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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 286 weeks left in which to radically lower emissions.

Please note it may be necessary to copy and paste links into the browser or address space.

A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES

HR COUNCIL BACKS GAZA REPORT

The UN Human Rights Council has backed a report into the Israeli offensive in Gaza that accuses both Israel and Palestinian militants of war crimes, the BBC reported (16/10/09).

The report by Richard Goldstone calls for credible investigations by Israel and Hamas, and suggests international war crimes prosecutions if they do not. Twenty-five countries voted for the resolution, while six were against. Both Israel and the US opposed official endorsement of the report, saying it would set back Middle East peace hopes. The Palestinian Authority initially backed deferring a vote, but changed its position after domestic criticism.

Palestinians and human rights groups say more than 1,400 Gazans were killed in the 22-day conflict that ended in January, but Israel puts the figure at 1,166. Thirteen Israelis were killed.

Earlier, the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner had insisted that now was the time to end the "culture of impunity" which pervaded.

REPORT: http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8310754.stm

ICC PROSECUTOR EXAMINES GUINEA MILITARY ACTIONS

International Criminal Court prosecutor Luis Moreno-Ocampo has initiated an investigation into the Guinea military's recent crackdown on political opponents and protesters. More than 150 people died and thousands were wounded on September 28 when security forces opened fire on a demonstration against military ruler Captain Moussa Dadis Camara:

AlertNet.org/Reuters (15/10/09).

ISRAEL AND PALESTINIANS 'MUST REFRAIN FROM INCREASING TENSIONS'

Worrying developments on the ground had increased tensions in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict over the past month and it was vital that both sides refrain from provocative actions, the top United Nations political official said (14/10/09).

"While the immediate crisis may have passed, we remain concerned about the broader situation in East Jerusalem and the potential for renewed tensions," Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe told the Security Council, referring to incidents around the Haram al Sharif/Temple Mount site, sacred to both Jews and Muslims.

"Even with the full determination and support of the international community to achieve a two-state solution, the essential ingredient is political will from the parties to meet their obligations and negotiate an end to the conflict," he said in a monthly report on the conflict.

Mr Pascoe cited clashes in Jerusalem between Israeli police and Muslim worshippers at al-Aqsa mosque and subsequent confrontations, with the Islamic Movement of northern Israel claiming radical Jewish groups intended to alter the status quo of the holy site.

"The Israeli authorities strongly deny these rumours," he said. "Bitter accusations from both sides, however, underline the gulf of mistrust that exists." He stressed that the issue of the Old City of Jerusalem would only be fully resolved in final-status negotiations as part of the Roadmap peace plan championed by the so-called Quartet – the UN, European Union, Russia and the United States – that calls for two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

"Until then, the repeated call of the Quartet on Israel to refrain from provocative actions in East Jerusalem and on the Palestinian Authority to refrain from incitement remains more relevant than ever," he said, citing continuing Israeli "illegal" settlement activity in Palestinian areas.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32536&Cr=palestin&Cr1=>

ISRAEL MOUNTS CAMPAIGN OVER GAZA REPORT

Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has conceded that his government's mishandling of the United Nations' Goldstone report on the war in Gaza has strengthened Hamas, The Age reported (15/10/09).

Under pressure from the US, the Palestinian leadership refused to endorse the report, sparking furious protests across the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The severity of the backlash forced Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to reverse the decision. The Palestinians are also calling on the Human Rights Council to condemn Israel's recent closure of the Haram al-Sharif, or Temple Mount, area, and demand that UN institutions obligate Israel to end the siege of the Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, Israel was reported to be preparing a vigorous diplomatic campaign to stymie attempts by the Human Rights Council to censure it over the war in Gaza. As part of the Israeli PR campaign, President Shimon Peres, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Defence Minister Ehud Barak and Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, were expected to talk to heads of state and ask them not to support the report. Israel is likely to warn that adopting the report meant ending the peace process.

The UN Human Rights Council was due to begin debate on Thursday (15/10/09) on a move to censure Israel over its conduct of the war in Gaza.

REPORT: <http://www.theage.com.au/world/israel-mounts-campaign-over-gaza-report-20091014-gxel.html>

UN GRANTS SPECIAL VOTE ON GOLDSTONE REPORT

The UN Human Rights Council will hold a special session in Geneva to address the report compiled by South African judge Richard Goldstone, per a request by the Palestinian Authority co-sponsored by 18 members of the HRC. Though Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas previously had agreed to delay a vote on the report for six months, he is pressing for a vote sooner -- which could potentially prompt a war-crimes hearing. The session comes the day after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out against Goldstone's report and pledged no Israeli would ever be put on trial for war crimes: [Al-Jazeera](#) (13/10/09).

GAZA ECONOMY RELIES ON TUNNEL SYSTEM

Economic activity in the Gaza Strip is dependent solely on a network of underground tunnels to Egypt that bypass official crossings and provide a supply lifeline while the area continues to languish under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade. Israel, which often seeks to bomb and destroy the network over concerns it is used to transport weapons, targeted the tunnels in an aerial assault after a reported rocket attack: [BBC](#) (14/10/09) and [TIME](#) (13/10/09).

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ERADICATION OF POVERTY MESSAGE - October 17

Today we recognise the daily struggles and contributions of those living in poverty and resolve to intensify efforts to eliminate the scourge once and for all.

At a time of multiple global crises, the poorest and most vulnerable have a special claim on our attention. We know that, in any recession, those hurt first—and worst—are the poor. According to recent estimates, the global economic crisis has claimed at least 50 million jobs this year. As many as 100 million more people are expected to fall below the poverty line in 2009. Climate change further compounds the problem.

The theme of this year's observance, 'Children and Families Speak Out Against Poverty', coincides with the 20th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We recognise that investing in children and securing their rights is one of the surest ways to ending poverty.

Despite our world of plenty, children's basic needs are still being sidelined. Millions of children continue to be deprived of an education, with many more at risk of dropping out of school. This is particularly true for girl children.

Yet we also know that common sense investments to meet the Millennium Development Goals can make a profound difference. In areas where global investments have been scaled up – such as AIDS, TB, malaria and vaccine-preventable diseases – we are seeing heartening progress. There has also been notable success in reducing under-five mortality. These gains suggest how we can accelerate progress toward those MDG targets where the world is still far behind – by investing in key areas such as primary education, basic infrastructure and maternal health.

The United Nations system is responding to the crisis on a number of fronts - promoting food security, building a greener economy, ensuring stronger safety nets and putting forward a Global Jobs Pact. We are also developing a Global Impact and Vulnerability Alert System—GIVAS—to create a networked capacity for real-time data collection and analysis. Policies must be driven by a solid picture of developments on the ground.

We are at a critical juncture in the fight against poverty. Now is the time to amplify the voices of the vulnerable and ensure that the world follows up on its pledges. With the right investments and concrete action, we can build upon the gains, fulfill our commitments, and ensure that every man, woman and child has the opportunity to make the most of their potential.

- Ban Ki-moon

UN EXTENDS PEACEKEEPING MISSION IN HAITI

The UN adopted a unanimous resolution to extend the 9,000-person peacekeeping mission in Haiti for one year, though UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon suggested the mission be tweaked for more rapid deployment to rural areas and the coast. The mission will see a slight reduction of troops and a slight increase in police. The UN first deployed peacekeepers to Haiti in 1994 after a bloody coup ousted President Jean-Bertrand Aristide. [Google/The Associated Press](#) (10/13)

BAN PAYS TRIBUTE TO FALLEN BLUE HELMETS IN HAITI

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon paid tribute today to 11 peacekeepers serving with the UN mission in Haiti who were killed when a plane crashed last week, hailing them for helping the Caribbean country's people "fulfil the enormous promise of their proud nation," UN News reported (13/10/09)

A plane had been on a routine surveillance flight near the border with the Dominican Republic when it struck the mountain on Friday, according to the mission, known as **MINUSTAH**.

"Those we remember today were patrolling from the skies, but they could see something farther on the horizon: a brighter and more hopeful future for all the people of Haiti," Mr Ban said in a **message** to a memorial service delivered by his Special Representative, Hédi Annabi, in the capital, Port-au-Prince.

"They ventured far from home to serve the shared values that bind us together as a human family," he added. The peacekeepers came to Haiti to protect the country's borders and help victims of last year's devastating storms and hurricanes, the Secretary-General noted.

"These 11 brave men put everything into a painting a picture of a rising Haiti, more secure, more hopeful, more strong." The bodies of the fallen blue helmets were to be repatriated after the service, MINUSTAH said.

In a related development, the Security Council today **extended** that mandate by one year of the mission, which has been in place in Haiti, the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, since mid-2004 after the then president Jean-Bertrand Aristide went into exile. Currently there are more than 9,000 military and police personnel deployed and nearly 2,000 civilian staff.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32518&Cr=pakistan&Cr1=>

UN REMEMBERS COLLEAGUES KILLED IN BRUTAL BOMBING

The UN remembered five fallen colleagues who were working on the frontlines against hunger when their lives were brutally cut short by a suicide bombing last week at the headquarters of the World Food Program (**WFP**) in the Pakistani capital (13/10/09).

"The victims of this senseless attack were working tirelessly on the frontlines of hunger and human suffering to assist the poor and the vulnerable of Pakistan," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a **message** to the memorial ceremony in Islamabad, attended by diplomats, government officials and UN staff members.

"Their selfless work to feed the hungry should not have been dangerous. It was part of the humanitarian mission of the United Nations to aid those in need." He pledged the UN would not be deterred by this "senseless" violence.

"Yes, we must continue to be vigilant about the dangers of the world we live and work in. But our resolve will stay strong and our work – which is against no-one and for the benefit of many – will continue," he said. "This is the best way to honour the memory of our fallen colleagues."

The victims included veteran information and communication technology expert Botan Ahmed Ali Al-Hayawi, who left his native Iraq to work for WFP in Jordan, Sudan and then Pakistan. Staff assistant Farzana Barkat, nearly 23, was at her desk when the blast, on October 5. Abid Rehman, a senior finance assistant, had worked with WFP since 1998. Gul Rukh Tahir was a receptionist, the first to greet those entering the WFP offices. Mohammad Wahab, a meticulous and industrious finance assistant, was loved for his jokes.

"These were people who were dedicated to helping their countrymen who had been displaced and needed food," WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran **said**. She inspected the wrecked headquarters, met families of victims and visited injured staff in hospital.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32518&Cr=pakistan&Cr1=>

CALL FOR WOMEN'S RIGHTS TO BE RECOGNISED

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all nations to renew their commitment to women's equality to commemorate the 15th anniversary of a breakthrough 1994 UN session on promoting women's education and ending sexual violence. The rights affirmed during that conference - including a universal right to sexual and reproductive health - stood as goals instead of reality for many of the 180 signers, he said: [Google/The Associated Press](#) (13/10/09).

REPORT URGE PACIFIC TO BUILD RESILIENCE AGAINST ECONOMIC

A new report, *Pacific Economic Survey 2009, engaging with the world*, was launched in Tonga (14/10/09) by Australia's Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance Bob McMullan. The survey also proposes countries capitalise more fully on the overseas image of the Pacific as a tropical paradise and further develop tourism and niche markets for organic and other products unique to the Pacific and East Timor.

REPORT:

http://www.ausaid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Latest&ID=1676_4392_5572_512_1898

AUSTRALIA BACKS INDIA FOR SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT

At the India-Australia Foreign Ministers Framework Dialogue in New Delhi on October 13, the Indian Minister of External Affairs S M Krishna and the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Stephen Smith underlined the strong bonds and enduring shared interests which bind India and Australia together. Mr Smith reiterated Australia's strong support for a permanent seat for India on the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

REPORT: <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2009/fa-s091013.html>

FIVE SET TO RUN UNOPPOSED FOR NON-PERMANENT SECURITY COUNCIL SEATS

The General Assembly is expected to elect Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Gabon, Liberia and Nigeria as non-permanent members of the Security Council for two-year terms starting on January 1 next year, the UN News reported (14/10/09).

The five countries were set to run unopposed in their respective regions. Voting was scheduled for Friday (16/10/09) at UN Headquarters in New York. This would mark the first time since 2004 that there has been a Security Council election with no contested seats.

Gabon and Nigeria was endorsed as candidates by the African group and, if chosen, would succeed Burkina Faso and Libya. Brazil was set to replace Costa Rica in the Latin American and Caribbean category.

In Eastern Europe, Bosnia and Herzegovina was the only declared candidate for the seat currently held by Croatia, while Lebanon won regional endorsement from the Asian group to succeed Vietnam.

Council elections are conducted by secret ballot in the General Assembly, and winning candidates require a two-thirds majority of ballots of members present and voting. Formal balloting takes place even when there is only one declared candidate per available seat. The five countries chosen will join Austria, Japan, Mexico, Turkey and Uganda, whose terms on the 15-member body end on December 31 2010. The five permanent members are China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States.

AUSTRALIAN PEACE EDUCATOR NOMINATED FOR UNESCO AWARD

Australian peace educator Dr James Page has been nominated for the prestigious *UNESCO Madanjeet Singh Prize for the Promotion of Tolerance and Non-violence*. The nomination was made by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) in Geneva. The major work for the nomination was the book by Dr Page, *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*, published by Information Age Publishing.

Dr Page is an educationist with a special interest in peace research and education. He is currently a member of the Group on International Perspectives on Government Aggression & Peace (GIPGAP), research social attitudes to war, peace and intolerance.

DETAILS: WILPF International: <http://www.wilpf.int.ch/>; WILPF Australia: <http://www.wilpf.org.au/>; **BOOK:** <http://www.infoagepub.com/products/peace-education>

RIGHTS GROUP WARNS UN OVER DRC CIVILIAN CASUALTIES

A United Nations-backed offensive in the Democratic Republic of Congo against Rwandan Hutu rebels is exacting a heavy toll on civilians and the UN should end its involvement if local populations cannot be protected, several dozen humanitarian and rights groups say. More than 800,000 people have been displaced and 1,000 civilians killed since the offensive began in January: [Reuters](#) (13/10/09).

