

UNITY

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Acting Editor: Ian Mathews - 02 6281 4025

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTIONS: Email: ian.mathews7@bigpond.com

DISTRIBUTION: unity.unaa@gmail.com

UNity has moved..UNity and Supplement can be found at: <http://www.unaa.org.au/>

Email reminders will go out as usual.

Earlier editions of UNity 2004-05, 2006, 2007, 2008 and 2009 are also on the UNAA website: www.unaa.org.au.

A. UNITED NATIONS and Australia

How do the major parties' foreign policies reflect Australia's obligations and responsibilities as a member-state of the United Nations? This edition of Unity publishes the parties' policies.

B. CLIMATE CHANGE and ENVIRONMENT

Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, says this year's United Nations climate conference, in December in Cancún, Mexico, must keep up the unprecedented momentum created in the lead up to Copenhagen. Reaching a strong international Climate Change agreement remains a top priority for the European Union.

C. HUMAN RIGHTS and the election

A re-elected Labor government says it will "engage with **United Nations** international human rights bodies, including through Australia's participation in the Universal Periodic Review process before the Human Rights Committee in 2011"

D. PEACE & SECURITY

The last American combat brigade in Iraq has left the Iraq, the US military has said. But the Pentagon has not confirmed that the move marks an early end to combat operations

E. HEALTH & MEANS

United Nations agencies including **the World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF, the World Health Organisation (WHO), UNHCR, UN Population Fund (UNFPA)** are caring for 20 million people affected by the on-going floods in Pakistan. The World Bank has offered a \$US900 million loan to Pakistan to help with the country's flood recovery programme. As aid donations fall short, the World Bank said that \$US900 million would be diverted from ongoing and planned projects in the country.

F. MEDIA MATTERS

The annual United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Awards 2010 are seeking nominations in many categories.

G. OTHER NEWS

The US may be ready to back a proposed UN commission to investigate alleged human-rights abuses in Myanmar (Burma), including killings, torture, rape and mass displacement of Myanmar's ethnic groups, according to Foreign Policy magazine,

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. **This week there are 242 weeks left in which to radically lower emissions.**

A. UNITED NATIONS & AGENCIES – and major parties' foreign policies

Foreign affairs, overseas aid, national security – and the election

Both major parties have published their foreign policies on their respective websites. The parties have adopted different ways of presenting these. Labor's statement of intent is published below followed by the Coalition's presentation. The Coalition's presentation has been shortened by omitting a section devoted to criticisms of the other party and the detailed expansion of its summary. Both of the latter are available on the Coalition website.

Labor's full foreign affairs and national security policy is at:

<http://alp.org.au/agenda/strengthening-australia/>

The Coalition's foreign affairs and national security policy is at:

<http://www.liberal.org.au/Policies.aspx>

The Greens' policies, presented by Senator Bob Brown, at the National Press Club, Canberra, on August 18, encompass a number of UN-related issues. Details at:

<http://greens.org.au/content/senator-bob-brown-pre-election-national-press-club-address>

UNity has not commented on the policies but has highlighted mentions of the **United Nations** and related topics.

Labor's foreign and national security policies

At the heart of the Government's foreign policy and national security approach lies the responsibility to protect and defend Australia's national interests.

By having an active foreign policy and making sure our voice is heard, we can help secure the best outcomes for Australia and Australians.

That is why the Australian Government has taken an active role in international efforts to respond to the global financial crisis, to tackle climate change, and to help build a better future for Afghanistan.

The Australian Government has:

- Rebuilt Australia's engagement with the world in the face of rapidly evolving international events as global economic and strategic weight shifts to the Asia-Pacific.
- Strengthened our ties with our ally the United States, with key regional partners in Asia and the Pacific and with the wider world.
- Re-engaged with the **United Nations** in recognition of the fact that supporting a strong multilateral system is not just the right thing to do, but it is in our national interest to do so.
- Moved to ensure the security of our nation through long-term planning for our defence forces.

Strengthening Australia in a changing world requires building our defence forces and engaging actively in regional and global affairs.

