

### **WFP ROLLS OUT RAPID RESPONSE TO REACH FLOOD VICTIMS IN LAOS**

The UN World Food Program (WFP) rapidly expanded its operations in the Lao People's Democratic Republic to reach flood-affected populations following a destructive typhoon which hit the southern part of the country last week, destroying crops, depleting vital food stocks and impacting some 250,000 people. In the Philippines, an estimated 3 million people have been affected by severe flooding and more than a million have fled their homes.

"We are extremely concerned about people getting back on their feet following such devastating destruction," said WFP Executive Director, Josette Sheeran, speaking from Washington. WFP was working closely with both the Philippines Government and the Lao People's Democratic Republic to ensure that food and other supplies reached those in need as swiftly as possible. WFP has scaled up its operations in Laos to provide rations of rice and canned fish to the hardest-hit communities in the provinces of Sekong and Attapeu, where more than 90 per cent of land was flooded and hundreds of houses submerged under water.

### **THOUSANDS OF SAMOANS NOW HOMELESS**

A week after a powerful earthquake in the Pacific Ocean triggered a series of tsunamis that devastated a chain of islands in the region, the UN reported that thousands remained homeless and warned against the heightened risk of outbreaks of disease, the UN news reported (7/10/09).

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (**OCHA**) said that around 3,200 Samoans had been forced from their homes, while the death toll stood at 137 people, with 310 injured and six still missing in the aftermath of the 8.0 magnitude earthquake on the ocean bed.

OCHA said that assessments by the Samoan Red Cross (SRC) indicated that the September 29 earthquake, with its epicentre 190km south of the Samoan capital of Apia, sent waves crashing down on 40 villages along the south-eastern coast, completely destroying 20.

The government estimated the cost of damage to infrastructure, including public and private properties, amounts to around \$150 million as it downgraded the situation in the South Pacific island from a "state of disaster" to a "state of emergency."

The World Health Organisation (**WHO**) said UN agencies were conducting a comprehensive needs assessment and coordinating with the government to develop a plan for reconstruction and recovery, and that the health surveillance system was in place and reporting daily.

The UN Children's Fund (**UNICEF**) is on the ground in Samoa to meet the urgent needs of the estimated 9,000 affected children, 2,000 of whom were thought to be displaced.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32443&Cr=samoa&Cr1=>

### **AUSTRALIAN FORCES MOBILISE RELIEF FOR SUMATRA AND SAMOA**

Following acceptance by the Indonesian Government of an offer of emergency assistance, the Australian Defence Force launched its Indonesian earthquake relief effort (2/10/09).

Chief of the Defence Force, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said the Joint Task Force were deploying to Indonesia on C-130 and C-17 aircraft, sending a ten-man Army engineer reconnaissance team and a RAAF health assessment team. Also being sent were an ADF medical team and a 36-man civilian urban search and rescue team from Brisbane. He said

HMAS Kanimbla was sailing for Padang with a medical facility and a Sea King helicopter capable of delivering aid into more inaccessible areas. This latest operation was being managed alongside support currently being provided to the Samoan relief effort.

**DETAILS:** Defence on i02 6127 1999 or 0408 498 664.

### **250 DEAD, 2.5M HOMELESS IN INDIA FLOODS**

About 2.5 million people have crammed into temporary relief shelters after floods triggered by torrential rains tore down their homes in southern India over the last week and killed some 250 people, officials have said. Most of the deaths were reported from Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh state where rivers topped or breached their embankments. Some deaths occurred in the western Maharashtra state, the ABC reported (6/10/09).

The flooding - described by officials as worst in many decades in south India - swamped millions of hectares of cropland, including sugarcane plantations, prompting worries of a fall in sugar output in Karnataka, the country's third-biggest producer.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/06/2705563.htm>

### **ECUADOR PLANS TO REDUCE GALAPAGOS POPULATION**

The Ecuadorian Government is working to reduce the population of the Galapagos Islands, which doubled to 30,000 in the past 10 years to the dismay of environmentalists who believe the archipelago's delicate ecosystem is at risk. Officials hope that banishing some residents - including more than 1,000 in the past year - will preserve the unique natural attractions that draw millions of dollars in tourism each year: [The New York Times](#) (4/10/09).

### **ON HORIZON 2050 - BILLIONS NEEDED FOR AGRICULTURE**

Net investments of \$83 billion a year must be made in agriculture in developing countries if there is to be enough food to feed 9.1 billion people in 2050, according to an FAO **discussion paper** published (8/1/10/09).