KARADZIC IMMUNITY APPEAL REJECTED

Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic has lost his appeal that war crimes charges against him be dropped, the BBC reported (13/10/09). He had appealed against a court ruling made in July that a trial would still be held despite his claim of immunity. However, he was successful in appealing against the start date of his trial. International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) at the Hague. Due to start on October 21, it has been postponed for five days as Mr Karadzic wanted more time to prepare.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/8305707.stm>

UN PHILIPPINES APPEALS FINDS FEW FUNDERS

A United Nations appeal for \$74 million in funding to aid millions of victims of storms and flooding in the Philippines has raised only a quarter of the funds. The Philippines is struggling to cope with the aftermath of two back-to-back typhoons that left hundreds dead and hundreds of thousands homeless: [BBC](#) (13/10/09).

KARZAI QUESTIONS FRAUD INVESTIGATION AFTER UN RESIGNATION

Incumbent Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai expressed concerns about strong suspicions raised about the legitimacy of his apparent re-election after the resignation of Mustafa Barakzai from the UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission - the body tasked with investigating electoral fraud in Afghanistan. Supporters of Karzai's rival candidate, Abdullah Abdullah, say Karzai is behind the resignation. Karzai has further sought to position himself as a close ally to those in Washington pushing for the deployment of more US troops to Afghanistan: [BBC](#) and [Reuters](#) (13/10/09).

AFGHAN MEMBER OF UN-BACKED ELECTION FRAUD PANEL STEPS DOWN

Maulavi Mustafa Barakzia, one of only two Afghans on the UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission, resigned and blamed "the interference of foreigners" as the reason. UN spokesman Aleem Siddique said his resignation was "regrettable, but the work of the Election Complaints Commission must continue," says [Google/The Associated Press](#) (12/10/09).

CZECH PRESIDENT HOLDS OUT ON LISBON TREATY

In an effort to get around the last impediment to the Lisbon Treaty, the Czech prime minister has sought assurances that maverick Czech President Vaclav Klaus will allow the agreement to proceed in return for written assurances his country can opt out from its charter of fundamental rights, which Klaus believes would expose his country to property demands from ethnic Germans, reported [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (12/10/09).

SOUTH AFRICAN JUDICIARY ALSO ON TRIAL

In a case seen as a crucial test of the South African judiciary in the wake of new president Jacob Zuma's pledge to fight political corruption, the trial of the nation's former UN ambassador Jackie Selebi opened last week with testimony from the man Mr Selebi is accused of attempting to bribe. But few observers expect major reforms to result from the trial of the African National Congress member: [TIME](#) (12/10/09).

INTERPOL AND UN TO PARTNER TO FIGHT CRIME

There will be fewer places for criminals to hide once the new UN/Interpol-backed "global policing policy" is launched. Representatives from 60 nations, including the US and China, were meeting in Singapore to discuss the joint effort to increase the world's ability to track the movement of criminals through shared resources such as DNA records, fingerprints, photographs and fugitive notices: [The New York Times](#) and [The Washington Post](#) (12/10/09).

From the UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS OF AUSTRALIA

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

The South Australian Division has published its Spring newsletter, featuring the first World Peace March, Australian Human Rights Commission president Catherine Branson, the UN Secretary-General's appeal to UN members for unity to face the world's challenges and Grameen Bank founder Professor Muhammad Yunus and other UN and human rights items.

SA NEWSLETTER: UNAASA Newsletter Spring 2009.pdf (591KB)

DETAILS: John Crawford: johncraw@internode.on.net

- John Crawford, Vice-President

B. CLIMATE CHANGE

UN PANEL HEAD SEES WRIGGLE ROOM FOR CLIMATE DEAL

Despite fears of failure facing global climate change negotiations in December, the UN climate panel chief said on Wednesday it was still possible to agree a pact, including levels of emission cuts by rich nations, Reuters reported (9/10/09).

Talks for a treaty to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, which obliges 37 rich nations to cut emissions by an average of 5 per cent below 1990 levels by 2008-12, are deadlocked on the question of cuts to be taken by rich and poorer countries (14/10/09). Developed nations will also have to come up with billions of dollars in climate aid and green technologies for the poor.

"The wriggle room is there even at the stroke of midnight when the conference is ending," said Rajendra Pachauri, chairman of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. "Now I am not saying that's a very healthy development and that probably involves a lot of compromises that may or may not be the best possible."

REPORT: <http://www.alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/DEL548223.htm>

MORE CLARITY ON COPENHAGEN BUT FINANCE AND OTHER TARGETS REMAIN

The penultimate negotiating session before the historic UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December wrapped up last week in Bangkok with progress made on what needs to constitute the “bricks and mortar” of the Copenhagen agreed outcome, but a continuing lack of clarity on key deliverables to make a successful international climate change deal workable (9/10/09).

“A will has emerged in Bangkok to build the architecture to rapidly implement climate action,” said UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer, “but significant differences remain. In December, citizens everywhere in the world will have a right to know exactly what their governments will do to prevent dangerous climate change. It is time now to step back from self interest and let the common interest prevail,” he said.

Parties made progress on the issues of adaptation, technology transfer and capacity building. They also reached agreement on technical issues such as forests and land use, how to assess the global warming potentials of new greenhouse gases and the number of options for strengthening the Kyoto Protocol’s Clean Development Mechanism.

However, little progress was made on the issue of mid-term emission reduction targets for industrialised countries. And clarity is lacking on the issue of finance that developing countries need to undertake additional actions to limit their emissions growth and adapt to the inevitable effects of climate change.

“A good example with regard to what industrialised countries can do to increase the level of their ambition in the context of an international agreement at Copenhagen is the minus 40% emissions reduction target announced by Norway today,” the UN top climate change official said.

The negotiations in Thailand will be followed by five days of pre-Copenhagen negotiations in Barcelona (2-6 November) before the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen (7-18 December).

“Negotiators have three weeks back in their capitals to receive guidance from their political leaders to complete their work,” said Yvo de Boer. “Bold leadership must open the roadblocks around the essentials of targets and finance that the negotiators can complete their journey.”

The UN climate change committee reported that the heads of state and government meeting in New York in September identified five politically essential issues to deliver a comprehensive, fair and effective Copenhagen agreement.

The climate change deal clinched in Copenhagen is to ensure enhanced action to assist the most vulnerable and the poorest to adapt to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, world leaders have agreed that clarity must be provided on ambitious emission reduction targets of industrialised countries, as well as the need for nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries with the necessary support.

A beacon to guide discussions is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s finding that an aggregate emission reduction by industrialised countries of between minus 25% and 40% over 1990 levels would be required by 2020, and that global emissions would need to be reduced by at least 50% by 2050, in order to stave off the worst effects of climate change.

The fourth essential identified by heads of state and government is that the Copenhagen agreed outcome needs to generate scaled-up financial and technological resources, with a mechanism put in place that would funds to be generated automatically over time. Finally, they have agreed that the Copenhagen deal needs to create an equitable governance structure to manage funds for adaptation and mitigation that address the needs of developing countries.

With 192 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership and is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. The

Kyoto Protocol has to date 184 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialised countries and countries undergoing the process of transition to a market economy, have legally binding emission limitation and reduction commitments. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.

DETAILS: Eric Hall, spokesperson on +66 81 925 0238; ehall(at)unfccc.int

UN URGES CLIMATE NEGOTIATORS TO AVOID SELF-INTEREST

The shape of a broader climate pact was clearer after marathon talks in Bangkok, the UN said, as rich nations were urged not to ditch the Kyoto Protocol or dodge tough emissions cuts (9/10/09).

Speaking near the end of two-week UN talks on ways to draw all nations into the fight against climate change, the world body said leaders had little time left to show more ambition on a deal to brake the rapid growth of planet-warming carbon emissions.

"All the ingredients for success are on the table and what we must do now is step back from self interest and let common interest prevail," Yvo de Boer, the head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat, said.

The Bangkok talks were the last major negotiating session before a December 7/18 meeting in Copenhagen meant to agree on a broader framework to expand or replace the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the UN's main weapon in the fight against climate change: AlertNet.org/Reuters (9/10/09). **REPORT:** <http://alertnet.org/thenews/newsdesk/SP428032.htm>

NO CONSENSUS EMERGED FROM BANGKOK

The conclusion of two weeks of climate talks at a UN meeting featuring representatives of 180 nations did not find consensus with regard to carbon emissions cuts - or a framework for debate at the climate summit in Copenhagen. Developed and developing nations disagree over whether the Kyoto protocol should serve as the basis for the treaty that will replace it: The Christian Science Monitor (9/10/09).

HISTORY OFFERS 'SCARY STORY'

A new historical record of carbon dioxide levels suggests current political targets on climate may be "playing with fire", scientists say, the BBC reported (10/10/09). Researchers used ocean sediments to plot CO2 levels back 20 million years. Levels similar to those now commonly regarded as adequate to tackle climate change were associated with sea levels 25-40m (80-130 ft) higher than today. Scientists write in the journal *Science* that this extends knowledge of the link between CO2 and climate back in time.

The report indicates in the intervening millennia, CO2 concentrations have been much lower; in the last few million years they cycled between 180ppm and 280ppm in rhythm with the sequence of ice ages and warmer interglacial periods. Now, humanity's emissions of greenhouse gases are pushing towards the 400ppm range, which will very likely be reached within a decade. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/science/nature/8299426.stm>

BAN URGES OPINION MAKERS TO SPREAD GREEN TECHNOLOGIES MESSAGE

Green technologies generate not only environmental advances but also promote economic growth, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said, calling on opinion-makers at a Seoul forum to encourage businesses and governments to make climate-friendly investments, the UN News reported (14/10/09).

In a message to the World Knowledge Forum, delivered by the President of the United Nations Foundation Timothy Wirth, Mr Ban called on governments "to show the flexibility and leadership" that will seal a "fair, ambitious and binding" global climate agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen this December. "Investing in green technologies yields not only environmental gains but also large-scale economic growth," he said.

Established in October 2000, the forum gathers more than 100 business executives and policy-makers from around the world to grapple with the major challenges facing humankind.

“The world is over-armed; the nuclear threat persists,” said Mr Ban, “but now is also a moment of opportunity, as momentum builds toward next year’s nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Review Conference.” Urging participants to play their part in efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (**MDGs**), a set of targets for solving social and economic problems, Mr Ban said the World Knowledge Forum could serve as a catalyst in the struggle to eradicate poverty.

“The global economic downturn threatens to push an additional 100 million people below the poverty line. Governments everywhere are facing increasing budgetary pressures but this is no time to renege on past pledges of aid and investment.” The focus of this year’s forum is Asia, which “has a great stake in international efforts to combat climate change, reduce nuclear arsenals and overcome poverty,” said Mr Ban.

SEABED PLANTS FORM EFFICIENT CARBON SINK

Although mangrove, salt marshes and seagrass beds cover less than 1 per cent of the world's seabed, these oceanic plants lock away half of all carbon buried on the ocean floor, making them one of the most efficient carbon sinks on the planet, according to a report from three UN agencies. The report, entitled *Blue Carbon*, was produced in collaboration by UNEP, UNFAO and UNESCO and concludes that halting the destruction of these plants' habitats would be one of the most efficient ways to cut carbon emissions: [The Times \(London\)](#) (14/10/09).

SEAL THE DEAL: UN HELPS COMMUNITY TO ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHANGE

With small communities the least equipped to cope with climate change, a UN-backed pilot project is helping to boost their resistance to coastal erosion, sea-level rise, increasingly erratic rainfall, and other effects of global warming, the UN News reported (13/10/09).

Ten countries are taking part in the Community-Based Adaptation (**CBA**) scheme, an initiative of the UN Development Program (**UNDP**) which is funded by the Global Environment Facility (**GEF**), a global partnership among 178 countries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector to address global environmental issues.

“We provide the technical support to the communities who want to understand what climate change is and how they could potentially deal with it,” said Pradeep Kurukulasuriya, a UNDP technical adviser for GEF Adaptation Programming.

Climate change is projected to increase the frequency and intensity of hurricanes and strong storms, while causing rainfall levels to decline, resulting in erosion and landslides in the region. This, coupled with unsustainable land management practices including slash and burn, which involves cutting and burning forests to create agricultural fields, is expected to make the area increasingly unsuited for farming crops requiring cool and moist climates.

The initiative aims to reforest slopes vulnerable to climate-driven erosion and landslides, as well as to promote soil conservation techniques and alternative livelihood practices.

“There is consultation with the communities at every level,” said Dale Rankine, National Coordinator of GEF’s Small Grants Program (SGP), adding “We engage and empower all communities,” underscoring the importance of local-level engagement in adaptation projects.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32530&Cr=climate+change&Cr1=>

KASHMIR GLACIER MELTING AT ALARMING' RATE

The largest glacier in Indian Kashmir, the Kolahoi, is melting faster than other glaciers in the region, threatening the water supply to tens of thousands of area residents, Indian scientists warn in a report: [AlertNet.org/Reuters](#) (12/10/09).

PLAN FOR CARBON NEUTRAL POWERHOUSE

The Australian Greens Party on Monday launched its Safe Climate Bill, which it described as “the first legislative attempt to transform Australia as swiftly as possible into a flourishing carbon neutral powerhouse.”

A Greens statement says, "For many, this might seem out of reach, but we humans are capable of amazing things when we set our minds to it. Setting a safe climate target would inspire the community and unleash a wave of creativity, of innovative job creation that is right now champing at the bit, as well as improving our quality of life and reconnecting our communities." It claims the plan would result in a massive transformation in the Australian economy, a transformation that will require the creation of hundreds of thousands of new jobs.