The defence and security of our nation, its people and their interests is the first priority of government. To ensure that we can deliver this, we have undertaken long-term planning for the defence and security of our nation, including developing a Defence White Paper to chart a strategic way forward to deliver Force 2030. We are committed to recognising and supporting the efforts of all our men and women in uniform.

We are also working to secure Australia's future through re-energised regional and global engagement. We are committed to building on the Labor tradition of active contribution to the world beyond our shores. And we are committed to an activist middle power diplomacy that delivers the best outcomes for Australia and Australians.

This engagement is both about principles and the interests of our nation and its people. In our globalised world, we need our voice to be heard in global councils that are crafting the solutions to the challenges we face. The government has made sure this is happening.

Major Achievements

Despite the challenges we have confronted in responding to the global economic crisis, we have injected new life into our foreign policy, allowing Australia to once again be recognised as an important and constructive regional player, and as a source of ideas and a key contributor to finding solutions to global challenges:

1. Protecting Australia's interests in the global economic crisis: We recognised the early dangers of the global financial crisis, and ensured that Australia was a key driver of the international response through the G20 process.

- We used creative, active middle power diplomacy to help shape the international response to the crisis and ensure that the G20 has become the new body for tackling global economic challenges.
- The declaration of the G20 as the premier forum for international economic cooperation represents the most significant shift in global governance in decades. For Australia, it is the most important new leaders' institution since the creation of APEC.
- The G20 successfully addressed the global financial crisis, acting in a coordinated and immediate way to stabilise the financial sector and build confidence globally.

2. Defence White Paper: We have delivered the first Defence White Paper in nearly a decade, which sets out a comprehensive plan for Australia's Defence out to 2030.

- To implement the Defence White Paper we delivered the first Defence Capability Plan since 2006, which set out over \$60 billion of projects that will form the building blocks of Force 2030.
- Our actions will ensure that Australia has the Defence Force it needs to meet the challenges of the future - and that our defence interests are properly planned for and budgeted. Our approach also includes a targeted Strategic Reform Program that will deliver efficiencies in the way Defence carries out its roles.

3. Making a contribution to international security:

- We have strengthened our deployments in **Afghanistan**, and play our part by contributing to the International Security Assistance Force, helping with reconstruction efforts and training of the Afghan National Army.
- We have continued to contribute to stability in our near neighbourhood through our military deployments to **East Timor** and **the Solomon Islands**.

4. Strengthening our alliance with the United States:

- Australia's Alliance with the United States remains the bedrock of Australia's defence security and strategic arrangements.

- We have established strong connections with the new Obama Administration, and built strong working relationships in areas of common involvement, such as Afghanistan.
- We have built on our close relationship by concluding new agreements in defence cooperation, civil-military cooperation, and counter-terrorism.

5. Engaging with our region: We have injected new vigour into our key regional relationships – with Japan, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, South Korea, and Singapore to name just a few.

- We concluded negotiations for the ASEAN-Australia-New Zealand Free Trade Agreement – Australia's largest free trade agreement that will reduce or eliminate tariffs across a region of 600 million people with an annual GDP of \$3.2 billion.
- We have commenced negotiations for a Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) agreement which includes Australia, the United States, New Zealand, Vietnam, Brunei, Chile, Singapore and Peru. The Trans-Pacific Partnership will be an ambitious, 21st century agreement that will strengthen economic integration in the region.
- We have been a constructive participant in discussions about the shape of future regional architecture in the Asia Pacific region, drawing on the Labor tradition of driving discussion and innovation in our engagement with our region.
- We secured membership of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), which brings together 16 Asian nations and the ASEAN Secretariat along with 27 European Union nations and the European Commission – correcting a longstanding historical anomaly.

6. Acting as a good international citizen through delivering on our commitment to increase our **foreign aid** to 0.5% of gross national income by 2015-16.

7. Recasting our relations with the Pacific to be based on mutual respect and mutual responsibility.

- We hosted the Pacific Islands Forum leaders' meeting in Cairns – the first time Australia has hosted in 15 years.
- We have concluded Pacific Partnerships for Development with Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Nauru and Kiribati. These agreements commit us to **increased development assistance**, tailored for countries' individual development needs, and embrace commitments from our partners to improve governance, increase investment in infrastructure, alleviate poverty and achieve better outcomes in health and education.
- We have launched PACER Plus trade negotiations with our partners in the South Pacific to help build economic resilience and sustainability in the region.

