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## **With clock ticking down, Annan steps up efforts to secure Summit document**

**12 September** - With less than two days left before the United Nations hosts the largest ever gathering of global leaders, and the Summit document still mired in discord, Secretary-General Kofi Annan today intensified his diplomatic efforts, postponing a news conference in a bid to secure a compromise of "give and take" from Member States.



**Annan speaks to reporters**

"There's clearly a sense of urgency, the clock continues to tick, the negotiators, I think, have left things perilously late in light of the date of the summit which was announced well in advance and he's concerned that the work might not be done," spokesman Stephane Dujarric said when asked how serious the situation was.

"But he's definitely not given up, and as I said he's continuing to consult with Member States at various levels," both at UN Headquarters in New York and with phone calls to national capitals, he told the regular noon briefing. Despite some progress, differences still persist over producing an agreed outcome document on issues ranging from enacting UN reform to promoting development to battling terrorism.

Mr. Dujarric said "intensive negotiations" were held in the General Assembly over the weekend and were still continuing in an effort to produce the document ahead of the 2005 World Summit from 14 to 16 September, expected to be attended by some 180 heads of State or government. Meanwhile Mr. Annan put off his pre-Summit news conference until tomorrow.

Progress was made in the areas of development, terrorism and management reform, Mr. Dujarric said, but differences still

exist in other areas, especially the section on disarmament and non-proliferation.

"Obviously the hard decisions are going to have to be made by the Member States but the Secretary-General has been meeting daily, if not twice daily, with both presidents (outgoing and incoming) of the General Assembly," he added.

"He's also meeting today with the chairs of the regional groups. He's been in phone contact with Member States, both at the ambassador level here and higher level in capitals, and he's trying to encourage them to make the necessary give and take that will enable us to have an outcome document for the Summit."

A General Assembly Core Group, set up by outgoing Assembly President Jean Ping of Gabon, has engaged in marathon sessions over the past two weeks, and Mr. Ping is to present Member States with yet another revised version later today.

The document is intended to cover a host of proposals contained in Mr. Annan's report in March "In Larger Freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all." He has repeatedly spoken of the unique opportunity offered by the Summit in this 60th anniversary year of the UN to rise up to the challenges of the 21st century.

The report contained key recommendations on poverty, security and human rights, including increasing official development assistance by developed countries to 0.7 per cent of their gross domestic product (GDP).

It urged tackling climate change, noting that the Kyoto Protocol containing binding targets for cutting greenhouse gas emissions only extends until 2012, and called for a comprehensive anti-terrorism treaty, defining terrorism as any act intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants and intimidate a population or coerce a government or international organization.

It also proposed the creation of two new bodies, a UN Peacebuilding Council to help countries emerging from conflict, and a more powerful Human Rights Council elected by the General Assembly to replace the current Geneva-based Commission on Human Rights, which critics says is politicized.

Other recommendations included establishing a democracy fund, expanding the Security Council from its current 15 members to 24 and streamlining the UN Secretariat.

If acted on, the proposals would mark the most dramatic change in the UN's functioning ever achieved at once.

## **Annan invites Summit leaders to sign or ratify a raft of international treaties**

**12 September** - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan has invited heads of State and government attending the 2005 World Summit to take the opportunity to sign, ratify or accede to 32 key treaties ranging from human rights and refugees to terrorism and the Kyoto protocol to curb global warming gases.

This continues an initiative begun at the Millennium Summit in 2000 that has since become an annual event for treaties for which the Secretary-General is depositary during the opening of each General Assembly.

More heads of State or government are expected to participate in this year's Summit than at any previous international meeting ever, and expectations for such a high level of participation extend to the treaty event as well.

"Ours is an age of unprecedented interconnectedness," Mr. Annan wrote in his letter to heads of State and government inviting them to participate in the event. "The destinies of peoples around the world and the threats they face are interwoven."

The treaties selected this year, rather than focus on any specific aspect of international law as has been the case in the past, reflect what the Secretary-General calls "the central challenge for the twenty-first century – to fashion a new and broader

understanding ... of what collective security means.”

They span a broad range of issues, also including penal matters, organized crime and corruption, the law of the sea, disarmament and health.