"Some industries will inevitably be replaced, as thousands of industries such as photo film and horse power have throughout history. Part of the job of government is to make that transition as painless as possible."

The bill is presented as a collection of 12 linked bills based around the pillars of renewable energy, energy efficiency, clean transport and forest protection, supported by a carbon pricing scheme. The bill as a whole and each of its constituent elements are intended as exposure drafts for public comment and debate. **DETAILS:** http://greensmps.org.au/webfm_send/262

FOUR CHAIN THEMSELVES TO COALMINE CONVEYOR BELT

Four people have chained themselves to the conveyor belt of a coal mine at Helensburgh, south of Sydney, the ABC reported (11/10/09). The three women and one man, in their early 20s, were protesting against the expansion of the Metropolitan Colliery, Australia's oldest coalmine. One of the protesters, Clare Silcock, said the protest is aimed at highlighting the impact the coal mine is having on the local environment. "It's part of the climate camp that's been going on at Helensburgh, which is around the theme of water, climate and jobs to protest against the expansion and continued export of so much coal from the southern coalfields," she said. **REPORT:** <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/11/2710652.htm>

\$7.34M FOR POTABLE WATER PIPELINES IN SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Australian Minister for Climate Change and Water, Senator Penny Wong, and South Australian Minister for the River Murray, Karlene Maywald, announced up to \$7.34 million in funding for potable water pipeline extensions to Point Sturt and Hindmarsh Island, South Australia (14/10/09). Up to \$120m will go towards the cost of irrigation and drinking water pipelines for communities dependent on the Lower Lakes, through the Lower Lakes Integrated Pipeline Network. The project will service areas seriously impacted by water shortages which recently have had to rely on water carting.

REPORT: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/wong/2009/mr20091014.html>

C. HUMAN RIGHTS

UN RIGHTS CHIEF SPEAKS OUT AGAINST DEATH PENALTY IN IRAN

UN human rights chief called for changes to Iranian laws to end the death penalty for juvenile offenders, and also voiced serious concern about the death sentences handed down to three people for their involvement in the recent post-election protests (13/10/09).

Behnoud Shojaie, who was executed on Sunday, had been convicted of the murder of another boy in a street fight when both were 17, according to an Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**) news release.

Both High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay and UN special rapporteurs had raised his case with the Iranian authorities, reminding them of their international obligation not to execute juveniles. Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, both of which prohibit the death penalty for juvenile offenders.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32517&Cr=iran&Cr1=>

PROFESSOR CONDEMNS 'DUMPING' REFUGEES OVERSEAS

Indonesian authorities have stopped more than 2000 asylum-seekers from reaching Australia's shores in the past two years, The Australian reported (15/10/09). Immigration Minister Chris Evans confirmed the figure as it emerged 260 asylum-seekers detained at the weekend could be sent to an Australian-funded detention centre in Sumatra.

In a video, featured by The Australian, Professor James Hathaway, on a Sky News video, said although Prime Minister Rudd had got rid of some of the "hideous measures" of the Howard Government, Australia, which had signed the Refugee Convention, now was being "flagrantly objectionable" by dumping people in overseas countries that Australia knows had not signed the treaty. The refugees' request for protection was legitimate, he said. Professor Hathaway, Dean of Melbourne Law School, is internationally recognised in refugee law.

[REPLAY VIDEO](#)

REPORT: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,26212952-5013871,00.html>

SRI LANKANS SAY THEY ARE FLEEING GENOCIDE

Almost 260 Sri Lankans aboard a boat moored in Western Java have made a desperate plea to Australia and other countries to consider their bids for asylum, saying returning to Sri Lanka is no longer an option for Tamils who wish to survive, the ABC reported (15/10/09). The group was intercepted in Indonesian waters at the weekend after a phone call from Prime Minister Kevin Rudd to Indonesia's President Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono.

Journalists went on board to speak to the asylum seekers, who were refusing to leave. A man with fluent English, called 'Alex', came forward, the ABC reported.

"There are people in the camps right now being murdered even today as we speak, as we are sitting comfortably on this boat in the shores of Indonesia, there are still Tamil people in Sri Lanka who are dying every day," Alex said. "This is why most of these people here have fled from genocide in Sri Lanka and trying to find a future somewhere else." After thanking PM Kevin Rudd for accepting many previous refugees, he said they had come "believing that Australia will accept us into their country." The Tamils were determined not to leave their boat and have threatened self-harm if forced.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/15/2714544.htm>

BOAT BLAST SURVIVORS GET REFUGEE STATUS

Asylum seekers who survived a boat explosion off Ashmore Reef earlier this year will be granted refugee status in Australia, the ABC reported (12/10/09). The 42 Afghan men were to be released into the community but it is believed the Australian Government will deport any who are subsequently convicted of serious charges over the incident.

The boat, known as SIEV 36, was carrying 47 asylum seekers, and two Indonesian crew, when it exploded while being escorted by the Australian Navy in April, leaving five people dead and many injured. Earlier this month a Northern Territory Police investigation found at least one asylum seeker intentionally had set fire to the boat before it exploded.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/12/2711016.htm>

MORE BEDS NEEDED FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS

Extra asylum seekers arriving on the outlying Christmas Island have forced Australia's government to bring in hundreds of extra bunk beds, Radio Australia reported (13/10/09). More than 1,000 asylum seekers are being held on Christmas Island, with 56 more on the way. The island, off the north-west coast, is nearing its capacity of 1,200 detainees. Immigration Minister Chris Evans said he has a plan to cope with any further arrivals.

REPORT: <http://www.radioaustralianews.net.au/stories/200910/2713440.htm?desktop>

WE CAN DO BETTER THAN ITALY'S WAREHOUSING ON LAMPEDUSA: CURR

"They did not drown. They died of thirst", the UN worker on Lampedusa told me, reports Pamela Curr, Campaign Coordinator Asylum Seeker Resource Centre (ASRC) in the National Times (14/10/09). In the busy shipping lanes of the Mediterranean, 75 Eritrean men, women and children died of thirst in an open boat.

Five survivors told the UN worker that 10 ships witnessed their plight and sailed away. "This is the dark side of dehumanising asylum seekers. The result is that civilised nations can avert their gaze as asylum seekers die. Maybe Australians need to recall our history in this game as our politicians begin the anti-refugee war games again," writes Ms Curr.

REPORT: <http://www.nationaltimes.com.au/opinion/politics/we-can-do-better-than-italys-warehousing-on-lampedusa-20091014-gwh8.html>

ASIAN NATIONS SEEK GREATER REFUGEE RIGHTS

With more refugees on the move but few Asian countries giving them a warm welcome, representatives of civil society and non-governmental organisations from 19 Asian and Pacific countries met in Thailand to plot a strategy to press for greater refugee rights, reported UNHCR (12/10/09).

The second meeting of the UNHCR-backed Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN), which ended on Saturday, brought together more than 100 individuals representing advocacy groups from a broad region where protection of refugees often depends on political discretion rather than written laws.

"Much of Asia is a vacuum in terms of asylum law and institutions," Raymond Hall, UNHCR regional representative and regional coordinator for South East Asia, told the opening session. "Our strategy should be to encourage governments to change this and to take a greater degree of ownership over refugee protection. With large-scale irregular migration and increasing numbers of people seeking asylum, the day may come when governments close down the fragile protection space that does exist," he said.

REPORT: <http://www.unhcr.org/4ad331cf6.html>

UNHCR SUBMISSION ON REFUGEES

Recommendations in a submission by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees *Inquiry into Migration Amendment (Immigration Detention Reform) Bill 2009* Senate Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee (5/8/09) were:

1. It should be made clear that the Government's *New Directions in Detention* policy applies throughout the Commonwealth of Australia, including any territories excised from the 'migration zone';
2. The Government's Key Immigration Detention Values should be explicitly incorporated into Australia's legal framework, including clear guidelines for the reception of asylum-seekers on Christmas Island;
3. All decisions to detain an asylum-seeker, refugee or stateless person should be based on an individualised (case-by-case) basis and the reasons should be limited to those authorised by international law and standards;
4. All decisions to detain an asylum-seeker, refugee or stateless person should be subject to review in accordance with Article 9(4) of the 1966 ICCPR. In all cases, reasons should be given in writing to record the basis of the detention, and include periodic reviews for its ongoing necessity;
5. Mechanisms established to provide review of the decision to detain should be prescribed in legislative form to ensure clarity, transparency and predictability; and
6. Specific criteria relating to the decision to detain, and the reasons for its ongoing necessity, in particular when a person presents an unacceptable risk to the community, should be established and prescribed in legislative rather than regulatory form.

DETAILS: http://www.unhcr.org.au/pdfs/2009-08-05_ImmigrationDetetentionReformBill2009.pdf

HR REPORT IMPORTANT AS AUSTRALIA SEEKS SECURITY COUNCIL SEAT

As Australia is seeking a seat at the UN Security Council, the political situation "was looking pretty good" for discussion of the Human Rights Report, Fr Frank Brennan, chairperson of the National Human Rights Consultation Committee, said at the National Press Club, Canberra, on Wednesday. The report was recently handed to Australia's Attorney-General.

The report was unlikely to take precedence over more pressing issues such as the financial stimulus and emissions trading, but he suggested that those who queried the committee's recommendations should take a close look at the chapter in the report outlining the huge response throughout Australia, when most favoured a human rights act.

He was comfortable and delighted with the report, which recommended a human rights act, he said. The recommendations were confined to the Commonwealth (Federal) Government, and did not refer to governments of Australia's states and territories. While Australia had an

ombudsman, a human rights commission and a senate which the government of the day did not usually control, his committee still believed a human rights act would be an improvement. The matter was now in the hands of the Australian Government, he said.

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

FECCA CALLS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS ENGAGEMENT AND DIALOGUE

The Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia (FECCA) called on Australia's multicultural communities to get active in the human rights debate, as FECCA welcomed the recently released National Human Rights Consultation Report (14/10/09).

"FECCA strongly endorses the National Human Rights Consultation Report's call for a National Human Rights Act. Ideally such an act should provide better human rights protection for ethnic and religious minorities while also maintaining the sovereignty of the Parliament," said Voula Messimeri, FECCA chairperson.

"FECCA would also like to see greater recognition of the freedom of cultural and linguistic expression in any government response to the report. These standard civil and political rights also need to be recognised in the report's otherwise extensive final recommendations (25) around civil and political rights. FECCA recommended in its submission to the national consultation that these rights (as well as the right to religious expression which is explicitly recognised) be better protected.

"FECCA encourages multicultural communities to get engaged in the human rights debate and ensure that our voices are heard as the Government considers its response to the report's recommendations. A critical component of human rights is the protection of ethnic and religious minority rights. These rights must include the freedom of cultural, linguistic and religious expression for minority groups be they Indigenous Australians, older migrants in their golden years or recently arrived refugees," said Ms Messimeri.

DETAILS: FECCA: 02 6282 5755

AUSTRALIAN REVIEW OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITY FOR WOMEN IN THE WORKPLACE

The Australian Minister for the Status of Women announced a Review of the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace and Agency (EOWA) and its underlying legislation, the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace (EOWW) Act (14/10/09).

The EOWA Review will examine the effectiveness and efficiency of EOWA and the EOWWA in promoting equal opportunity for women in the workplace. The government wants to ensure that regulation is working, is well-targeted and cost-efficient.

SUBMISSIONS: due on October 16. **DIFFICULTIES:** Australian Government Office for Women on 02 6212 9059.

DETAILS: www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/eowa/index.html

EOWA REVIEW:

www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/women/progserv/economic/Pages/eowa_review.aspx.

SURVEY: www.surveys.kpmg.com/mmi/2w44CSP/Link.html

D. PEACE & SECURITY

BAN COUNTS ON COUNTER TERRORISM TASKFORCE TO FIND ANSWERS

The UN task force charged with coordinating the world body's counter-terrorism efforts met in Vienna, with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warning: "We are far from reaching safer shores," the UN News reported (14/10/09).

The Counter-Terrorism Implementation Task Force (CTITF), set up in 2006, brings together two dozen UN entities, working under mandates from the assembly, the Security Council and various specialised agencies, funds and programs.

"Countless innocent civilians and the United Nations itself have suffered heinous terrorist acts," Mr Ban said a **message**, delivered by CTITF head Jean-Paul Laborde. "Our efforts to address this problem comprehensively are crucial to global security."

He noted that some entities in CTITF were focused directly on terrorism, while others brought expertise on non-proliferation, disarmament, education, cultural and inter-religious dialogue, human rights, peacekeeping, health and other issues.

“This range of experience allows the UN to address terrorism as part of our broader mission to promote development, human rights and peace. It also promotes synergies and information-sharing, and allows each entity to maximise its comparative advantage.”

The UN had brought the world a long way in advancing multilateral counter-terrorism cooperation, but “we are far from reaching safer shores,” he said, saying he counted on the task force to advance the journey towards peace and security for all. The meeting followed a two-day workshop of national counter-terrorism officials, the first ever such meeting on the working level, to devise ways to implement the UN global counter-terrorism strategy, looking at actual practical aspects and identifying real needs and key gaps.

PEACE MARCH TO CIRCLE EARTH STARTS IN NEW ZEALAND

The First World Peace March to circle the earth started in New Zealand with a Peace March in Wellington, New Zealand, on October 2, the anniversary of Mahatma Gandhi’s birth and UN International Day of Non-violence. The march will end in the Andes Mountains at Punta de Vacas, Aconcagua, Argentina, on January 2 2010.