Other achievements

- Strengthening border security through a tough, targeted approach, including through close cooperation with our regional partners, in developing enduring regional solutions to issues of irregular people movement.
- Establishing the **International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament** to develop new ideas on strengthening the existing nuclear non-proliferation regime and making progress towards the ultimate goal of a world free of nuclear weapons.
- Renewed commitment to the **United Nations**, and as an expression of that commitment, actively seeking a non-permanent seat on the **United Nations Security Council** for the 2013-14 term. As a member of the Security Council, we can help shape global responses in ways that serve our national interests, promote our values and virtues and support peace and security.
- Actively pursuing trade policy through high quality Free Trade Agreements that increase market access for Australian exporters, as well as through a leadership role in World Trade Organisation negotiations.

- New engagement with Africa, the Caribbean and Latin America – regions of the world where our interests are increasingly engaged, but which Australia has for too long neglected.
- Demonstrating that we are a committed member of the Commonwealth through being selected to host the next Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth in 2011.

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The Coalition's national security policies, including foreign affairs (published below) include

- Restoring Sovereignty and Control to Australia's Borders
- Towards a Productive and Sustainable Population Growth Path for Australia Border Protection
- Ports and Airports Policy Population and Immigration Policy Sustainable Population and Immigration
- National Community Crime Prevention
- Fight Crime Policy
- Foreign Affairs Policy
- Veterans Policy

Coalition foreign affairs' policies summary

The international challenges facing Australia demand a coherent and effective foreign policy. The Howard Government bequeathed a strong and consistent foreign policy legacy. However, the strong relationships, founded on mutual respect and built over many years, have been mismanaged and damaged by Labor's inept and erratic diplomatic efforts.

The Coalition will strengthen our relationships with key partners and refocus foreign policy on the advancement of Australia's core strategic and economic interests.

Our foreign policy should be based on a robust assessment of our strategic and economic interests and the enduring values of the Australian people.

The Coalition's *Plan for Real Action on Foreign Affairs* is firmly grounded in:

- repaired bilateral relationships with key regional partners;
- strengthened relations with our allies and partners further afield;
- a strong commitment to Australia as a good neighbour and a respected power in the Asia-Pacific region, and more broadly;
- an increased focus on the Indian Ocean region;
- **multilateral engagement** where it is clearly in the national interest;
- a resolute stand against terrorism;
- promotion of educational and cultural exchange;
- enhanced global trade and investment links based on disciplined economic management;
- and
- more effective and efficient delivery of **international aid**.

To strengthen Australia's strategic and economic interests in the international arena, the Coalition's *Plan for Real Action on Foreign Affairs* will:

1. Repair and strengthen relations with key partners. A Coalition Government will give priority to repairing the damage Labor has inflicted on Australia's relations with key regional partners – Indonesia, East Timor, Japan, China and India – and to strengthening our relations with them. Our focus will be on consistency, stability and mutual respect.

2. Work with, instead of antagonising, our neighbours on regional institutions. Australia's neighbourhood will be defined as the Asia Pacific-Indian Ocean. A Coalition Government will work cooperatively with the Asia-Pacific region to make existing regional institutions work better to serve the national interest and the interests of our region rather than creating new ones. We will also focus diplomatic, development, trade and security efforts in the Indian Ocean rim.
3. Support multilateral engagement where it is in the national interest. Australia under a Coalition Government will engage with **multilateral organisations** where it is clearly in our national interest. A Coalition government would not proceed with Labor's extravagant **UN Security Council** bid, which has distracted from Australia's core foreign policy interests.
4. Support increased rigorously-administered **foreign aid**. The Coalition will increase foreign aid spending to 0.5 per cent of our Gross National Income by 2015-16. It will also consolidate our aid efforts in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean regions and will focus on the quality and rigorous administration of that effort.
5. **Minister for International Development**. A Minister for International Development will be appointed, to work with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, with responsibility for our foreign aid effort, including AusAid and the delivery of aid in our regions through non-government channels.
6. Secure funding for Australians in distress overseas. The Coalition will reverse Labor's Budget cuts to consular services which are of vital assistance to Australians who find themselves in distress overseas. The required funds will be drawn from within the existing portfolio budget allocation.
7. Build understanding: promote foreign language study and connected classrooms. To afford students the best opportunities from our international neighbours the Coalition will pursue greater international student exchange and will reinforce the need for students to pursue foreign language studies. A Coalition Government will pursue greater cultural engagement as part of our foreign policy initiatives.
8. **Provide a principled voice on human rights**. The Coalition will pursue a principled and robust approach to human rights abuses, and will seek to establish more bilateral Ministerial level Human Rights Dialogue forums with nations in the region.
9. **Engage with Women Leaders in our region**. The Coalition will work with women political leaders in our region to establish a forum for dialogue and action on common interests including security, education, health, human rights and development. We will work within the forum to establish a network of mentors to encourage women in the region to take political leadership roles.