Agricultural investment thus needs to increase by about 50 percent, according to the paper prepared for the High Level Experts' Forum on How to Feed the World in 2050, Rome 12-13 October 2009. Some 300 top international specialists will attend the meeting.

Required investments include crops and livestock production as well as downstream support services such as cold chains, storage facilities, market facilities and first-stage processing.

The projected investment needs to 2050 include some \$20 billion going to crops production and \$13 billion going to livestock production, the paper said. Mechanization would account for the single biggest investment area followed by expansion and improvement of irrigation.

A further \$50 billion would be needed for downstream services to help achieve a global 70 percent expansion in agricultural production by 2050.

Most of this investment, in both primary agriculture and downstream services, will come from private investors, including farmers purchasing implements and machinery and businesses investing in processing facilities.

In addition, public funds will also be needed to achieve a better functioning of the agricultural system and food security, the paper said. Priority areas for such public investments include: i) agricultural research and development; ii) large-scale infrastructure such as roads, ports and power, and agricultural institutions and extension services; and iii) education, particularly of women, sanitation, clean water supply and healthcare.

**DETAILS:** Christopher Matthews (Rome) on +39 06 570 53762;

[christopher.matthews@fao.org](mailto:christopher.matthews@fao.org);

**REPORT:** <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/36107/icode/>

### **LIGHT RAINS MEANS 'NEW RICE FOR AFRICA' CAN GROW**

The first rains arrived in June in Padibe-East County, part of the Kitgum District, close to the border between Uganda and South Sudan, the Food And Agriculture Organisation reported (2/10/09). It was a light rain, but very welcome for Alphonso Oyo, who had planted a new

variety of high yielding NERICA ('New Rice for Africa') rice, and was waiting impatiently for it to flower.

"These rains are late, and the flowering of my rice is behind as a result", he said. "But with the NERICA variety that I have planted on this dry and hostile soil here on the uplands, I am still hoping to get a good harvest in September".

Alphonso is already back working his old farm but about 1.5 million more internally displaced people are gradually moving back to their original lands after more than 20 years living a precarious existence in the refugee camps of northern Uganda. Their return is being helped by FAO's NERICA project, which is introducing innovative, rice-based farming systems to increase food security and reduce poverty in Uganda. Funding was provided by Japan (US\$1.5 million 2008-2010). **REPORT:** <http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/35606/icode/>

#### **AID TO AFRICA A SECURITY CONCERN: MACHEL**

Efforts to combat poverty in Africa are in the West's security interests and must remain a policy focus, Graca Machel, Nelson Mandela's wife, told European parliamentarians. European and African governments need to live up to their commitments, Machel said, and realise "that aid means saving lives, it's not a luxury": [AlertNet.org/Reuters](http://AlertNet.org/Reuters) (2/1/09).

#### **UN MEETING REACHES AGREEMENT ON MEASURING DESERTIFICATION**

The world's countries have agreed to a minimum set of indicators for monitoring and assessing the extent of desertification, drought and land degradation in what a UN official has called a "groundbreaking achievement" in the battle against a problem afflicting nations on every continent (3/10/09).

After two weeks of negotiations involving hundreds of scientists, government ministers and officials, the Ninth Session of the Conference of Parties to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) wrapped up today in Buenos Aires with consensus on the measurement indicators.

Luc Gnacadja, the Executive Secretary of the UNCCD, described the agreement as "good news and a groundbreaking achievement" for the treaty, which entered into force in 1996.

Mr Gnacadja said the ministers in Buenos Aires also had sent "a strong message" to the talks in Copenhagen this December aimed at striking a long-term deal to cut greenhouse gas emissions.

"A high level of convergence emerged at the ministerial segment on the need for a comprehensive new regime that includes the potential for soil in carbon sequestration, and serious attention to adaptation so that the poor are given their fair share of support." He said the ministers called for a review of the costs of action versus the costs of inaction regarding combating land degradation.

**REPORT:** <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32415&Cr=Desert&Cr1=>

#### **AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCE TRANSCRIPTS**

Australian Academy of Science transcripts of recent lectures relating to climate change are at: <http://www.science.org.au/events/publiclectures/re/index.htm>

**DETAILS:** Richard Bray, AAS, on 61 2 6201 9452; [www.science.org.au](http://www.science.org.au)

#### **SURGE IN AMOUNT OF ELECTRONIC RUBBISH**

More computers, televisions and mobile phones than ever are being buried in landfill, despite a national recycling push, reported the Sydney Morning Herald (5/10/09). The surge in electronic rubbish may be in part the result of the government's economic stimulus package, which led to record sales of "digital lifestyle products", an annual review by the Total Environment Centre and Environment Victoria concluded.