At this year's event, the recently adopted International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism will be opened for signature. The UN Convention Against Corruption, which was adopted in 2003, is expected to enter into force during the event while the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC) approaches its 100th ratification or accession.

## UN ecology chiefs calls on World Summit to put environment front and centre



**12 September** - Declaring that “the environment is not a luxury, not a Gucci accessory bag or a fancy silk tie affordable only when all other issues have been resolved,” the head of the United Nations ecological agency today called on this week's World Summit to give the environment its due priority as the key to human development.

“It is our sincere hope that when heads of state meet in New York that they put ‘natural or nature's capital’ right up there with human and financial capital,” UN Environment Programme (UNEP) executive director

Klaus Toepfer said in a statement about the largest ever gathering of world leaders starting at UN Headquarters on Wednesday.

“Anything less will undermine our attempts to defeat poverty and deliver sustainable development and will short-change current and future generations,” he added, stressing that significant, targeted investments in the environment will go a long way towards meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) that seek to slash a host of socio-economic ills, such as extreme poverty, hunger, and preventable diseases, by 2015.

The environment “is the oxygen breathing life into all the Goals,” he said. “It is the red ribbon running around our common aspirations for a healthier, more stable and just world. It is also critical to the economies of countries and regions, a fact that governments have yet to fully take on board but which they ignore at their economic peril.”

Mr. Toepfer cited a long list of supporting evidence, putting actual dollars and cents value to the gains earned from properly managing nature and the losses entailed by its degradation.

In one example, New York City Council, faced with supplying safer drinking water for its 9 million customers, saved between \$3 billion to \$5 billion by investing \$1 billion to better manage river banks, forests, agriculture and other ecosystems to reduce pollution into the Catskill/Delaware river system, instead of sinking up to \$6 billion into filtration machinery.

In another example the recently published Millennium Ecosystem Assessment and its spin-off reports show that intact tropical mangroves, coastal ecosystems that are nurseries for fish, natural pollution filters and coastal defences, are worth around \$1,000 a hectare, but when cleared for shrimp farms their value falls to around \$200 a hectare.

In a third case studies show that the value of the timber and fuel-wood from a forest is worth less than a third when compared with the value of their services such as water-shed protection and absorption of pollutants like greenhouse gases.

Studies in the Amazon by researchers at Johns Hopkins University in the United States have concluded that for every 1 per cent increase in deforestation, there is an 8 per cent increase in the number of malaria-carrying mosquitoes.

This has implications for economic development as well as human health. It is calculated that Africa's gross national product (GNP) in 2000 could have been 25 per cent or \$100 billion higher if malaria had been eradicated 35 years ago.

In a related development, the heads of five UN-backed treaties said Summit participants must take action to conserve and

use biological diversity sustainably, and distribute its benefits equitably if the world is to achieve the MDGs.

“All of us rely on biodiversity, directly or indirectly for our health and welfare. We must ensure that biodiversity will be available for us and for all future generations,” they said in a joint news release.

The five biodiversity-related treaties are: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS), the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) and the World Heritage Centre (WHC).

## Head of UN probe into Lebanese ex-premier's assassination arrives in Syria



Kofi Annan (R) with Detlev Mehlis (file photo)

**12 September** - The head of the United Nations inquiry into the assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri arrived in Syria today to continue the probe he launched after an earlier mission found Lebanon's own investigation seriously flawed and Syria primarily responsible for the political tension preceding the murder.

At the same time Secretary-General Kofi Annan informed the Security Council of his intention to grant a 40-day extension to the UN International Independent Investigation Commission (UNIIC), set up by the Security Council to probe the February bomb attack which killed Mr. Hariri and 20

others.

Earlier this month, after naming the heads of Lebanese intelligence and security agencies as suspects, UNIIC head Detlev Mehlis said he would seek an extension of the inquiry's three-month mandate to complete its work.

Mr. Hariri's assassination led to renewed calls for the withdrawal of all Syrian troops and intelligence agents, who had been in Lebanon since the early stages of the country's 1975-1990 civil war. Syria withdrew its troops from its smaller neighbour in April.