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The Greens policies

This summary of the Greens' policies was presented during Senator Bob Brown's address to the National Press Club, Canberra, on August 18, which centred on environmental protection of productive land and native species.

He said, in part:

First, I want to remind you, Ladies and Gentlemen, of some of the other policies the Greens are putting before the Australian people. You may have missed them for very good reason - too much of the news pages have been too full of piffle to cover them.

- The Greens will end discrimination in the marriage laws of Australia: this issue rankles out there. Young Australia is in revolt over it.

- The Greens will accord with international law and give **asylum seekers** the respect and compassion they deserve in Australia, in an election where the dire prediction of a tsunami of boat people has proven false.
- The Greens will roll out the remainder of the \$16 billion schools building program. We got that through the Senate as part of the Rudd-Swan \$43 billion stimulus package. The Coalition opposed this package which saved Australia from recession. Tony Abbott now threatens this school funding program, if voted into office next week. That threatens projects in both the private and public schools of Australia. For the Senate on Saturday, I hope voters will remember it was the Greens, against Tony Abbott's opposition, who ensured those thousands of Australia's public schools, as well as independent schools which benefited from the schools building program and more, which, if the Coalition is elected, face being cut out immediately.
- We will work with the next government for a triple referendum: to recognise Indigenous Australians in the Constitution; to acknowledge Local Government in the Constitution; and for a new vote on Australia becoming a republic, for an Australian as our Head of State.
- The Greens propose a Murray-Darling management commission with teeth: able to make sure those urgent measures to save the nation's greatest river system will be implemented.
- We advocate a National Register of the foreign ownership of farmlands and water rights.
- We will legislate for truth in political advertising.
- Our policy is to extend the nation's marine reserve system, including the Coral Sea, to guarantee the future of Australia's fisheries and marine ecosystems.
- We will meet the aspiration of over 80% of Australian voters to end the needless destruction of Australia's remaining wild forests and woodlands and their biodiversity.
- Christine Milne has announced our \$5 billion national loans guarantee fund for 'first of kind' renewable energy projects like base-load solar, wind, geothermal and ocean power.
- We would also extend Rachel Siewert's amendment to the workplace laws, which entitles parents of pre-school children and children with a disability to have flexible working hours. The Greens will work for flexible work hours for all carers. Carers deserve such a break - after all they contribute \$30 billion to Australia's economy each year.
- One topic is not up for debate with the old parties - **Afghanistan**. Australians may be divided on the deployment of our troops, though most Australians want the troops brought safely home. But all Australians support and honour the courage and commitment of the brave 1600 who are in Afghanistan. We should honour them further by debating their deployment in the Parliament. The parliament of The Netherlands did, to the extent of forcing an election, and so the Dutch contingent is now on its way home. I will pursue a debate on Afghanistan in our parliament - so that every elected MP contributes for once - when parliament sittings resume after this election. We politicians owe that debate to our Defence Force Personnel and to the nation.
- The Greens back Labor's National Broadband Network which can deliver dedicated broadband speeds of one thousand megabits per second to 93% of the population. Whereas the Coalition can only promise that same 93% that their broadband speeds