In Auckland on September 27, around 300 local activists joined the Base Team in support of the march. On the Pacific Island of Rekohu, the first inhabited island to receive the first rays of the sun at the start of each day, a blessing ceremony was held for the World March with the local Moriori people who renewed their own Covenant for Peace. This ceremony is an ancient one which commemorates the time when the Moriori renounced violence for ever, even at risk of their own lives.

World Peace March organisers reported the beautiful ceremony was a fitting moment to connect with the ‘inner march’ - the profound reasons which have motivated members of the Base Team to sacrifice three months of their lives and much of their savings for this peace endeavour.

The World March for Peace and Nonviolence is calling for the end of war, nuclear weapons and the elimination of violence of all kinds - physical, economic, racial, religious, cultural, sexual, psychological - to help build a new, global, non-violent consciousness.

The 160.000 Km route of the march is divided into six parts: New Zealand -> India; 2. India -> Moscow; 3. Moscow -> Rome; 4. Rome -> New York; 5. New York -> San José (Costa Rica); 6. San José (Costa Rica) -> Punta de Vacas (Argentina).

On October 11, the Middle East team of the World March reached Tel Aviv in Israel, following its Egyptian leg. This leg was marked by a meeting with the Director of Music and Dance at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, and with the Municipal Councillor, Meir Margalit, of the Meretz party.

The University Director, as a way of promoting the march’s ideals, is organising a concert of traditional and modern, multicultural music (Jewish, Arabic and Western), performed by an ensemble of both students and teachers, on December 16. This event will be linked to concerts in Buenos Aires and other cities around the world on the same day.

Municipal Councillor Margalit took the opportunity of the march to present a number of local proposals to improve the situation in Jerusalem. One proposal was to create a division in the city that was not territorial but functional, making it the capital of the two states. It was suggested this would mean Israeli or Palestinian administrations would be set up, reported the WPM organisers, saying the proposal was supported by some Israelis and a majority of Palestinians.

"It seems like a Utopian proposal, but it's the only way of creating the collective will to share territory," said Councillor Margalit. The day ended with a visit to All for Peace Radio, which broadcasts activities connected to peace and non-violence.

The march will last 90 days, travelling through 90 countries over all six continents, celebrated by activities and events along the route. It will pass through all climates and seasons, from the hot summer of the tropics and deserts, to the icy cold of Siberia and Antarctica.

DETAILS: <http://www.theworldmarch.org/>

ETHICAL CHARTER: <http://www.theworldmarch.org/index.php?secc=cartaetica>

ICAN WELCOMES PARLIAMENTARIANS CALL ON NUCLEAR WEAPONS

The International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) has welcomed the Australian parliamentary inquiry's call for Australia to play a leading role in ridding the world of nuclear weapons through a global Nuclear Weapons Convention (NWC). In addition, ICAN's Bill Williams and James Norman discussed the importance of US President Obama's vision for a nuclear weapons free world in a piece published in The Age prior to the recent UN Security Council meeting chaired by US President Barack Obama.

REPORT: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/stars-align-in-quest-to-rid-the-world-of-nukes-20090923-g2m8.html> **SEE also Articles in Focus.**

SOUTH EAST ASIA/PACIFIC

AUNG SAN SUU KYI MEETS WESTERN DIPLOMATS

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi met with British, US and Australian ambassadors to discuss the status of European Union sanctions against the country. The move follows her letter in September to the leader of the military junta expressing her willingness to discuss the lifting of sanctions: [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (10/10/09).

ASIA

CIVIC DYSFUNCTION PREVALENT IN AFGHANISTAN

Recent reports and interviews with administration and military officials suggest seven months after US President Barack Obama deployed 17,000 troops to support the war in Afghanistan and bolster the nation's civil institutions, many of those institutions remain in a state of dysfunction. Afghans frequently turn to a shadow Taliban court to administer justice, while the nation is so dangerous that aid workers cannot usually work outside the capital: [The New York Times](#) (11/10/09).

BRITAIN READY TO SEND MORE TROOPS

Britain is ready to raise troop numbers in Afghanistan by 500 to 9,500, Prime Minister Gordon Brown said, providing certain conditions were met, 7 News/Yahoo reported (15/10/09). Worsening violence in the eight-year, US-led war against the Taliban has led to calls for a change of strategy, including the option of sending more troops to bolster security. More than 100,000 Western troops are serving in Afghanistan, of whom 65,000 are American. The number of US troops is already due to increase to 68,000 later this year. US President Barack Obama is considering a military recommendation to boost his force with a further 40,000 troops next year.

REPORT: <http://au.news.yahoo.com/a/-/world/6219858/britain-ready-to-send-500-more-troops-to-afghanistan/>

AID MONEY 'DOES NOT REACH AFGHANS'

An extraordinary 40 per cent of the billions of dollars in aid destined for Afghanistan does not even reach the country, a top international specialist on the region has warned. Anthony Cordesman, from the US Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said in Canberra the massive waste of international aid was one of the great failures of the campaign to win the war in Afghanistan (13/10/09).

The UN was presiding over an uncoordinated and unmanaged mess, said Dr Cordesman, who has advised the Obama Administration and the US military extensively on Afghanistan and Pakistan as they plan a new strategy to defeat the insurgency. "This is a major problem,"

he said. In a speech to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Dr Cordesman said international aid efforts needed to be refocused on the needs of Afghan people and made specific to individual communities. He confirmed the worst reports about corruption in the recent elections, saying the President, Hamid Karzai, had "stuffed the ballot boxes in a remarkably clumsy way".

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/world/massive-waste-of-aid-harms-afghan-campaign-says-specialist-20091013-gvqm.html>

TALIBAN WEALTHIER THAN AL-QAIDA: US TREASURY OFFICIAL

The Taliban are in much stronger financial shape than al-Qaida and rely on a wide range of criminal activities to pay for attacks on US and coalition forces in Afghanistan, a senior Treasury Department official has said, reported the Times of India (13/10/09).

David Cohen, the US department's assistant secretary for terrorist financing, said the extremist group extorts money from poppy farmers and heroin traffickers involved in Afghanistan's booming drug trade. The Taliban also demand protection payments from legitimate Afghan businesses, he told a conference on money laundering enforcement. He said al-Qaida was a cash-strapped organisation that was losing its influence.

REPORT: <http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/us/Taliban-wealthier-than-al-Qaida-US-Treasury-Dept-assistant-secretary/articleshow/5118292.cms>

NORTH KOREA AGREES TO TALKS WITH SOUTH KOREA

North Korea has agreed to hold talks with South Korea this week, a day after it test-fired short-range missiles, the BBC reported (13/10/09). The talks will be on how to avoid cross-border flooding, and arrangements for reunions between family members divided by the Korean War. The agreement to the talks came amid reports that the North may be preparing to launch more short-range missiles. The North is under pressure to return to international talks about ending its nuclear program.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8303986.stm>

RELEASE OF NEPALESE CHILD SOLDIERS APPEAL

A senior UN official appealed for the swift and orderly release of nearly 3,000 Nepalese minors who served as Maoist army personnel in the country's civil war and yet remain in temporary camps, three years after a peace deal ended the conflict (13/10/09).

"These children have a right to start their lives anew and help to build a peaceful and prosperous Nepal," said Radhika Coomaraswamy, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, according to a press release issued by her office. Ms Coomaraswamy also welcomed the re-launch of the discharge and rehabilitation process of over 4,000 former Maoist fighters – including the child soldiers – in Nepal. The UN and its partners stood ready to provide support and assistance for their successful rehabilitation into Nepali society.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32529&Cr=nepal&Cr1=>

MIDDLE EAST

WILPF COMMENTS ON GAZA UN FACT-FINDING MISSION GOLDSTONE REPORT

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom commented on the situation in Gaza as described in the Goldstone report, stating women were particularly affected by the Gaza crisis, facing poverty, psychological distress and unemployment (30/9/09).

WILPF therefore welcomed the recommendations of the mission urging to give special attention to the situation of women when addressing the consequences of Operation Cast Lead. It is imperative that women's access to compensation, legal assistance and economic security is ensured.

In the aftermath of the Gaza conflict and with the report of the Fact-Finding Mission, it said it was now time to push for follow-up: We call on the (Security) Council to endorse *all* recommendations made in the report and to make arrangements for a successful implementation; We especially urge the Council to advocate an immediate opening of the

Gaza border crossings; WILPF is certain that a respect for the rule of law is essential for long-lasting peace in the region; We therefore urge the Security Council to require Israel and Palestinian authorities to undertake independent examinations of the violations of human rights and humanitarian law which are mentioned in the report; We strongly support the formal submittal of the Goldstone report to the Prosecutor of the ICC; We further urge the council to promote the respect for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, including the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

WILPF stressed that the involvement of civil society and strong grass roots peace movements was crucial for advancing the Middle East peace process and welcomed the mission's recommendation calling for an enhanced participation of women in it in accordance with Security Council Resolution 1325. It said that the overwhelming majority of both the Palestinian and Israeli people wanted peace.

FATAH AND HAMAS UNITY TALKS APPEAR TO BE CRUMBLING

A UN report on alleged Israeli war crimes appears to be a stumbling block for a unity accord between rival Palestine factions Hamas and Fatah. The deal that was set to be signed on October 25 looks to be unravelling as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas announced his plans to freeze action on the UN report: [Al-Jazeera](#) (12/10/09).

CLINTON AND RUSSIA MAKE PROGRESS ON NUCLEAR IRAN TALKS

The US and Russia made tentative steps toward reconciling what have seemed like diametrically opposed approaches toward Iran, with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton celebrating a new era of US cooperation with Russia. Clinton's diplomatic breakthrough with Russia over Iran comes amid reports the US will drop its vocal criticism of Russia for human-rights violations. Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said threatening sanctions against Iran was counterproductive: [Los Angeles Times/The Associated Press](#), [BBC](#) and [The Guardian \(London\)](#) (13/10/09).

DEATH SENTENCES FOR IRAN PROTESTERS

Three people arrested after Iran's disputed presidential election have been sentenced to death, the Iranian ISNA news agency said.

"Three people who were accused in the post-election incidents have been sentenced to death," ISNA quoted Zahed Bashiri Rad, media officer at the justice ministry, as saying on Saturday, [aljazeera.net](#) reported (10/10/09).

Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election as Iran's president in a controversial June 12 vote was followed by mass street protests over alleged vote-rigging. Iranian authorities alleged the protests were sponsored by hostile nations. The opposition said at least 69 people were killed and thousands arrested in a crackdown that followed the protests.

Most of those detained have been released, but more than 100 prominent opposition supporters are now on trial on accusations of plotting to use the anti-election protests to overthrow Iran's clerical leadership.

REPORT: <http://english.aljazeera.net/news/middleeast/2009/10/2009101013811496700.html>

PROTEST MOVEMENT WILL NEVER DIE, FORMER PRESIDENT KHATAMI DECLARES

The former Iranian president Mohammad Khatami has posted a strong declaration on his website that the protest movement in Iran will not die despite violent crackdowns by the military and police (13/10/09).

"Be sure that people will never back down," said Mr Khatami, who was president from 1997 to 2005 and has become a leading reformist voice. "Today we are living in a world in which no dictator could be imposed on people to force them to be absolutely obedient to him. An acceptable government is a government born out of people."

The statement, posted on Sunday, was a rebuke to the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and the President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, whose re-election in June was marred by accusations of fraud that triggered nationwide protests.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/world/protest-movement-will-never-die-former-president-khatami-declares-20091012-gu0o.html>

YEMEN: MORE MUST BE DONE TO ENSURE AID GETS THROUGH

The conflict in northern Yemen is increasingly putting civilian lives at risk, leaving tens of thousands without vital aid and forcing many more to flee conflict areas. Unless more is done to protect civilians and ensure that they can receive life-saving aid, the situation will worsen further, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said this week.

"The situation has drastically deteriorated in recent weeks," said Jean-Nicolas Marti, the ICRC's head of delegation in Yemen. "Safety is the primary concern of those stranded – including women, children and elderly people – in areas where fighting is taking place. But access to food, water and health care is almost as vital, and shelter is a concern, too, as nights are becoming colder." Most Yemenis in the northern part of the country have already gone through years of conflict, living in harsh conditions and worsening poverty.

Together with the Yemen Red Crescent Society, the ICRC is providing food and other essential items for residents and displaced people (IDPs) in Sa'ada town and in Amran governorate, but obtaining safe access to other areas, particularly in Sa'ada governorate, remains a challenge.

Over the past two weeks, the ICRC and the Yemen Red Crescent have distributed food to almost 16,000 displaced people and their host families in Wadi Khaiwan, Bani Sureym and Hawazat Hashed, in Amran governorate. They have also provided urgently needed water for some 8,500 displaced people and residents in the governorate. In addition, they have been delivering medicines and medical supplies to two health-care facilities of the Ministry of Health and Populations in Wadi Khaiwan serving an average of 200 patients per day.

DETAILS: Pauline Wall on 61 2 9388 9039/mob on 61 2 418 485 120; sydney.syd@icrc.org

AFRICA

VIOLENCE EXPANDS IN NORTHERN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO

One year after violence erupted in Haut-Uélé district, in northern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), attacks and clashes have now expanded to new areas, forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee. Humanitarian organisations have failed to meet the massive needs that have resulted and an urgent response with greater presence in the rural areas of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé is imperative, says the international humanitarian organisation Médecins Sans Frontières (14/10/09).

Since late 2008, the civilian population of Haut-Uélé and Bas-Uélé has been caught up in a dramatic cycle of violence linked to attacks perpetrated by the Ugandan rebel group the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), and the Ugandan and Congolese offensive against the LRA. As the situation deteriorates, civilians also find themselves facing increasing banditry.