The extension means the investigators' mandate will now last until 25 October.

## Annan pleased at Israeli withdrawal from Gaza; praises Sharon, commends Abbas

**12 September** - United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan today voiced the hope that Israel's withdrawal from Gaza, “and the cooperation and coordination between Israelis and Palestinians which made it possible,” can lead to the revitalization of the Road Map plan that sees two states living side by side in peace.

“The Secretary-General is pleased that all Israeli military personnel and installations have been withdrawn from the Gaza Strip and praises the determination and political courage shown in this regard by Prime Minister (Ariel) Sharon,” a statement issued by his spokesman said.

“He congratulates the Palestinians and commends President (Mahmoud) Abbas who has played an important role in ensuring that the withdrawal was carried out in a peaceful and coordinated manner,” the statement added.

Mr. Annan said he was looking forward to next week's talks of the diplomatic Quartet – UN, European Union, Russia and United States – the sponsors of the Road Map plan, which calls for a series of parallel steps leading to two states living side-by-side in peace, originally by the end of 2005.

## General Assembly receives update on Roll Back Malaria

## initiative

**12 September** - The international community should provide anti-malarial medicines and nets to malaria-endemic countries free of cost as they try to halve the disease in their populations in the next four years and work towards halting its spread by 2015, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan says in a new report to the General Assembly, due to start its major annual public discussions this week.

This should be done by increasing funding for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and other mechanisms, "for insecticide-treated mosquito nets, insecticides for indoor residual spraying for malaria control and effective anti-malarial combination treatments to be fully accessible and free of charge, as public goods, for all populations exposed to malaria," Mr. Annan says.

The affected countries should "pursue a rapid scale-up of prevention by applying expeditious and cost-effective approaches, including targeted free or highly subsidized distribution of materials and medicines to vulnerable groups, with the aim of ensuring that at least 60 per cent of pregnant women receive intermittent preventive treatment and at least 60 per cent of those at risk use insecticide-treated nets, wherever that is the vector-control method of choice;" he says.

Those countries also should recruit, train and retain an adequate number of health-care personnel to achieve the targets of the April 2000 Abuja Declaration to Roll Back Malaria in Africa and the development goals of the September 2000 UN Millennium Declaration, the report to the GA says.

The Roll Back Malaria Partnership secretariat, hosted by the UN World Health Organization (WHO), has developed an overarching Global Strategic Plan 2005-2015, which charts the way to achieve 80 per cent coverage of populations with all Partnership interventions, a 50 per cent reduction in the disease burden by 2010, and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halting the spread by 2015 and reducing the burden even further.

Malaria-endemic countries should increase, where possible, domestic funding for malaria control and create favourable conditions for work with the private sector on access to good-quality services, Mr. Annan says.

The report notes that last year's GA requested the petroleum companies operating in Africa to provide polymer to manufacturers of mosquito nets at reduced prices, and called on the international community to expand access to artemisinin-based combination therapy for populations at risk of exposure to resistant strains of *Plasmodium falciparum* malaria.

Tanzania, Uganda and Kenya have been stepping up their cultivation of the plant yielding artemisinin, *Artemisia annua*, to meet the surge in demand to 30 million treatment courses in 2005 from 2 million courses in 2003, it says.

## Fréchette says women's equality crucial to achieving development goals



**12 September** - Gender equality and women's empowerment are central to achieving major development goals as well as many of the commitments made at all major United Nations conferences and summits since the 1990s, UN Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette said in anticipation of this week's World Summit in New York.

Louise Fréchette "Unless attention is paid to the discrimination of women across all MDGs, the achievement of the goals will be jeopardized," she told a meeting of women speakers of parliaments on Friday, in reference to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the ambitious set of targets for reducing world poverty and other ills by 2015.

"A gender perspective must be incorporated into the strategies, programmes and activities designed to reach the MDGs, she added"

She said that a gender perspective is particularly important for reaching the MDGs that relate to the eradication of poverty and hunger because of the disproportionately high incidence of poverty among women.

In addition, she said that women were also very much affected by to goals that relate to reducing child mortality and combating HIV/AIDS. They are central for ensuring environmental sustainability, she stressed, because giving women access to productive resources, including land, is critical for sustainable development.