About 234 million electronic items will be dumped this year, 41 million up on last year, according to industry figures and government estimates. The report, *Tipping Point: Australia's E-Waste Crisis*, recommends a national scheme, to start next July, in which used TVs and

computers could be returned to central recycling depots. It would be funded by a price rise of up to \$35 on TVs and \$10 on laptop computers.

**REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/environment/surge-in-amount-of-electronic-rubbish-20091004-ghxa.html>

### **TIMOR SEA OIL LEAK KILLS BIRDS BUT 'IMPACT MINIMAL': MINISTER**

More birds have died as a result of the oil leak in the Timor Sea but Environment Minister Peter Garrett says the impact on wildlife has been minimal, the ABC reported (7/10/09). It has been more than six weeks since oil first started leaking from the West Atlas oil rig, and it is not clear how much oil has leaked into the water.

The director of Environs Kimberley, Martin Pritchard, has said he wants to know how much oil has leaked and where it might be going. "We'd like to see the oil spill trajectory model that the Australian Government has so that we can see where this is likely to end up, particularly now that we've got a change in seasonal weather patterns where this oil is likely to be heading towards the Kimberley coast," he said. Mr Garrett said the oil was still 150km from the Australian coastline and more than 100km from Timor.

**REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/07/2706750.htm>

### **HOW TO FEED THE WORLD IN 2050 - HIGH-LEVEL EXPERT FORUM**

By 2050, the world's population will pass the nine billion mark – a third more mouths to feed than there are today. Already more than a billion people are suffering from chronic hunger and malnutrition.

A High-Level Expert Forum, over October 12/13, in Rome, with more than 300 participants from around the world will address the challenge of feeding the world in 2050, which means not only producing 70 per cent more food than today despite the uncertainties stemming from climate change but also making sure everyone has access to the food they need.

The forum will bring together leading experts from academic, non-governmental and private sector institutions. They will debate the key issues in six panel sessions over two days, with the aim of identifying action-oriented solutions to feed into the World Summit on Food Security in Rome over November 16/18. The panel sessions will cover: the global outlook for agriculture up to 2050; available resources and the challenges of climate change and bioenergy; the technology challenge; investment needs; the role of trade; and the special challenge of Africa.

**WEBCAST:** The forum will be webcast under FAO Website: <http://www.fao.org/webcast/>

#### **PROVISIONAL PROGRAM:**

<http://www.fao.org/wsfs/forum2050/wsfs-programme/provisional-programme/en/>

**DETAILS:** FAO Media Relations Office on +39 06 5705 3625; [fao-newsroom@fao.org](mailto:fao-newsroom@fao.org)

### **MINING URANIUM FUELS A MASSIVE TOXIC PROBLEM**

The mining and export of Australian uranium only digs us deeper into the unsolvable conundrum of nuclear waste - while also supporting the growth of nuclear weapons, the Australian Greens said in a media release (6/10/09).

Responding to comments this week by Australia's Co-Chair of the International Commission on Nuclear Non-proliferation and Disarmament, Gareth Evans, the Greens' Nuclear spokesperson Scott Ludlam said that no one had managed to solve the nuclear waste problem.

"Meanwhile, we have every reason to be concerned that Australian uranium is being used for nuclear weapons proliferation," the senator said. "There are two options for our uranium exports: either they will end up in nuclear weapons or they will end up in a multinational toxic waste dump - which is why we should get out of this toxic and obsolete industry."

**DETAILS:** Eloise Dortch on 0415 507 763; [eloise.dortch@aph.gov.au](mailto:eloise.dortch@aph.gov.au)

### **RED GUMS 'HEAVILY STRESSED' IN NSW WETLANDS**

"An interim report by the Natural Resources Commission on the River Red Gum wetlands of south-western NSW has confirmed what many have repeated *ad nauseum* to the NSW

Government - this iconic ecosystem and forest is heavily stressed and likely to continue declining without intervention and protection," said Ian Cohen, Greens MLC (1/10/09).

"The Federal Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts told a Senate Committee hearing earlier this year that the logging 'has a very significant impact on the ecological character of the Central Murray Ramsar wetland," he said. "We should do as Victoria has done, recognise the extreme importance of these forests to our natural heritage and protect them in perpetuity by declaring them national parks."