"The local population is the target of violence: murder, kidnapping and sexual abuse," says Luis Encinas, MSF coordinator of operations in Central Africa. "We are talking about tactics of violence aimed at instilling fear in the people. Our patients have told us the most brutal stories – about children who are forced to kill their parents and people burnt alive inside their homes."

The violence and armed confrontations have gradually expanded, now stretching from Haut-Uélé into Bas-Uélé in northeastern DRC, as well as in the neighbouring regions of southern Sudan and eastern Central African Republic.

Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced over the last year. Ongoing attacks continue to send thousands fleeing to seek shelter and greater security in towns. The population of Doruma city has tripled. The towns of Gangala and Banda are each hosting more than 20,000 displaced without assistance. These locations have become enclaves with outlying fields and villages left deserted.

In several places like Dingila or Niangara, MSF remains the only humanitarian organisation present. "New people are being displaced everyday in the region," says Pierre Kernen, MSF coordinator in Niangara, in western Haut-Uélé. "They have been forced to flee one time, two times, three times... They have sought shelter with local families or in empty buildings but they still don't feel safe there." MSF provides medical and psychological care but people also urgently need food, clean water, shelter and proper living conditions.

Due to insecurity and the absence of roads in these very isolated areas, MSF has had to fly in supplies, drugs and staff to most MSF locations. "Delivering humanitarian aid to the people of this region is of course a challenge, but we believe much more can and must be done to address the consequences of this war on the population. Humanitarian organisations should urgently address people's needs in areas that are most affected by the fighting and have so far been neglected," concluded Encinas. **DETAILS:** Sally McMillan on +61 447 482 379.

EUROPE

CLINTON INJECTS FRESH MOMENTUM IN NORTHERN IRELAND PEACE PROCESS

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton visited Belfast attempting to finish something her husband, Bill, started more than 10 years ago - finalise the Northern Ireland peace process. "I'm here today to send a strong message that the [Barack] Obama administration and the US are committed to supporting you as you continue your journey," Ms Clinton assured top leaders before speaking to the Stormont Assembly: [Reuters](#) and [BBC](#) (12/10/09).

TURKEY AND ARMENIA STILL FACE HURDLES

Armenian and Turkish efforts to overcome a century of bitter hostility face continued hurdles even though the two signed agreements last week to establish diplomatic relations and reopen their borders. Turkey is insisting Armenia pursue negotiations with its ally Azerbaijan over the rebel enclave of Nagorno-Karabakh, while Armenian leadership grapples with a public, deep distrust of the entire process: [Reuters](#) (12/10/09).

E. HEALTH & MEANS

International Day for Disaster Reduction

ACTION URGED TO PROTECT HOSPITALS FROM NATURAL HAZARDS

The tragedies that struck the Asia and Pacific region recently underscore the urgent action that must be taken to better protect hospitals from natural disasters. Large-scale human suffering is exacerbated when the very services that are most needed to save lives - hospitals, clinics and other health facilities - are counted among the casualties, reported WHO (14/10/09).

Today, the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction dedicates its annual International Day for Disaster Reduction to the urgent need to make 'Hospitals Safe from Disasters,' a media release stated. Dozens of hospitals and health facilities each year were themselves impacted by floods, hurricanes, cyclones, earthquakes and other natural hazards because safety measures were not integrated in their design, location or construction.

The 'Hospitals Safe from Disasters' theme was also used for the 2008-09 World Disaster Reduction campaign that culminated that day. This two-year campaign was a joint initiative of UNISDR, the World Health Organisation and the World Bank, aimed at ensuring people's access to functioning health facilities during and after natural hazards. The ISDR system was using the day to highlight the gains made during the campaign and the work that still needed to be done to make hospitals safer from disasters.

"Since the beginning of the campaign, much has been achieved to make hospitals safer but more investments are still needed to improve the functionality of hospital when disasters occur," says Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction. According to a recent WHO survey, only 50 per cent of all country's health sectors have a budget allocation for risk reduction and emergency preparedness.

Hospitals and health facilities are in the frontline when floods, hurricanes, cyclones, and earthquakes strike and many are adversely impacted because safety measures were not integrated in their design, construction and functionality. There are at least 90 000 hospitals and other health facilities in the world's 49 least-developed countries, many of which are vulnerable to disasters, including those related to the harmful effects of climate change.

REPORT:

http://safehospitals.info/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=30&Itemid=1; www.unisdr.org; Paul Garwood, WHO Health Action in Crises, Geneva, on mob +41 79 475 5546, garwoodp@who.int; www.who.int

WORLD PACT NEEDS TO STOP ORGAN TRAFFICKING: UN

A new, binding international treaty was needed to prevent trafficking in organs, tissues and cells (OTC), to protect victims and prosecute offenders exploiting deeply impoverished people, a joint study launched by the UN and the Council of Europe stated, UN News reported (13/10/09).

The study calls for the prohibition of financial gain from the human body or its parts as the basis of all legislation on organ transplants, adding that organ donation should be promoted to increase availability, with preference given to OTC donation from the deceased.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women Rachel Mayanja said she hoped the UN General Assembly would lay the groundwork for such a treaty expeditiously.

"This is the study that we have just launched, we hope that the study will be presented to the assembly, and that the issue will be put on the agenda so that they can start working and debating this issue," she told a news briefing in New York. "We would like, of course, to see work on a convention, a binding convention, start as soon as possible."

The report calls for the collection of reliable data on trafficking in OTC and in human beings for organ removal, separated by sex to assess if the problem impacts women and men differently. The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, already contain appropriate measures to combat trafficking in human beings for organ removal.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32521&Cr=traffic&Cr1=>

UNICEF AND WHO ATTACK DIARRHOEA – 2ND BIGGEST KILLER OF CHILDREN

Global campaigns to fight diarrhoea - the second deadliest illness for children – must be re-energised to prevent the deaths of millions in the developing world, UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) said this week, releasing a new report on the disease.

"It is a tragedy that diarrhoea, which is little more than an inconvenience in the developed world, kills an estimated 1.5 million children each year," said UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman. "Inexpensive and effective treatments for diarrhoea exist, but in developing countries only 39 per cent of children with diarrhoea receive the recommended treatment."

The report, *Diarrhoea: Why Children Are Still Dying and What Can Be Done*, lays out a seven-point plan that includes a treatment package to reduce childhood diarrhoea deaths and a prevention strategy to ensure long-term results: Fluid replacement to prevent dehydration; Zinc treatment; Rotavirus and measles vaccinations; Promotion of early and exclusive breastfeeding and vitamin A supplementation; Promotion of hand washing with soap; Improved water supply quantity and quality, including treatment and safe storage of household water; and Community-wide sanitation promotion.

DETAILS: UNICEF New York: Brian Hansford on +1 212 326 7269; bhansford@unicef.org

INDONESIAN EARTHQUAKE SURVIVORS FACE RISK OF DISEASE

The UN has launched a \$38 million appeal to pay for shelter, restoration of water facilities, the fight against disease and other urgent humanitarian needs in earthquake-ravaged Indonesia. But health workers, who have worked around the clock since the quake hit on September 30,

say without specialised medical equipment, they soon could be overwhelmed by outbreaks of dengue fever and other life-threatening diseases: AlertNet.org/Reuters (12/10/09).

UN URGES CEASEFIRE IN YEMEN TO LET IN HUMANITARIAN AID

Fighting between government forces and rebels in northern Yemen has been so intense, it has delayed delivery of humanitarian aid and triggered a UN plea for a ceasefire. UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes said he has approached the Yemen government and the Shiite rebels in hopes of getting more supplies moved into the impoverished war-torn region of northern Yemen. Aid workers estimate at least 150,000 people have fled their homes since the fighting broke out in 2004: AlertNet.org/Reuters (10/10/09).

CHILDREN WITH AIDS SUFFER PREJUDICE IN VIETNAM

Despite increased prevention and treatment programs in Vietnam for people infected with HIV/AIDS, prejudice and misinformation still hampers the ability of many with the disease to function in society -- for children in particular. Though the law stipulates equal treatment, the 5,100 children living with HIV/AIDS are refused entry into Vietnamese schools by the parents of other schoolchildren: [The New York Times](http://TheNewYorkTimes.com) (13/10/09).

ABORTIONS DECLINE WORLDWIDE BUT UNSAFE PROCEDURES STILL COMMON

The number of abortions performed annually is dropping around the world, but about 70,000 women a year still die as a result of unsafe procedures, according to a report from the Guttmacher Institute. More than half the deaths are in sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the lowest rate of contraception use, highest rate of unintended pregnancies and patchy health care access: [TIME/The Associated Press](http://TIME/TheAssociatedPress.com) (13/10/09).

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PAKISTAN SUFFERS NEW POLIO OUTBREAK

Pakistani health officials are reporting more than a dozen new cases of polio in the country's troubled Swat Valley region. Health workers have been unable to ensure immunization coverage for children living in the area for more than a year as security forces battle Taliban militants. IRINNews.org (13/10/09).

NIGERIA LIFTS GUNSHOT MEDICAL RULE

Nigerian officials have lifted a law that prevented emergency officials from treating victims of gunshot attacks until a police report was filed, a situation that drew scrutiny after newspaper editor Bayo Ohu died after a hospital waited to treat his gunshot wound: [BBC](http://BBC.com) (14/10/09).

AFRICAN LEADERS AND CHIRAC BLAST FAKE DRUG TRADE

Six African leaders and former French President Jacques Chirac have joined forces against a flourishing trade in dangerous fake medicines used by more than 80 per cent of the continent's population. More than 100,000 Africans lose their lives annually from fake or altered anti-malarial drugs, according to the WHO: AlertNet.org/Reuters (12/10/09).

UNF NETS TV'S 'UGLY BETTY' CAST FOR MALARIA CAMPAIGN

The cast of the American TV show 'Ugly Betty' has linked up with the UN Foundation to do battle against malaria. Scriptwriters have worked the UNF's Nothing But Nets malaria-fighting program into a premiere of the US ABCTV program: [SeattlePI.com/TV Guide](http://SeattlePI.com/TVGuide.com) (9/10/09).

ARTIFICIAL HYMEN INFURIATES EGYPTIAN CLERICS

Conservatives in Egypt have expressed outrage over the advent of the Artificial Virginity Hymen Kit, a device that would allow a woman -- for the price of \$29.90 -- to recreate a false hymen to deceive a new husband that her hymen is still intact. Members of the conservative

Muslim Brotherhood have called on a ban on the product, while a cleric issued a *fatwa* against its makers: [Los Angeles Times](#) (7/10/09).

CALL FOR PUBLIC COMMENT ON AUSTRALIA'S MIGRATION HEALTH RULES

Do visa applicants with a disability represent an unfair cost to the Australian community and to the health system? This is the question being asked by the Migration Committee's inquiry into the migration treatment of disability.

Chairperson Michael Danby said that the committee would like to hear the views of people with a disability, employers, business organisations, disability and community services providers, and any other interested individuals or organisations.

The committee is also interested in hearing the stories of people who have had difficulties getting a visa due to a disability, disease or condition, or have a friend or family member with that experience.

Comments are sought on the following questions:

Is the current process for assessing a visa applicant against the health requirement fair and transparent?

What types of contributions and costs should be considered?

How do we measure these?

Are there additional factors that should be considered?

Do you have personal experience of this?

What principles should apply to the assessment of visa applications against the health requirement? Should there be exceptions?

DETAILS: www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/mig/disability/index.htm

or Secretariat on 02 6277 4560; jscm@aph.gov.au.

GP STAFF REVEAL PATIENT AGGRESSION: NATIONAL STUDY

Australian general practitioners and their staff commonly encounter aggressive patients who are verbally abusive, display threatening behaviour or cause property damage, a national study reveals (12/10/09).

The Department of Health and Ageing has engaged the Australian Primary Health Care Research Institute (APHCRI) based at The Australian National University to conduct the first national study examining patient-initiated aggression against general practitioners and general practice staff in Australia.

Extensive consultations and interviews with stakeholders and general practice staff across Australia have been undertaken and findings have been used to develop national online surveys for general practitioners and general practice staff. Findings from the surveys will provide the first-ever Australian data of the extent of aggression towards general practice staff.

The research has found 57 to 64 per cent of Australian GPs have experienced some form of violence within a 12 month period; four Australian GPs have been murdered at work in the past 12 years; reception staff are subjected to considerable verbal abuse; Australian GPs are most likely to experience verbal abuse compared with other types of violence; female GPs are significantly more likely to experience sexual harassment than their male counterparts in Australia; causes of violence in Australia include patient waiting times and denial of access to care; aggression in Australia occurs both during and after business hours, however high-level violence (physical abuse, stalking, sexual harassment and sexual abuse) is more likely to occur after hours

DETAILS: Will Wright, APHCRI on 02 6125 2026 / 0432 130 469;

Melanie Fontolliet, RACGP on 03 86990513 / 0424461622.

US SENATE PANEL PASSES HEALTH BILL

A Senate committee has approved a bill to reform US healthcare, a key step in President Barack Obama's attempt to overhaul the system, the BBC reported (13/10/09).

Senators voted by 14 votes to nine to pass the bill, with one Republican joining Democrats on the Senate Finance Committee in voting in favour. Senator Olympia Snowe became the first

Republican to back the proposals. The reforms, intended to cut costs and make insurance more affordable, are Mr Obama's top domestic priority.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/8304375.stm>

MOTHER CAN PASS ON CANCER IN WOMB

Scientists have proved that it is possible for a mother's cancer cells to be passed to her unborn child, the BBC reported (12/10/09).

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/health/8298947.stm>

RADON AND CANCER

Radon is the second most important cause of lung cancer in many countries. Studies in Europe, North America and China have confirmed that lower concentrations of radon – such as those found in homes – also confer health risks and contribute substantially to the occurrence of lung cancers worldwide (12/10/09).