## **Annan says UN crime fighting agency integral in struggle against terrorism**

**12 September** - Over the past year, the United Nations agency charged with fighting crime and traffic in illicit drugs has become an important player in the struggle against terrorism, helping States to ratify international agreements and to create legislation on the issue, according to a new report by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

"The Office is particularly experienced in work pertaining to the development of state capacity to prevent terrorism, especially through the provision of legal technical assistance to requesting member States and the promotion of international cooperation in criminal matters," Mr. Annan says in the report to the General Assembly, which last year requested the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to intensify its efforts in those areas.

"By utilizing its specialized expertise and comparative advantages, as well as by fostering and strengthening both inter-agency and intra-agency partnerships, UNODC makes a substantive contribution to the global effort against terrorism and more specifically to the Secretary-General's comprehensive global strategy against terrorism," he adds.

In the report, Mr. Annan requests UNODC to reinforce its work in the areas of the rule of law, the building of viable criminal justice systems and strengthening international cooperation against terrorism.

In that regard, he also asks the agency to begin work on the recently adopted International Convention for the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism, in consultation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

"The terrorist attacks of the past year, including the hostage-taking in Beslan, Russian Federation, in September 2004 and the recent bombings in London in July 2005, once again brought the urgency of addressing the threat of international terrorism to the attention of the international community," he stresses.

## **UN joins in new global partnership to slash maternal and child mortality**

**12 September** - The world's leading maternal, newborn and child health professionals formally joined forces for the first time today in a United Nations-backed initiative to tackle a crisis that each year sees more than 500,000 women die in pregnancy or childbirth and nearly 11 million children succumb to mostly preventable diseases.

The Partnership for Maternal, Newborn & Child Health, a milestone in a growing global focus on the health of women and children, aims to boost efforts to achieve two of the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – slashing by two thirds the mortality rate among children under five and cutting by three quarters the maternal mortality ratio, both by 2015.

"If the world is to meet the goals of reducing maternal and under-five mortality by 2015, only a focused, coordinated effort can bring women, newborns and children the health care they need during pregnancy, delivery, the early weeks of life and in childhood," UN World Health Organization (WHO) Lee Jong-wook said.

"By working with countries to increase access to existing health-care solutions, this Partnership has the potential to transform millions of lives and make critical progress," he added.

The Partnership unites developing and donor countries, UN agencies, professional associations, academic and research institutions, foundations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to intensify and harmonize national, regional and global progress towards the two MDGs.



A young Ethiopian mother and child

"The lives of up to 7 million women, children and newborns can be saved each year if proven and cost-effective interventions are expanded to reach those in need," UN Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Director Thoraya Ahmed Obaid said at the launch, pledging to commit additional resources to support country programmes and tackle critical shortages in skilled health-care providers, which are exacerbated by a brain drain and HIV/AIDS.

"This is a major effort, and no one agency can do it alone. Commitment and partnership are essential," she added. The UN partners include WHO, UNFPA, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Bank.

The Partnership is a merger of three existing collaborations focused on maternal, newborn and child health and will be hosted by the Geneva-based WHO.

While some countries have made progress, at current rates the world is not on track to achieve the two MDGs, which are part of a programme adopted by the UN Millennium Summit of 2000 to slash a host of socio-economic ills, such as extreme poverty and hunger, all by 2015.

The Partnership will begin immediately to work with national leaders on delivering the much-advocated 'continuum of care' approach to countries. In recent publications including the WHO's World Health Report 2005, leading global health experts agree that progress begins when a women's health needs are addressed at the same time as her child's.

## **Severe worldwide housing crunch predicted by UN settlements programme**

**12 September** - With the world's urban population expected to almost double to more than 5 billion in the next 25 years, governments around the globe will need to build almost 100,000 new housing units a day, provide subsidies and support community loan programmes, or else compound the enormous slum conditions that exist now, according to a United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) report.

"If adequate financial resources are not invested in the development of urban shelter and services, this additional population will be trapped in urban poverty, deplorable housing conditions, poor health, and lower productivity," said Anna Tibaijuka, Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, in presenting the contents of the report today.