**DETAILS:** Catherine Coorey 0402 315 345.

## I. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

### ABORIGINES DESERVE ELECTED BODY

The Australian Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission model for an indigenous congress is a chamber of peak associations and trusted insiders, writes Gary Johns, formerly a minister in the Keating Labor government and president of the Bennelong Society, in *The Australian* (6/10/09). It is not a directly elected chamber. The puzzle of the model and the government's entertainment of it is, why the retreat from democracy? Aborigines established their own representative bodies a long time ago, William Cooper's Australian Aborigines League in 1936 and the Federal Council for Aboriginal Advancement in 1958. They barely had a penny, but they had integrity that stemmed from membership. By contrast, in 2009 HREOC wants to establish a permanent national representative body as a private company limited, by guarantee "free from government influence/control". To achieve this it seeks \$250 million of government funding. I wonder what Cooper, sitting at his kitchen table in Melbourne's Footscray, would make of it ... Either this is a peak bodies' forum or it is a representative body. If it is a peak bodies' forum, it should fund itself. If it is a representative body it must allow for direct election of delegates. Where is the vote for Aborigines, or members who want to join? The HREOC proposal is fundamentally pessimistic about giving Aboriginal people the freedom to determine its own voice. A people that does not trust itself to vote is a people doomed.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26169140-7583,00.html>

### CLIMATE CHANGE POLITICS FLOODS AUSTRALIAN PARLIAMENT

Ben Block presents an outsider's view as he writes about the Australian climate change debate in *Eye on Earth, Worldwatch Institute's online news service* (25/8/09), saying that less than two weeks after being elected prime minister, Kevin Rudd signed the Kyoto Protocol. The move committed Australia to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. However, 20 months later, Rudd and his supporters were struggling to overcome opposition from fossil fuel lobbyists and Green Party allies to pass national climate change legislation. "Many Australian politicians are bracing themselves for a parliament-wide re-election, which [Rudd may initiate](#) if legislators do not agree upon a response to climate change ... The Parliament is scheduled to debate the law again in November ... "Australia, home to about 21 million people, is relatively small compared to the world's major greenhouse gas emitters. But the country relies heavily on coal for its electricity, a major reason why emissions are projected to reach [120-percent of 1990 levels by 2020 \[PDF\]](#), according to business-as-usual scenarios. Energy-related emissions rose some 35 per cent as the market for Australia's raw materials skyrocketed between 1990 and 2004. Australia is the world's largest coal exporter and [fifth largest exporter of liquefied natural gas](#). China and other Asian countries are the main destinations of energy-intensive Australian exports. Meanwhile, Australia - already the driest inhabited continent on earth - will likely experience reduced rainfall, higher sea and land surface temperatures, more severe storm events, and rising sea levels as results of climate change, according to the Australian Department of Climate Change. Supporters of swift climate action are hoping the government can avoid such a measure. "It is time for both sides of politics to put political point-scoring aside in the interests of the future of our planet," said Reverend Eleni Poulos, spokeswoman of the social justice arm of the [Uniting Church in Australia](#). *Ben Block is a staff writer with the [Worldwatch Institute](#). He can be reached at [bblock@worldwatch.org](mailto:bblock@worldwatch.org).*

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.worldwatch.org/node/6241>

## **FOSSILISED POLICY**

G-20 leaders voted to end subsidies for fossil fuels in the medium term in a bid to slash carbon gas emissions and curtail wasteful consumption. Each country will need to examine its own subsidy programs and arrive at the next G-20 meeting in 2010 with a plan to end their current systems, reports [The Economist](#) (1/10/09). Hopeful activists branded the annual UN get-together of world leaders in New York starting on September 20th "Climate Week". In the event it was a cold shower, failing to reach a breakthrough in the run-up to the climate-treaty talks in Copenhagen in December. But a decision taken later in the week by the G20 meeting in Pittsburgh helped make up for that. To little fanfare, world leaders decided to phase out fossil-fuel subsidies in the "medium term". That was a surprise. Discussions in the days before the meeting seemed to centre on how the rich world might come up with money to pay poor countries for their transition to greener energy—a crucial element in any deal at Copenhagen. But behind the scenes, talks on fossil-fuel subsidies were moving forward. Earlier in the month, the American administration had started putting out feelers about cutting subsidies; President Barack Obama floated the idea in his speech to the UN on September 22. On Friday 25th the G20 announced a move that few had expected on Monday morning—and with an American stamp on it.