DETAILS: [Read the updated fact sheet on radon and cancer](#)

MANY MENTAL DISORDERS IN PRIMARY CARE

Worldwide, studies have shown that between 12–48 per cent of people will suffer from mental disorders at some point during their life. Mental disorders are treatable and most of them can be treated in primary care as reflected in WHO Mental Health Action Program and highlighted through World Mental Health Day this year.

[Read more about World Mental Health Day 2009](#) ; [Read the fact file on mental health](#)

BREASTFEEDING ASSOCIATED WITH REDUCED RISK OF ASTHMA IN INFANCY

Findings from a two-year study on asthma and wheezing illness in one year olds and kindergarten children, released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, show that within the first three years of life, almost 17 per cent of Australian infants experienced asthma or wheezing illness. (14/10/09).

REPORT: <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2009/mr20091014.cfm>

\$21M FOR NEW BETTER HEALTH GRANTS

The Australian Government is to provide \$21 million for the first-ever nationwide Partnership for Better Health Grants. Partnerships for Better Health Grants will help researchers to work directly with health organisations so that research results can be better tailored to real world situations. **REPORT:** <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr09-nr-nr178.htm?OpenDocument&yr=2009&mth=10;>

[PDF printable version of \\$21m for new Better Health Grants \(PDF 21 KB\)](#)

PROSPECTIVE BRIDES: NO LOO? NO 'I DO'

In rural parts of India, an increasing number of potential brides are refusing to wed a man who cannot provide them with indoor plumbing and a toilet. About 665 million people in India - about half the population - lack access to a toilet and are forced to use public restrooms or an open field. "No loo? No 'I do,'" says Vimlas Sasva, 18, parroting a radio slogan popularised by a 'No Toilet, No Bride' campaign begun two years ago: [The Washington Post](#) (12/10/09).

G. OTHER NEWS

INTERNATIONAL TRADE BOOM FAILS WORKERS IN DEVELOPING WORLD: UN

The surge in world trade in recent years has failed to improve the working conditions and living standards for the majority of workers in poor countries, according to a new UN labour agency study launched (12/10/09).

A high incidence of informal employment has curbed any benefit workers in the developing world have felt from the boom in trade, the joint International Labour Organisation (ILO) and World Trade Organisation (WTO) study found.

WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy **noted** that trade "has contributed to growth and development worldwide, but this has not automatically translated in an improvement in the quality of employment."

In the developing world, job creation has largely taken place in the informal economy, which ranges from 30 per cent of the workforce in Latin America to more than 80 per cent in some sub-Saharan and South Asian countries. Informal employment involves private, unregistered enterprises which are not subject to national law or regulation, offer no social protection and involve self-employed individuals, or members of the same household.

The study said that the informal economy has remained high and even increased in some countries, especially in Asia, leaving most workers with limited job security, low incomes and little benefit from globalisation. The study confirms that by promoting fair working conditions together with national labour market, trade and financial policies, developing countries would be much better placed to benefit from trade openings, said ILO Director-General Juan Somavia. **REPORT:**

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32505&Cr=international+labour&Cr1=>

IRAN NOT TOO FUSSY TO TRADE WITH US

Trade between Iran and the US rose by nearly 600 per cent during Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's first four-year term, just as hostile rhetoric between the two countries was reaching fever pitch, figures show, the Sydney Morning Herald reported (14/10/09).

Contradicting his anti-Western policies, the Iranian President oversaw a rapid increase in American imports - including a rise in the purchase of bull semen.

The pattern also confounded the depiction of Iran by the former US president George Bush as a member of the 'axis of evil'. Surprisingly, given President Barack Obama's pledge to pursue engagement with Iran, trade has fallen since Mr Bush left the White House. The Tehran Chamber of Commerce said Iran bought \$US563 million (\$622 million) of goods from the US last year, up from \$US98 million in the year after Mr Ahmadinejad's 2005 election.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/world/iran-not-too-fussy-to-trade-with-us-20091013-gvqn.html>

CHINA AND RUSSIA EMBRACE TRADE

Despite a dip in relations between Russia and China after Russia accused China of dealing in smuggled goods at a large wholesale market near Moscow, both nations signed contracts worth several billion dollars in an effort to reinforce and improve trade and relations. China is eager to take advantage of Russian natural resources, though China has concerns about Russia's influence over Central Asian nations and economies. Though Russia dreads China's rise and immigrations into its sparsely populated eastern areas, Russia craves Chinese investment: [The Wall Street Journal](#) (14/10/09).

AFGHAN VOTERS CYNICAL ABOUT RUN-OFF VOTE

Many Afghan voters view the prospects of a runoff election between incumbent President Hamid Karzai and lead opposition candidate Abdullah Abdullah with skepticism, saying it will only result in a waste of time and money. Their cynicism reflects deep ethnic divisions within the society, weariness with government corruption and acknowledgment of the shallow roots of democracy in Afghanistan: [The New York Times](#) (13/10/09).

SRI LANKA ADVANCES ELECTION SCHEDULE

Reflecting its new-found popularity after the military defeat of the Tamil Tigers, the government of Sri Lanka has called for presidential and parliamentary elections nearly two years ahead of schedule. President Mahinda Rajapaksa, who enjoys massive popularity among the Sinhalese majority, hopes to assemble a two-thirds majority by holding elections by April. Rajapaksa pledged to resettle displaced Tamils soon, but critics say he is stalling on delivering concrete reforms until after the vote: [BBC](#) (13/10/09).

CZECH PARLIAMENT SEEKS EU INPUT TO BUDGE KLAUS ON LISBON TREATY

The Czech parliament said it will discuss with other European Union member-states how to overcome the intransigence of President Vaclav Klaus, who has refused to sign the Lisbon Treaty despite the fact it has been signed by both houses of the Czech parliament as well as every other nation of the European Union. Klaus says the Czech Republic cannot ratify the treaty without an opt-out clause to prevent Germans expelled from the Czech region during

World War II from making claims against Czech property: [The Independent \(London\)/Reuters](#) (13/10/09).

PRINCE EDWARD LEADS DUKE OF EDINBURGH'S AWARD FORUM

Prince Edward will arrive in Sydney on October 27 to join over 300 international delegates for the International Award for Young People's 10th Forum to discuss the future direction of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award program around the world, as well as issues of youth engagement. The Duke of Edinburgh's Award is known globally as the International Award for Young People.

Kim Brislane, National CEO of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award in Australia, said, "This is an exciting time for the award in Australia and we are delighted to welcome HRH The Earl of Wessex to Sydney to celebrate the achievements of young people from around the world. In 2008 over 33,000 young Australians participated, which is testimony to the continued importance of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award today."

BRITAIN HAS WORST QUALITY OF LIFE IN EUROPE: STUDY

France has the best quality of life out of Europe's biggest countries, while Britain has the worst despite having the highest incomes, a study says. British workers can expect to spend three years longer at work and die two years younger than their French counterparts, while they pay above the European average for fuel, food, alcohol and cigarettes, the study by uSwitch.com released on Monday said, according to the Sydney Morning Herald (13/10/09). **REPORT:** <http://www.smh.com.au/lifestyle/wellbeing/britain-has-worst-quality-of-life-in-europe-study-20091013-gu7s.html>

GOVERNOR-GENERAL'S INDIGENOUS STUDENT TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS

The establishment of the Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarship to assist one Indigenous student in every state and territory to undertake education studies at university, was announced by Minister for Education Julia Gillard (13/10/09).

The scholarships will provide \$25,000 per year to successful recipients for the life of their teaching degree (up to four years). This will enable scholarship recipients to concentrate solely on their education studies while at university and fully develop their teaching skills and knowledge. All scholarship recipients will be provided with the support of a teacher or teacher educator as a mentor throughout their studies.

Applications for 2010 Governor-General's Indigenous Student Teacher Scholarships are scheduled to open in November. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations will consult with Indigenous groups to develop the criteria, application and selection process. **SCHOLARSHIPS:** [DEEWR Website](#). **DETAILS:** 1300 363 079

\$34M FOR INDIGENOUS YOUTH LEADERSHIP SCHOLARSHIPS

The Australian Government is investing \$34 million in the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program over the next three years to help 'Close the Gap' in Indigenous education. The Indigenous Youth Leadership Program is designed to foster Indigenous educational attainment to ensure all Indigenous youth, including those from remote areas, have access to the best available schooling, said Minister for Education Julia Gillard (14/10/09). **REPORT:** http://www.deewr.gov.au/ministers/gillard/media/releases/pages/article_091013_160146.aspx

REFORMING AUSTRALIAN REFERENDUM PROCESSES

The House Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee was holding a roundtable discussion on reforming Australian referendum processes with a number of key organisations and academics in Sydney on October 14. Participants invited included the Australian Electoral Commission, Australian Broadcasting Corporation, AusPoll, Foundation for Young Australians, as well as Gilbert & Tobin Centre Professor George Williams.

The chairperson of the House of Representatives Committee Mark Dreyfus QC said, "There has not been a successful referendum in Australia since 1977 and there has been no referendum since the unsuccessful campaign for a republic in 1999. It is important to review

our current processes to determine if they adequately address the needs of Australians in the 21st century.”

The current legislation sets out the processes for preparing the arguments for and against the proposed changes and limits government spending in relation to this. The purpose of the inquiry is to determine whether this legislation is sufficient in addressing voter requirements in the lead up to a referendum. As such, the inquiry is considering whether there are other ways to provide the public with the same or greater levels of explanatory information.

QUEENSLAND MULTICULTURAL FESTIVAL 2009

The Queensland Multicultural Festival 2009 will take place at Roma Street Parkland, Brisbane, on October 18. The family-friendly program includes non-stop entertainment across five stages, dance, music, theatre, roving artists, children’s activities, international food and beverage and craft stalls.

Artists headlining this year’s festival include ARIA award-winning Zulya and the Children of the Underground, ‘Triple J Unearthed’ artist Kate Vigo, nine-piece Brisbane sensation Miguel and Pavarotti Viva!, three resonant tenors from Ingham, Brisbane and Naples.

Also there will be a procession, themed *Sevillanas*, featuring Flamenco music and dance, originating from Seville in Spain, and a performance of the universally popular children’s story ‘Where The Wild Things Are’ by Jewish-Polish-American author Maurice Sendak.

HARD WORK AND TALENT OF RURAL WOMEN ACKNOWLEDGED

The hard work and talent of Australian women working and living in rural areas, ahead of the 14th UN World Rural Women’s Day tomorrow (15/10/09) was acknowledged by the Australian Government as it announced the second round of applications is open for grants under the Recognising Women Farmers program.

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke said rural women in Australia played a vital role in food production, including in agriculture and fisheries, natural resource management and the forestry sector. According to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, around 85,000 Australian women are directly employed in the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors.

“This is another opportunity to pay tribute to the essential role of women in rural businesses and communities, but also to recognise that more work needs to be done,” Mr Burke said. “Women still occupy less than 20 per cent of paid management and board positions in the agricultural sector and we continue working to improve that level of representation.

“In 18 months we have increased the representation of women on our rural research and development corporation boards from 20 per cent to more than 40 per cent and that work is on-going.” Other government initiatives to support rural women include: \$75,000 for the annual Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation National Rural Women’s Awards and \$50,000 for a new mentoring project for women living in rural and remote areas.

INDIAN WINNERS OF AUSTRALIAN LEADERSHIP AWARDS

Australian Foreign Minister Stephen Smith presented Australian Leadership Award (ALA) Scholarships to four Indian students. It is hoped these ALA Scholarships will strengthen the friendship and understanding between India and Australia. These latest ALA Scholarships build on 63 ALA scholarships and fellowships awarded to Indian students since the program began in 2007. **REPORT:** <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2009/fa-s091014c.html>

HOAX EMAILS ON ASYLUM SEEKER POLICY CIRCULATION

The Australian Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) is urging the media and the public to ignore hoax emails circulating on the internet about government benefits provided to asylum seekers and refugees permanently settling in Australia. Figures quoted in these emails also bear no resemblance to income-support payments to asylum seekers and refugees settling in Australia.

REPORT: http://www.newsroom.immi.gov.au/media_releases/750

MALAYSIAN STATE OFFERS SECOND HONEYMOON

A state in north-east Malaysia says it will offer free second honeymoons to couples on the brink of divorce, the BBC reported (12/10/09). Ashaari Idris, a government official in Terengganu, said troubled couples would be allowed to spend two nights at one of the state's scenic island resorts.

He said those who wished to take part would have to apply, undergo an interview and also commit to marital counselling. He said the program was aimed at building family ties. "After marriage, some are unable to cope with the new challenges," Mr Ashaari told the AFP news agency. **REPORT:** <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8303408.stm>

H. ENERGY & ENVIRONMENT

MONTHS OF HARD WORK AHEAD FOR STORM- BATTERED PHILIPPINES

The crisis in the Philippines in the aftermath of two devastating storms that recently hit the country was not over, the United Nations humanitarian chief said, as he appealed once again to donors to support the relief and recovery efforts, the UN News reported (13/10/09).

"Even though the immediate effects of these typhoons have passed, we face many months of hard work, relief and recovery and reconstruction ahead. This crisis is by no means over. In some ways the hard work is just starting," John Holmes said in Manila.

Mr Holmes, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, visited to see first-hand the emergency response to tropical storm Ketsana (also known as Ondoy), which hit on September 26, and typhoon Parma, which struck a week later. The two successive storms affected over 6 million people, killing more than 500 and displacing thousands of others. Crop damage has been estimated at over \$160 million.

The UN has secured financial commitments amounting to nearly \$19 million, out of the \$74 million flash appeal it issued last week. He stressed the serious health threat posed by stagnant water, which was crucial to disperse rather than wait for it to recede.