With already 900 million people worldwide out of the 3 billion urban population considered "slum dwellers," much of the world is already undergoing a severe housing crisis, and many more do not have the money to pay for better housing.

In Indonesia for example, 40 per cent of the population lives in cities, but only 20 to 30 per cent have access to formal financing. In urban areas such as in Zimbabwe, Mumbai, India, and Malawi, large scale evictions are leaving urban dwellers without shelter. And in Morocco, 93 per cent of households do not have access to financing.

In addition, housing prices in the developed and developing countries have increased by anywhere from 49 per cent to over 225 per cent over the last seven years, leading to a widening gap between incomes and housing, according to the agency's report, "Financing Urban Shelter: Global Report on Human Settlements 2005."

To meet the urgent needs of urban residents in developing countries, Mrs. Tibaijuka recommended that short-term micro-financing in amounts of \$500 to \$5,000 be provided for incremental housing additions in preference the more traditional long-term, larger mortgages often provided, which most households in developing countries cannot afford.

The report estimated that meeting the target of improving the housing of urban dwellers will cost on average of \$294 billion or \$440 per person over the 2005-2020 period.

Reducing slum conditions are part of a programme adopted by the UN Millennium Summit of 2000 to slash a host of socio-economic ills, such as extreme poverty and hunger, all by 2015.

## **Antarctica: 'unique' cooperation yields results, but challenges persist – UN report**

**12 September** - While Antarctica continues to serve as a unique example of environmental cooperation among nations, a number of concerns – including the depletion of the ozone layer, the growth of tourism and the emergence of biological prospecting – call for a timely response by the world community, according to a report released at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

“Designated as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science, Antarctica is the scene of successful international cooperation in research, in particular in connection with the study of global changes,” says the report from Secretary-General Kofi Annan prepared for the current UN General Assembly session. The wide-ranging document highlights recent activities under the 1959 Antarctic Treaty – a landmark accord that, in part, banned nuclear explosions over Antarctica and provided for freedom of scientific investigation in the interest of all mankind.

Among positive developments, the report points to the opening or upgrading of nine stations to monitor the state of the region. It also notes the importance of such bodies as the Committee for Environmental Protection as a “dynamic forum” for addressing environmental issues related to human activity and the newly established Treaty Secretariat, which will become “a central repository of Antarctic information.”

At the same time, the report flags a number of challenges and issues of concern that require speedy response. It notes, for example, that illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing for toothfish in the Southern Ocean still exceeds reported catches despite major efforts to address such activities. During 2003-4, “illegal, unregulated and unreported” toothfish fishing was estimated at 15,992 tons, up from 13,804 in 2000-1.

“Further enforcement and cooperation are still required from all States involved to bring such activities to a halt,” the report says.

Another area of concern is “tremendous” growth of the tourism industry in the area. According to the report, over the past decade the number of ship-borne tourists to the Antarctic Peninsula grew by more than 300 per cent. The 2004/2005 season recorded the highest number of ship-borne tourists totalling 27,324. The report underscores that an increase in high-risk, “adventure tourism” has been cause for concern partly because of the activity level and partly because of the increase in need for new search and rescue missions.

Global warming has also become a “major threat” to the Antarctica, the report says, noting in particular climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer. The report observes that several glaciers including Brown Glacier on Heard Island, and Collins Glacier on King George Island have retreated by several metres over three years, providing indications of continued glacial melting. A ripple effect has impacted animals in the area, with reductions in the breeding of three seabird species correlated with increases in sea temperature and the loss of penguin nests correlating to a decline in krill due to retreating pack ice, the report says.

In conclusion, the report urges continued efforts to ensure that commercial activities will not impact on the successes of the Antarctic Treaty system, “in particular in securing Antarctica as a natural reserve, devoted to peace and science.”

## **Sierra Leone: UN mission chief calls on security forces to respect constitution**

**12 September** - With only a few months left on the United Nations peacekeeping mission's timetable in Sierra Leone, the mission chief has called on the nation's security forces to respect the constitution by subjecting themselves to civilian authority and to build trust between themselves and the people of the West African country emerging from 12 years of civil war.