- The Greens will call on the next government to commit to an **international ban on the mining and manufacture of asbestos**. Asbestos continues to be used in developing countries - with over 2 million tonnes produced in 2008. There are an estimated 125 million people around the world still exposed to asbestos in their home and work environment. Australia, with its own terrible experience of asbestosis, can lead in helping the **World Health Organisation** and International Labor Organisation to achieve a comprehensive ban on asbestos.
- The Greens will also move to establish a Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO), which will provide economic and budgetary advice to Parliament, similar to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) in the United States. This PBO would provide alternative costings for budget and policy, removing the reliance on government departments. It would put an end to the squabbling over debates on the economy and the costing of policies between the major parties which has dominated this election campaign and many before it. A Parliamentary Budget Office will make our democracy better informed and more accountable to the people.

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B. CLIMATE CHANGE

EU's strong support for Cancun conference

Reaching a strong international Climate Change agreement remains a top priority for the European Union, says Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action. At last December's Copenhagen climate conference, the majority of countries recognised that global warming needs to be held below 2°C in order to prevent the most severe and potentially catastrophic impacts of climate change. This will require a coordinated international effort, in the form of a strong and legally binding global climate framework.

The Copenhagen conference made some progress in this direction. The non-binding Copenhagen Accord has led to all major economies setting out pledges to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions or take action on them. The Accord includes pledges from the industrialised world to provide nearly US\$ 30 billion in funding over the next three years to help the poorest and most vulnerable developing nations, to make a 'fast start' in tackling greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. Almost a third of this funding will come from the European Union alone, and the EU is on track to deliver this.

She said, "This year's United Nations climate conference, taking place in December in Cancún, Mexico, must keep up the unprecedented momentum created in the lead up to Copenhagen. Europe is ready for ambitious decisions in Cancún. The conference needs to deliver agreement on a set of decisions that captures progress achieved so far, including on institutional matters, and paves the way for a legally binding global climate framework to be agreed as soon as possible thereafter...."

Source: Delegation of the European Union to Australia. For more information, access <http://www.delous.ec.europa.eu/News&events/News/2010/ClimateChangeHedegaardMessage.htm>

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C. HUMAN RIGHTS and the election

A suite of election comments and proposals has been put by the Federal Attorney General, Robert McClelland, who says, on **Human Rights**, “Enhancing and improving human rights is about creating a decent and inclusive society. In 2008, Federal Labor delivered on its commitment to remove discrimination against same sex couples and their families from over 80 different Federal laws in areas such as taxation, social security, health, aged care, superannuation, immigration, child support and family law.

“Earlier this year, we launched Australia’s Human Rights Framework, which outlines key measures to further protect and promote human rights in Australia, including:

- - Investing over \$12 million in a comprehensive suite of education initiatives to promote a greater understanding of human rights across the community.
 - □ Requiring that each new Bill introduced into Parliament is accompanied by a statement of compatibility with our international human rights obligations.
 - □ Establishing a new Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights to provide greater scrutiny of legislation for compliance with our international human rights obligations.
 - □ Combining federal anti-discrimination laws into a single Act to remove unnecessary regulatory overlap and make the system more user friendly.
 - Creating an annual NGO Human Rights Forum to enable comprehensive engagement with non-government organisations on human rights matters.

“Federal Labor policy statement says it has implemented legislative reforms to:

- Prohibit torture and to prevent the reintroduction of the death penalty in Australia.
- □ Introduce stronger protections against age discrimination. The former Coalition Government made it harder for people to make complaints of age discrimination by requiring that the person establish that age discrimination was the dominant reason for discrimination.
- Provide minimum national standards for those with a disability to access premises.
- Extend protections from discrimination on the grounds of family responsibilities, provide greater protection from sexual harassment and established breastfeeding as a separate ground of discrimination.

“A re-elected Gillard Labor Government will provide \$3 million over the forward estimates to the Australian Human Rights Commission to create a stand-alone Age Discrimination Commissioner as a dedicated advocate for people, including older Australians, who experience age discrimination. The Commissioner will be a dedicated advocate in the community and engage with stakeholders, including industry and community representatives, to tackle discrimination in our workplaces and our community, promote respect and fairness and build a more inclusive Australia.

“We will also explore opportunities to ensure that other areas of systemic discrimination, such as disability and race, have their own dedicated advocate.