REPORT: <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=32527&Cr=philippines&Cr1=>

URGENT SHELTER NEEDED FOR INDONESIAN EARTHQUAKE VICTIMS

The top UN emergency relief official took a helicopter tour of the worst affected rural areas in the wake of last month's earthquake in the Indonesian island of Sumatra, flying over valleys ravaged by dozens of landslides (14/10/09).

"We need to work with the government to ensure temporary shelter solutions quickly, with the rainy season soon upon us, but then move to more durable housing as soon as possible," Under-Secretary General for Humanitarian Affairs John Holmes said of the earthquake, which killed over 700 people, with 300 more missing, and injured over 2,200.

One community he visited lost more than 130 people, with many of the bodies unrecoverable and the survivors, still in shock, wondering how and where they can rebuild their lives. Hospitals, schools, infrastructure and 135,000 homes were severely damaged, according to initial assessments, especially in Padang city and the Padang Paramian district.

"People are thinking about how they should rebuild their homes, but the issue is also whether many should be relocated away from the landslide risk, as this part of Indonesia is so earthquake prone," Mr Holmes said. "The fact that today is the International Day of Disaster Risk Reduction serves to remind us that disaster reduction measures have to be a huge priority in Indonesia."

Last week the humanitarian community, in close consultation with the government, launched a \$38 million Humanitarian Response Plan, identifying acute needs to be addressed within 90 days and identifying 74 projects.

ADF ENGINEERS ASSESS STRUCTURAL DAMAGE IN PADANG

Australian Defence Force teams, in co-ordination with AusAID, the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Indonesian Government, are in Padang to provide structural assessments to determine what is repairable.

REPORT: <http://www.defence.gov.au/media/departmentalpl.cfm?CurrentId=9583>

AUSTRALIAN AID 'CAN HELP COUNTRIES PREPARE FOR DISASTERS'

Australia recently responded quickly with humanitarian and emergency assistance to affected communities, Parliamentary Secretary for International Development Assistance, Bob McMullan, said to mark International Day for Disaster Reduction (14/10/09).

"With a number of our Asia and Pacific friends and neighbours currently devastated by natural disasters, this is a reminder that minimising the threat and consequences of disasters is an important and urgent concern for our region. The death and devastation which has torn across Asia and the Pacific in the past three weeks shows just how prone our region is to natural disasters," he said.

"As these communities move from recovery to reconstruction, Australia's assistance will help communities to build back better essential infrastructure including schools, housing, public health facilities, water, power and roads."

"With climate change likely to increase the frequency and scale of weather-related events, we may well see more devastation and loss of life unless urgent action is taken to prepare those who are most vulnerable. The cost of not being prepared can be catastrophic, not just in terms of lives lost, but also to local businesses and the environment.

"People living in poverty in developing countries are more vulnerable to natural disasters as they are often forced to live and work in poorly constructed buildings, in high-risk coastal areas or on land prone to regular flooding. There are practical things we can do today to minimise the risks people in our region face from disasters."

As an example, he said after the devastating Yogyakarta earthquake in 2006 which killed over 5000 people, SurfAid International, with support from Australia organised training for the provincial government and Silabu community leaders on what to do in the event of a disaster.

"Through our aid program Australia can help developing countries take action such as strengthening buildings to withstand earthquakes, planting crops that will survive drought, developing systems that warn people in the path of a cyclone and train people in first aid to help in the aftermath of a disaster," he said.

REPORT:

http://www.aid.gov.au/media/release.cfm?BC=Latest&ID=6151_8200_3367_6503_515

SMITH ANNOUNCES AID FOR SAMOA AND SUMATRA

Australia has announced it will spend \$17 million for assistance to Indonesia to help rebuild schools and health facilities in Sumatra and Java, and will contribute \$5 million to the recovery in Samoa. The government has also announced \$1 million for flood-affected Laos (11/10/09). Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith said, "This reflects not just Australia's desire to be a good international citizen but also the leadership role that Australia together with New Zealand takes in development assistance matters, in the Pacific in particular, but also in Australia's case in South East Asia," he said.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/11/2710806.htm>

AUSTRALIA PARTICIPATES IN REGIONAL TSUNAMI EXERCISE

Australian Attorney-General Robert McClelland welcomed Australia's participation in an international exercise to test response arrangements for tsunami activity in the Indian Ocean (14/10/09). The exercise involved emergency services from Western Australia as well as federal agencies including Emergency Management Australia (EMA), Geoscience Australia and the Bureau of Meteorology which are involved in the Australian Tsunami Warning System (ATWS). The ATWS is provided through the Joint Australian Tsunami Warning Centre which operates 24-hours a day, seven days a week.

REPORT:

http://www.attorneygeneral.gov.au/www/ministers/RobertMc.nsf/Page/MediaReleases_2009_FourthQuarter_14October2009-AustraliaParticipatesinRegionalTsunamiExercise

LAKE CHAD SHRINKING WATER RESOURCES THREATENING LIVES

The humanitarian disaster looming at the shrinking Lake Chad in central Africa should be urgently addressed, FAO said (15/10/09). The lake, which is surrounded by Cameroon, Chad, Niger and Nigeria, was once one of the world's largest water bodies. Due to climatic variability, climate change and population pressure over recent decades, the lake has shrunk by 90 per cent, from 25 000 sq km in 1963 to less than 1500 sq km in 2001. If water continued to recede at the current rate, Lake Chad could disappear in about 20 years from now, according to NASA climate forecasts.

Together with the Lake Chad Basin Commission (LCBC), FAO organised a special event ('Saving Lake Chad: A System under Threat') in Rome during World Food Day on October 16, aimed at raising awareness about the disastrous situation of Lake Chad and mobilising funds to replenish the lake and improve overall food security in the region. About 30 million live in the region.

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1.02 BILLION HUNGRY PEOPLE IN 2009: FAO REPORT

The sharp spike in hunger triggered by the global economic crisis has hit the poorest people in developing countries hardest, revealing a fragile world food system in urgent need of reform, according to a report released by the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the World Food Program (WFP) (14/10/09).

The combination of food and economic crises have pushed the number of hungry people worldwide to historic levels – more than 1 billion people are undernourished, according to FAO estimates.

Nearly all the world's undernourished live in developing countries. In Asia and the Pacific, an estimated 642 million people are suffering from chronic hunger; in Sub-Saharan Africa 265 million; in Latin America and the Caribbean 53 million; in the Near East and North Africa 42 million; and in developed countries 15 million, according to FAO's annual hunger report, *The State of Food Insecurity*, produced this year in collaboration with WFP. The report was published before World Food Day, celebrated on October 16.

Even before the recent crises, the number of undernourished people in the world had been increasing slowly but steadily for the past decade, the report says. Good progress had been made in the 1980s and early 1990s in reducing chronic hunger, largely due to increased investment in agriculture following the global food crisis of the early 1970s. But between 1995-97 and 2004-06, as official development assistance (ODA) devoted to agriculture declined substantially, the number of hungry people increased in all regions except Latin America and the Caribbean. Gains in hunger reduction were later reversed in this region as well, as a result of the food and economic crises.

The rise in the number of hungry people during both periods of low prices and economic prosperity and the very sharp rises in periods of price spikes and economic downturns shows the weakness of the global food security governance system, FAO said.

"World leaders have reacted forcefully to the financial and economic crisis and succeeded in mobilizing billions of dollars in a short time period. The same strong action is needed now to combat hunger and poverty," said FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf. "The rising number of hungry people is intolerable. We have the economic and technical means to make hunger disappear, what is missing is a stronger political will to eradicate hunger forever. Investing in agriculture in developing countries is key as a healthy agricultural sector is essential not only to overcome hunger and poverty but also to ensure overall economic growth and peace and stability in the world."

"We applaud the new commitment to tackle food security, but we must act quickly. It is

unacceptable in the 21st century that almost one in six of the world's population is now going hungry," said Josette Sheeran, Executive Director of the UN World Food Program. "At a time when there are more hungry people in the world than ever before, there is less food aid than we have seen in living memory. We know what is needed to meet urgent hunger needs - we just need the resources and the international commitment to do the job."

Several reasons for the situation included that traditional coping mechanisms such as currency devaluation, borrowing or increased use of official development assistance or migrant remittances had been reduced, high food prices and because developing countries had become more integrated, both financially and commercially, into the world economy than 20 years ago, it made them more vulnerable to changes in international markets.

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AGRICULTURE TO 2050 – THE CHALLENGES AHEAD

Agriculture must become more productive if it is to feed a much larger world population while responding to the daunting environmental challenges ahead, FAO Director-General Jacques Diouf said, opening a two-day High-Level Expert Forum on How to Feed the World in 2050.

Speaking in Rome (12/10/09), he said, "The combined effect of population growth, strong income growth and urbanisation ... is expected to result in almost the doubling of demand for food, feed and fibre."

"Agriculture will have no choice but to be more productive," he said, noting that increases would need to come mostly from yield growth and improved cropping intensity rather than from farming more land despite the fact that there are still ample land resources with potential for cultivation, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America.

He also noted that "while organic agriculture contributes to hunger and poverty reduction and should be promoted, it cannot by itself feed the rapidly growing population."

World population is projected to rise to 9.1 billion in 2050 from a current 6.7 billion, requiring a 70-per cent increase in farm production.

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FAO: INVEST NOW TO AVOID MASS FAMINE BY 2050

Global food production needs to increase by 70% during the next 40 years to keep pace with the world's growing population, the Food and Agriculture Organisation warned. Failure to expand agriculture in developing countries through investments in infrastructure improvements and increased access to irrigation systems could leave as many as 370 million people facing famine by 2050, FAO says: [BBC](#) and [TIME/The Associated Press](#) (12/10/09).

BROWN PUSHES FOR ANTARCTIC WORLD HERITAGE LISTING

Australian Greens leader Bob Brown says the Federal Government must honour an election promise that it would push for Antarctica to be protected. The senator says the continent is a world heirloom. "Labor party policy is to have Antarctica made a world heritage area and yet they keep voting that down in the Senate," he said.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/11/2710767.htm>

AUSTRALIA FINDS \$1.2M FOR ANTARCTIC SCIENCE AND CONSERVATION

Over \$1.2 million for conservation of Antarctic heritage, and scientific research was announced by Australian Environment and Heritage Minister Peter Garrett (13/10/09). The \$60 million allocated from the Jobs Fund for community heritage projects is the largest investment ever made in Australian heritage conservation, he said. "Australia plays a major role in Antarctic and Southern Ocean research and is a key contributor to the development of policy on a range of matters, including sustainable fisheries and conservation in the region."

REPORT: <http://www.environment.gov.au/minister/garrett/2009/mr20091013.html>

AUSTRALIA-INDIA SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RESEARCH AWARD ANNOUNCED

The new Australia-India Science and Technology Research Award was announced by Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith to provide \$AU30,000 (12 lakh rupees) in 2010 to facilitate two-way exchange between Australian and Indian researchers, with support for one young Australian scientist to visit India and one young Indian scientist to visit Australia for a 12 week research placement (14/10/09).

In addition to the Australia India Science and Technology Research Award, the Australian Government is supporting leading-edge science through the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund, which with an Australian commitment of \$20 million (80 crore rupees), matched by the Government of India, is Australia's largest fund for bilateral research.

REPORT: <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/releases/2009/fa-s091014b.html>

LINKING FORESTS TO CLIMATE CHANGE AND SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS

As climate change negotiations enter their final stretch towards the December conference in Copenhagen, Denmark, the World Forestry Congress will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, October 18/23. The most important meeting on the global calendar with regard to the forestry sector, the World Forestry Congress has been held every six years since 1926, organised by the government of the host country under the auspices of FAO. This year, some 4,500 participants — including government delegates and representatives from the private sector and environmental organizations from more than 120 countries — are expected to kick off the five day discussions under the theme: *Forests in development. A vital balance.*

THEMATIC SESSIONS PROGRAM:

<http://wfc.eipixel.com/uploads/File/Thematic%20Sessions.pdf>

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MDBA RIVER HEALTH CONFERENCE LAUNCHES NATIONAL WATER WEEK

More than 2000 year 5-11 students from around Australia and New Zealand are due in Canberra over October 18/20 for the tenth MDBA International River Health Conference. The Murray-Darling Basin Authority is a major sponsor of the conference. Organisers say the students would teach each other with drama, comedy, song, and imagination about issues and action needed, as well as get their hands dirty in environment work. Convenor Arron Woods said they would also quiz senior politicians, celebrities and activists on climate change. **DETAILS:** www.onelifeoneworldourfuture.com

OIL SPILL CONTINUES SPEWING

The spill in the Timor Sea is still spewing out oil after the failure of a second attempt to plug it, the ABC reported (14/10/09). The West Atlas rig off Australia's north-west coast has been leaking for nearly eight weeks. A third attempt to stop the flow is to be made; however environmentalists are calling for the company to reveal how much oil has been spilled and what caused the leak in the first place.

REPORT: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/14/2713737.htm>

A WEEK ABOUT FOOD IN ROME AND LONDON

During a week about food and hunger, the Food & Agriculture organisation has arranged a number of events, including:

On October 14 the 2009 FAO hunger report, this time jointly produced with the World Food Program, was due to be launched. It highlights the fact that even before the current food and economic crises hunger was on the rise. With the onset of these crises, the number of hungry people in the world increased sharply.

The annual World Food Day ceremony was due to take place at FAO headquarters, on October 16 when Enrique Iglesias, former president of the Inter-American Development Bank, was scheduled to speak. Five new FAO Goodwill Ambassadors are being appointed: American Olympic gold medallist Carl Lewis, French fashion stylist Pierre Cardin, Indonesian singer and songwriter, Anggun, Columbia singer and composer Fanny Lu and French Football Federation soccer star Patrick Vieira. The first lady of the Dominican Republic is also being honoured as FAO Extraordinary Ambassador.