### **ARTICLE:**

[http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story\\_id=14540043](http://www.economist.com/world/international/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14540043)

## **THIS WRETCHED PLACE NEEDS SO MUCH, BUT ARE WE PREPARED TO DELIVER?**

Coalition allies are in an uncomfortable state of limbo, awaiting direction from Barack Obama on where he will take the increasingly unpopular war in Afghanistan, Cynthia Banham writes in the Sydney Morning Herald (2/10/09). Will he heed the sobering assessment given by his commander in Afghanistan, General Stanley McChrystal, and provide the resources necessary for a successful counter-insurgency? Or will he opt for the less ambitious strategy favoured by Vice-President Joe Biden, aimed at keeping terrorists at bay, rather than rebuilding the failing state? This brief interlude offers Australia an opportunity to contemplate what it is doing in Afghanistan. Are we there to make a difference to the lives of Afghans or to manage the US alliance? ... Let's not kid ourselves. Australia's current contribution in Afghanistan is having a negligible impact. It is entirely about alliance management. Whether we should care depends on what strategic importance we place on the stability of Afghanistan, a question which polarises the global foreign policy establishment. Whether Australia *could* make a difference in a country so racked by corruption and led by a government lacking legitimacy following the recent election debacle, is another divisive question.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/this-wretched-place-needs-so-much-but-are-we-prepared-to-deliver-20091001-geis.html>

## **GALBRAITH RESPONDS TO AFGHANISTAN DISMISSAL**

Former UN Deputy Special Representative to Afghanistan Peter Galbraith writes about his dismissal from his position in Afghanistan, following a disagreement over whether the UN mission should respond to electoral fraud, according to Galbraith, in the Washington Post (4/10/09). "Afghanistan's presidential election, held Aug. 20, should have been a milestone in the country's transition from 30 years of war to stability and democracy. Instead, it was just the opposite. As many as 30 per cent of Karzai's votes were fraudulent, and lesser fraud was committed on behalf of other candidates. In several provinces, including Kandahar, four to 10 times as many votes were recorded as voters actually cast. The fraud has handed the Taliban its greatest strategic victory in eight years of fighting the US and its Afghan partners. The election was a foreseeable train wreck. Unlike the United Nations-run elections in 2004, this balloting was managed by Afghanistan's Independent Election Commission (IEC). Despite its name, the commission is subservient to Karzai, who appointed its seven members. Even so, the international role was extensive. The US and other Western nations paid the more than \$300 million to hold the vote, and UN technical staff took the lead in organising much of the process, including printing ballot papers, distributing election materials and designing safeguards against fraud."

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/02/AR2009100202855.html>

### **RUSSIA'S WAR ON WORDS**

Three years ago today Anna Politkovskaya, a courageous journalist who exposed appalling human rights offenses in Chechnya, [was shot](#) five times as she entered her Moscow apartment building. She was not the first Russian journalist to be slain for performing the invaluable function of bringing buried truths to light. Sadly, there have been, and will be, more murders. And we all pay the price, writes K. Anthony Appiah in the Washington Post (7/10/09). Westerners were inclined to think during the Cold War that a democratic Russia would be better for Russians and for us. Yet 20 years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, hopes for genuine democracy in Russia remain unrealized. A major reason is the parlous condition of the Russian media. In the United States, an investigative journalist who unsettles the powerful can win accolades; in Russia, such a journalist can expect to be gunned down. A liberal democracy depends on reporters who follow the story and publish what they learn. It cannot flourish when the pursuit of investigative journalism carries an informal death penalty. The writer, a philosophy professor at Princeton University, is president of the board of trustees of the PEN American Centre, the US branch of the world's oldest international literary and human rights organisation.

**ARTICLE:** <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/06/AR2009100602834.html?wpisrc=newsletter>

### **REGULATION: DOUBTS OVER POLITICAL RESOLVE FOR REFORM**

As the world's banking system teetered on the brink of collapse just about a year ago, there were widespread, heartfelt, calls for reform, Norma Cohen writes in the Financial Times (5/10/09). Politicians of all stripes on both sides of the Atlantic, spurred on by taxpayers' outrage at the cost of bailing out those who ought to need help least, vowed to get tough. No longer would banks be allowed to become too big to fail, or bankers be rewarded for taking risks that prove the undoing of their institutions. But just one year later, as the world's economy begins to emerge from a severe recession and some big banks once again appear profitable, it is not clear that the political resolve remains as strong.

**ARTICLE:** [http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5cf43a1a-b14b-11de-b06b-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=Late\\_headline1/NL/APOct2009/Vanilla\\_wdecon/0/](http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5cf43a1a-b14b-11de-b06b-00144feabdc0.html?ftcamp=Late_headline1/NL/APOct2009/Vanilla_wdecon/0/)