“A Labor Government will continue to focus on measures that promote a fair and inclusive society, and:

- Implement Australia’s **Human Rights Framework** to promote and protect human rights, including enhanced parliamentary scrutiny of human rights, harmonising all anti-discrimination laws and providing a suite of education programs.
- Work to become a party to the **Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture**, which Australia signed in 2009.

- Engage with **United Nations** international human rights bodies, including through Australia's participation in the Universal Periodic Review process before the Human Rights Committee in 2011.

Labor's full human rights policy is at: <http://alp.org.au/agenda/strengthening-australia/>

The **Coalition** website states "The Coalition will pursue a principled and robust approach to human rights abuses, and will seek to establish more bilateral Ministerial level Human Rights Dialogue forums with nations in the region." The Coalition's policy has various headings all of which encompass human rights such as national security, mental health, child care, care of the ageing.

The Coalition's policies can be found at <http://www.liberal.org.au/Policies.aspx>

Border Protection Command intercepts 2 vessels

HMAS Wollongong, operating under the control of Border Protection Command, has intercepted two suspected irregular entry vessels. One, on August 14, had 17 passengers and four crew on board who have been transferred to Christmas Island where they will undergo security, identity and health checks and their reasons for travel will be established. On August 19, *HMAS Wollongong* intercepted a second suspected irregular entry vessel north of Christmas Island which initial indications suggest has 31 passengers and three crew on board. The group also will be transferred to Christmas Island.

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Young People's Human Rights Medal

The Australian Human Rights Commission is encouraging young people who have made an outstanding contribution to advancing human rights in Australia, to nominate for the Young People's Human Rights Medal.

Commission President Catherine Branson QC said the Young People's Medal was open to those aged 25 years or under on 3 July this year, and was always hotly contested due to the great efforts being undertaken by young people to protect the human rights of others.

"Each year the Commission receives nominations from committed, innovative and passionate young people who take it upon themselves to lead the protection of human rights or raise awareness of human rights issues in their communities, colleges, workplaces and schools," Ms Branson said.

"The judging panel has a difficult task in assessing these nominations, but is always inspired by the efforts young people are making to build a fairer and better society for us all."

Winner of the 2009 Young People's Human Rights Medal, Vinay Menon, said winning the Medal was an honour and recognition of the valuable services provided by the Red Cross, the organisation for whom he volunteers.

"I have been lucky to be a part of the Red Cross and the services they provide that make a difference for vulnerable people," Mr Menon said.

“Winning the Young People’s Medal was also an opportunity to highlight that young people do care about creating a fairer Australia and there are thousands of us volunteering everyday to achieve that goal.”

Nominations can be made for the Human Rights Medal and Young People’s Human Rights Medal and seven Award categories: Law, Community (Organisation), Community (Individual), Literature (non-fiction), Print Media, Television and Radio.

The Commission’s website contains all the information about the 2010 Human Rights Medals and Awards, and information about the sponsors for this year’s awards,

Nominations close at 5pm on Monday, 4 October, 2010. Winners will be presented with their Medals and Awards at a ceremony to be held on Human Rights Day, Friday, 10 December 2010 at the Sheraton on the Park Hotel in Sydney.

Nomination forms/information: www.humanrights.gov.au/hr_awards or Ph: 02 9284 9618 or hrawards@humanrights.gov.au.

Tickets to awards: Ph: 02 9284 9618 or hrawards@humanrights.gov.au (\$80 or \$50 concession includes two course luncheon and drinks.)

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D. PEACE & SECURITY

US combat forces quit Iraq

The last American combat brigade in Iraq has left the country, the US military has said, the BBC reported this week. But the Pentagon has not confirmed that the move marks an early end to combat operations

The 4th Stryker Brigade, 2nd Infantry Division began crossing by land into Kuwait. Their departure comes ahead of a 31 August deadline for an end to the US combat mission in the country. Most of the 4,000 Stryker Brigade troops drove out of Iraq in a convoy of armoured vehicles, say reports.

Some of the brigade remained behind to complete logistical and administrative tasks but were due to leave the country by air later on the same day, the Associated Press reported.