WORLD FOOD DAY: <http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/en/>

RED CARPET EVENT WITH THE STARS

At Rome Auditorium, Sala Sinopoli, for the first time, FAO is partnering with the Rome International Film Festival to hold a Red Carpet Event at the Rome Auditorium featuring FAO Goodwill Ambassadors. The event, presented by journalist Livia Azzariti, entitled 'Together, everything is possible' will include an introduction by FAO Director-General, Jacques Diouf; musical performances by singers Anggun, Noa and Mira Awad accompanied by guitarist Gil Dor; interventions by the newly appointed FAO Goodwill Ambassadors, Carl Lewis, Pierre Cardin, Anggun, Fanny Lu, Patrick Vieira, the First Lady of the Dominican Republic; and the Italian premier of documentary film in competition at the festival, *The Cove*, with remarks by the film's director and producer.

Also attending the event will be FAO Goodwill Ambassadors, and testimonials, Carla Fracci, Gina Lollobrigida, Al Bano Carrisi, Massimo Ranieri, Lina Wertmuller, Valentina Vezzali, Gianni Rivera, Dino Zoff and Enzo Ghiazzi (Pupo). All proceeds from ticket sales will finance a community project in the Central African Republic.

IN LONDON

Irish singer Ronan Keating on October 14 will deliver a statement at the Houses of Parliament, London, on the occasion of the meeting of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Agriculture and Food for Development which has now launched its Parliamentary Inquiry into the UK's Role in Tackling the Challenge of Global Food Security.

AND IN SHANGHAI

US singer Dee Dee Bridgewater will dedicate a concert in Shanghai, China, on October 16. On this occasion, a pre-event, press conference with the presence of government authorities is also being organised.

DETAILS: <http://www.fao.org/getinvolved/worldfoodday/worldfoodday-eventsca/en/>

GEODESY AND GEOPHYSICS BOFFINS CONFER

Launching the conference on Wednesday during the 90th anniversary celebrations for the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG), the first Australian to be elected president of the IUGG, CSIRO's Dr Tom Beer, said this was only the second time that the IUGG General Assembly had been held in the Southern Hemisphere. The conference - Earth on the Edge: Science for a Sustainable Planet - brings together the eight earth science IUGG associations. **REPORT:** <http://www.csiro.au/news/Earth-on-the-edge--vqnextfmt-print.html>

CSIRO ANNUAL REPORT SHOWS BREADTH AND DEPTH OF ITS SCIENCE

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) has issued its Annual Report showing that the delivery of the science by the CSIRO in the form of journal articles, book chapters, conference papers and technical reports has increased over the five years to 2008, says an Australian Government media release.

REPORT: <http://www.csiro.au/news/Annual-Report-0809.html>

KEEPING THE PEACE WITH ELEPHANTS

Conservationists in Cambodia have brokered an agreement which should see elephants living more peacefully alongside their human neighbours, the BBC reported (13/10/09). Villagers living near elephant habitats have promised not to harm the animals - or disturb their environment. In return the local farmers are receiving help to keep the elephants away from their crops. Elephant numbers are finally on the rise here - after decades of war and deforestation. The organisation Fauna and Flora International is helping to keep the peace between people and pachyderms.

REPORT: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8303998.stm>

CAR CALLED IVY WHICH RUNS ON LESS POWER THAN A TOASTER

Motorists using the M5 on the weekend may have been stunned to find this lean little car zipping past them on the motorway, says a Sydney Morning Herald report (12/110/09). But their curiosity may have given way to jealousy had they known the sleek vehicle zooming past at 110km/h was running on less energy than is needed to power a toaster, while they spent \$1.10 a litre on fuel to power their cars. The solar-powered Sunswift IV was out on the M5 for

a test run, ahead of its tilt in the 3000km Global Green Challenge race from Darwin to Adelaide, starting on October 24.

REPORT: <http://www.smh.com.au/technology/technology-news/in-a-league-of-her-own-the-car-called-ivy-which-runs-on-less-power-than-a-toaster-20091009-gq4j.html>

I. ARTICLES IN FOCUS

EGG IN YOUR FACE CAN BE SO SATISFYING

It is so gratifying to be found conspicuously incorrect. Journalists, in particular, relish being hung out to dry and this one is no exception, writes Richard Ackland in the Sydney Morning Herald (9/10/09). It's the findings and recommendations of the Human Rights Consultation that are causing a bit of pain at the moment. Last week your columnist went for the line that Frank Brennan and his cohorts on the National Human Rights Consultation would squib the opportunity to come up with a "dialogue" version of a human rights bill. That is the version that requires the courts and parliament to bat back and forth their respective thinking on whether legislation is compatible with a regimen of civil and political rights. At the end of the process parliament has the final say and can tell the courts to stick their findings and butt out. Father Frank and his team's report came to hand and they have gone to considerable trouble to whip up the most elaborate egg concoction and toss it in my face ... What we have is a modest start to a human rights regime for this country, one of the few parliamentary democracies without such protections.

ARTICLE: <http://www.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/egg-in-your-face-can-be-so-satisfying-20091008-gowl.html>

MISGUIDED MONETARY MENTALITIES

One lesson from the Great Depression is that you should never underestimate the destructive power of bad ideas, writes Paul Krugman in the New York Times (11/10/09). And some of the bad ideas that helped cause the Depression have, alas, proved all too durable: in modified form, they continue to influence economic debate today. What ideas am I talking about? The economic historian Peter Temin has argued that a key cause of the Depression was what he calls the "gold-standard mentality." By this he means not just belief in the sacred importance of maintaining the gold value of one's currency, but a set of associated attitudes: obsessive fear of inflation even in the face of deflation; opposition to easy credit, even when the economy desperately needs it, on the grounds that it would be somehow corrupting; assertions that even if the government can create jobs it shouldn't, because this would only be an "artificial" recovery. In the early 1930s this mentality led governments to raise interest rates and slash spending, despite mass unemployment, in an attempt to defend their gold reserves. And even when countries went off gold, the prevailing mentality made them reluctant to cut rates and create jobs. But we're past all that now. Or are we?

ARTICLE: <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/12/opinion/12krugman.html?emc=eta1>

URANIUM POLICY A HYPOCRISY

After the UN Security Council, with a push from US President Barack Obama, agreed to a historic resolution last month to rid the world of nuclear weapons, Australia needs to consider whether we see our future as supplying China's uranium market, writes David Noonan in The Age (5/10/09). We also need to assess the broader effects of Australia's uranium exports on nuclear non-proliferation, regional security and China's human rights record. One of Kevin Rudd's early initiatives as prime minister was to establish the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament, co-chaired by former foreign minister Gareth Evans, saying this would be "our gift to the world". Unfortunately, Australia can never credibly lead on nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament while spreading nuclear risks as one of the world's largest uranium suppliers. The mismatch between Australia's rhetoric and the illusion of protection provided by nuclear safeguards is stark in the case of China. As a uranium exporter, Australia has a responsibility to strengthen nuclear safeguards and to act decisively to disqualify any state that does not fully observe its Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty obligations. China is modernising - rather than eliminating - its nuclear arsenal and has so far failed to ratify the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty. China is one country that does not meet its non-proliferation treaty obligations.

ARTICLE: <http://www.theage.com.au/opinion/politics/uranium-policy-a-hypocrisy-20091004-ght0.html>

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT IRAN

The possibility that Iran is seeking to develop a nuclear weapon and the reality that it is building a capability for enriching uranium continue to raise tensions in the Middle East and could push other countries in the region to move in the same direction, writes Hans Blix in the London Guardian. In my view the issue of nuclear weapons is not really of great importance for today's [negotiations](#). After all, even if there were no such ambition now, Iran could change its mind next year and would then have come closer to a weapon by the progress made in the enrichment program. The conclusion is that it remains desirable to persuade Iran to abandon enrichment. But we do not know if this would be possible under any circumstances. Only direct talks will show this, and it is sad that such talks did not begin much earlier. Several years were wasted by making suspension of enrichment a precondition for talks. We should give President Obama the credit for the start of talks – without any guarantee, of course, that a deal will be reached.

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/cifamerica/2009/oct/07/iran-nuclear-weapons-wmd-enrichment>

IN EGYPT AND SAUDI ARABIA, SUCCESSION LOOMS

They are a desert king and a military officer-turned-president. Drive through their capitals and their images glow from billboards and painted walls, old men with their eyes fixed everywhere, even as whispers grow about who will rise to replace them, writes Jeffrey Fleishman in the LA Times (13/10/09). King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak are in their 80s, durable US allies whose governments have crushed political dissent at home while playing leading roles across the Middle East. But these days, talk of succession reverberates as Washington, as well as Riyadh and Cairo, plans to navigate an era without two of the region's dominant personalities. The men have given no indication that they will step down. Mubarak's term runs until 2011 and the king's reign lasts for as long as he sees fit. But Mubarak and Abdullah are frail. In Egypt, there is incessant chatter that the president's younger son, Gamal, will follow his father, and in Saudi Arabia, several leadership scenarios are unfolding within the ruling House of Saud ...But the (US) official, who spoke anonymously because of the sensitivity of the matter, added that the eventual absence of Mubarak, who has been in power since 1981, and Abdullah, who took the throne in 2005 but has run Saudi Arabia since 1996, when the since-deceased King Fahd suffered a stroke, raises concerns about the future of a jittery Middle East.

ARTICLE: <http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-two-leaders13-2009oct13,0,2106514.story>

NO JOKE - QUEENSLAND'S ANTI-CORRUPTION SYSTEM A HIT WORLDWIDE

In ABC's Background Briefing Ian Townsend, recalled that comedian Max Gillies used to tell a joke back in the 1980s about Queensland's former 'Minister for Everything', Russ Hinze. Hinze's portfolios included racing and liquor licencing, and asked if his ownership of hotels and racehorses wasn't a conflict of interest, Hinze said: "That's not a conflict of interest, that's a convergence of interest!" It's a joke Brisbane-based ethics consultant Howard Whitton likes to tell when he jets around the world to talk about public sector corruption. The joke's been on Queensland ever since a bribery racket run by the police called 'The Joke' was exposed in the late 1980s in the Courier Mail and the ABC's Four Corners program 'The Moonlight State'. The Fitzgerald corruption inquiry eventually sent four government ministers, a police commissioner, and others, to jail. Queensland's had a hard time living all of that down and recent scandals, including the jailing this year of former health minister Gordon Nuttall on corruption charges, haven't helped. It's almost a laughing matter, then, that Queensland's better known around the world these days as the very model of integrity. The integrity system that evolved in Queensland after the Fitzgerald Inquiry is fighting corruption in places like Kurdistan ... It's called a National Integrity System, but not only do few people recognise its origins; in the streets of Brisbane you'd be lucky to find anyone who knows it exists, let alone how it works. This system that evolved from Queensland is now used by the World Bank, the United Nations, UNESCO, governments, universities and all sorts of institutions around the world. It's been translated into 25 languages.

ANALYSIS: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2009/10/09/2710033.htm>

VENEZUELA'S PRESIDENT HUGO CHÁVEZ ACCUSED OF TURNING TYRANT

He was the man who saved Hugo Chavez when all seemed lost. A coup had ousted Venezuela's president and buried, it seemed, his leftist experiment. General Raúl Baduel, however, stayed loyal and tilted the army Chávez's way during tumultuous days in April 2002, paving the way for his triumphant return to power and restoring democracy. A grateful Chávez hailed the general a hero and appointed him defence minister. They became close allies and confidants, Rory Carroll writes in the London Guardian. Times change. Baduel is now stripped of power and facing corruption charges that could keep him in jail for decades. Prosecutors say he pilfered state funds. Baduel says his crime was to realise – and declare – that the president was a tyrant. "Every day there is more repression, and Chávez's mask slips further. The only thing Chávez cares about is being president for life," he said, seated at a desk in his cell. "This," he said, tapping a pile of legal documents emblazoned with his name, "is a judicial farce".

ARTICLE: <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/12/hugo-chavez-venezuela-president-tyrant>

RESPONDING TO AUTHENTIC RAGE

It is a sign of our weird political moment that the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to President Obama will probably hurt him among some of his fellow citizens, writes E.J. Dionne in the Washington Post (12/10/09). His opponents are describing the award as premature. The deeper problem is that the Nobel will underscore the extent to which Obama is a cosmopolitan figure, much loved in European capitals because he is the change they have been looking for. Most Americans will probably be happy to have a leader who wins acclaim around the globe. But, paradoxically, a decision made in Oslo to honour Obama's peaceable intentions may make it more difficult for him to reconcile a body politic roiled by years of cultural warfare, partisan animosity and ideological extremism. The effort to understand where Obama hatred comes from has been one of the few growth areas in the American economy.

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/11/AR2009101101556.html?wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter&wpisrc=newsletter>

SAVING THE LAST LIONS

Just 50 years ago there were close to a half-million lions in Africa - about 450,000 in all. Today there are between 16,000 and 23,000. And yet, unlike elephants (a far more numerous species), lions have no protection under the international accord governing such matters, writes Dereck Joubet in the Washington Post (13/10/09). Big cats are in trouble everywhere. The number of tigers has dipped below 3,000. Indeed, as we look at the lion population today, it's the shadow of the tiger's history that scares me most. Tiger bones are used extensively in the East for medicines and mythological (read nonsense) cures for ailments or limp libidos, and the demand is increasing. A growing demand and a disappearing supply is a formula for disaster. The solution we are seeing play out is a switch from tiger bones to lion bones, which can be easily sold off as tiger bones. It's ironic that the most famous animal in Africa, perhaps in the world, can't even be poached on its own value but only as a "mock tiger."

ARTICLE: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/10/12/AR2009101202403.html?wpisrc=newsletter>