The Pentagon has stressed that the official end to Operation Iraqi Freedom - the US military mission in the country - remains scheduled for the end of the month.

Some 50,000 US troops are expected to remain in Iraq until the end of 2011 to advise Iraqi forces and protect US interests. Those soldiers will be armed but will only use their weapons in self-defence or at the request of the Iraqi government.

State Department spokesman PJ Crowley said the US involvement in Iraq was far from over, but that it would be less intrusive and more civilian focused.

"We are ending the war ... but we are not ending our work in Iraq. We have a long-term commitment to Iraq," he told reporters.

Mr Crowley said the US had a trillion dollar investment to protect in the country and also wanted to see a significant return on the 4,415 troops who have lost their lives in the conflict.

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E. HEALTH

UN and agencies fear cholera in Pakistan

The World Bank has offered a \$US900 million loan to Pakistan to help with the country's flood recovery programme.

As aid donations to the beleaguered nation fall short of what is needed, the body said that funds would be diverted from ongoing and planned projects in the country.

It is now estimated that the number of people affected by floods in Pakistan equals the population of Australia – 20 million, and the water is still rising in Sind province.

The first delivery of AusAID stores for those affected by the recent flooding in Pakistan has arrived by Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) C-17A Globemaster in Islamabad and is being distributed to areas as determined by the Pakistan National Disaster Management Authority.

The Pakistan Government now estimates that more than a third of Pakistan is being directly impacted on by the floods. Up to 20 million people have been adversely affected and more than 750,000 homes have been damaged or destroyed. Dehydration and water borne diseases such as cholera are of increasing concern.

To date, the Australian Government has pledged \$35 million humanitarian assistance to Pakistan.

Two C-17 Globemaster flights are delivering much-needed supplies including tents, tarpaulins, generators, water storage containers and water purification tablets. The supplies will provide shelter and 30 days of safe drinking water for 10,000 families. Australia has also provided 2,000 birthing kits to support expectant mothers in the coming weeks and days along with medical supplies.

Australian funding will help to provide:

- food to two million people over the next fortnight and a further six million people by the end of September through the **World Food Programme**
- clean water and sanitation to two million people through **UNICEF** to halt the spread of disease
- emergency shelter and blankets for the estimated 300,000 families who have lost their homes through the **United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees**
- emergency shelter and supplies to more than 175, 000 people through the **International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies**
- food, shelter, and other emergency relief to help at least 250,000 people through Australian NGOs
- support to the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** to coordinate and support the Pakistan Government's response to the crisis
- a damage and needs assessment mission through the **Asian Development Bank** and **the World Bank**.

In addition, 10 Australian humanitarian experts are being sent to Pakistan to join the relief effort. Two people will work with the **United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs** to coordinate relief efforts. Two people will join the **World Food Programme** to assist with food distribution. Six personnel will work with the Australian Red Cross to provide affected communities with safe drinking water and primary health care.

So far the floods have:

- affected 20 million people (Government of Pakistan figures)
- killed 1,392 people
- injured 1,985 people
- damaged 875,562 houses
- affected 130,000 square kilometres of land and destroyed 2.6 million acres of crops

The estimated loss of life and devastation are expected to increase as details of the situation unfold and secondary impacts start to occur such as water-borne diseases like cholera, which has already taken the lives of a number of children.

Australia's assistance is supporting the **United Nations** and Pakistani Government's Initial Floods Emergency Response Plan.

AusAID spokesperson Suzanne Edgecombe said the AusAID stores delivered by the ADF will benefit more than 10,000 families affected by the natural disaster.

“AusAID will continue to liaise with the Pakistan Government, UN partners, Defence and other key stakeholders within Australia to ensure we provide the most effective response to this disaster.”

Military combine for health program in E.Timor

Health specialists and engineers from the US military and Australian Defence Force (ADF) have formed the basis of a humanitarian assistance mission in East Timor over the next two weeks.

As part of Pacific Partnership 2010 (PP10), medical, dental and engineering aid projects will be conducted in Dili, Same, Soibada, Suai and Laclubar. PP10 participants for East Timor include military personnel from Australia, Canada, Portugal, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, and the US, as well as numerous volunteers from non-government organisations.

More than one thousand villagers in the Oecussi enclave were treated over three days, and two children with life threatening illnesses were immediately evacuated by helicopter to Ministry of Health hospitals.

HMA Ships *Labuan* and *Tarakan* are supporting United States Naval Ship (USNS) *Mercy* by hosting the health teams in the regions of Oecussi and Lautem. At the same time the engineers from the 2nd Combat Engineer Regiment and their US Navy counterparts will complete an engineering project in Dili.

The ADF will provide in-country advice and specialist support to PP10 engineering and medical projects through the ADF-led International Stabilisation Force (ISF) and the Defence Cooperation Program (DCP).

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F. MEDIA MATTERS

Nominations open nationally for the UNAA Media Peace Awards 2010

The annual United Nations Association of Australia is seeking nominations for its annual Media Peace Awards 2010 in many categories.

Major categories include:

News (TV, Radio and Print), Current Affairs, Documentary, Online; Feature writing; Photojournalism. Each of these categories has its own nomination requirements although all need to stimulate public awareness and/or a change in public or private policy, leading to a broader understanding of relevant social justice or humanitarian issues.

Entries are sought also in **special categories** including:

Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs

- Promotion of Aboriginal Reconciliation

Victorian Multicultural Commission/Australian Multicultural Foundation

- Promotion of Multicultural Issues
- Office of Senior Victorians
- Promotion of Positive Images of the Older Person
- Office of Women's Policy
- Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Women's Rights and Issues
- Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
- Increasing Awareness and Understanding of Children's Rights and Issues

For more information including nomination requirements for each category visit:
www.unaavictoria.org.au or contact Catherine Sutherland, Program Manager, United Nations
 Association of Australia (Victorian Division) Tel: 03 9670 7878
 Fax: 03 9670 9993 email office@unaavictoria.org.au

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G. OTHER NEWS

US to join UN over abuses in Burma

The US may be ready to back a proposed UN commission to investigate alleged human-rights abuses in Myanmar (Burma), including killings, torture, rape and mass displacement of Myanmar's ethnic groups.

According to Foreign Policy magazine, "The Obama administration has decided to press for the establishment of a UN commission of inquiry to probe allegations of human rights abuses by Burma's military regime, marking a retreat from earlier American efforts to engage the reclusive government.

"The decision reflects mounting frustration that nearly two years of diplomatic outreach, including several visits by senior American diplomats to Burma, have failed to persuade the country's military ruler, Senior Leader Than Shwe, to release Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, from house arrest or to allow the political opposition to participate in the country's upcoming election.

The allegations against human rights were outlined in a report issued in March by the UN's special rapporteur, Tomas Ojea Quintana. While the US had adopted a position of trying to engage with Myanmar's notoriously reclusive regime, it is reportedly unhappy with the results of the effort.

UN Diplomats win NY rates and taxes case

NEW YORK — A federal appeals court ruled on August 17 that New York cannot collect property taxes from foreign UN delegations, reversing a lower court ruling stating that India and Mongolia owed nearly \$US47 million in back taxes. Agence France Presse reported.

In a long-running battle over foreign delegations and local taxes, the US State Department in June 2009 published a ruling stating that foreign governments should not owe property taxes on buildings used to house their staff.

Therefore "the city's tax liens are invalid and no taxes on property owned by foreign governments and used to house staff of permanent missions to the United Nations or of consular posts are due and owing," read the court ruling Tuesday.

The case stems from a lawsuit filed by New York against the United Nations delegations of India and Mongolia, arguing that they owed millions of dollars in property taxes for buildings they own to house their employees in Manhattan.

City attorney Michael Cardozo argued that if foreign embassies are already exempt from property taxes, the same cannot be true for buildings housing the families of diplomats and mission staff.

A lower court judge ruled in favour of the city, and ordered India to pay 42.4 million dollars in back taxes for a 26-story building near the United Nations, 20 floors of which are reserved for apartments.

The judge had also ordered Mongolia to pay 4.3 million for a 6-story building with two residential floors.

India and Mongolia appealed the decision, and during the trial the US State Department provided key support.

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5g3of4m4Ct3QmN32j3FWQUcNSf8Pg>

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