At the end of a one-week seminar on civil-military relations, organized by the UN Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and conducted by the California-Based Naval Postgraduate School, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Ambassador Daudi Mwakawago, told the closing ceremony that security forces can only carry out their functions

successfully when they have the support of the people.

Community policing, therefore, is most vital in reinforcing police efforts towards maintaining safety and order, he said, warning against the excessive use of coercive power, which could lead the people to see the security forces as enemies rather than protectors.

Mr. Mwakawago exhorted seminar participants to undergo HIV/AIDS tests and take protective measures to safeguard themselves, their partners and their communities.

In addition to civil war, Sierra Leone had experienced a number of coups over the past three decades. When the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Sierra Leone closes its doors next January, it will be succeeded by the UN Integrated Office in Sierra Leone (UNIOSIL), which will work closely with the Government to root out the causes of the conflict and address deficits in governance, human rights observance and the rule of law.

## **DR of Congo refugees in Tanzania can start returning home in mid-October, UN says**

**12 September** - The first of more than 150,000 refugees who fled fighting in the eastern region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) will begin to go home from Tanzania next month to the most secure areas under an official voluntary repatriation operation, the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) said today.

A Tripartite Commission meeting between the two governments and UNHCR in Kinshasa, DRC's capital, late last week decided that some of the 152,284 Congolese refugees in Nyaragusu, Lugufu I, and Lugufu II camps will start the trek home by boat and bus on 15 October, it said.

UNHCR's representative in Tanzania, Chrysantus Ache, cautioned: "The capacities to receive returnees in their home areas without creating a humanitarian crisis and the logistical means for the actual movement put limits on the number of refugees we can repatriate every week."

Some refugees have been interested in the voting for the constitution and political representation scheduled from November to April, but Mr. Ache said: "You cannot expect that a large number of refugees will return in time for the voter registration in the DRC, therefore we need to de-link refugee repatriation from the electoral process."

Meanwhile, more than 800 "spontaneous" returnees have been reported every week since August and their total since October of last year number more than 14,000. They have arrived mostly from Tanzania, but also from Rwanda and Burundi.

## **UN agricultural fund approves over \$110 million to combat rural poverty**



**12 September** - The United Nations agency that works to fight rural poverty has approved over \$110 million in loans and grants to revitalize farming in Ghana, Rwanda, Tanzania, Mexico, China and a range of other countries in the African Sahel Region and South America.

At the meeting of its executive board last week, the Executive Board of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) approved US\$8.3 million in grants to support farmers, farmers' organizations, agricultural research and training programmes, along with \$102 million in loans for rural development programmes.

The loan of \$29.2 million to China, for example, assists farmers living in remote areas of South Gansu province, where natural resources have deteriorated and there is only poor access to water for irrigation and drinking. The programme which will receive the funds will support irrigation, terracing, tree-planting and training toward improved farming methods.

Another loan, of \$19 million, aims to improve the lives of small farmers, traders and processors in Ghana who depend on

roots and tubers for their livelihood. With women making up at least one-half of the beneficiaries, the programme will focus on both better production and marketing methods.

The \$8.1 million in grants are targeted to a wide range of programmes, including those supporting assistance to rural organizations in the countries of the Southern Cone Common Market of South America (MERCOSUR), improved management of indigenous trees and shrubs in the countries of the Sahel, and agricultural research and training in Eastern and Central Africa.

## **Colombia: UN rights office condemns fresh civilian deaths in conflict**

**12 September** - In its latest condemnation of "grave breaches of international human rights" in Colombia's decades-old civil war, the local United Nations human rights office has deplored the killing of three civilians, two of them young girls, and the wounding of 26 others during fighting last week.

The Colombia office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) noted that the leftist Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia – Popular Army (FARC-EP) and the Central Bolivar Bloc of the rightist Colombian Self-Defence Units (AUC) were in the southern Putumayo region where the incident occurred.

"In condemning these acts of violence, the Office stresses that international norms on the general protection of the civilian population must be observed by all those who participate directly in hostilities within an internal armed conflict," the Office said in a statement.

Hundreds of thousands of people are estimated to have been killed and millions displaced in four decades of fighting in the Latin American country between leftist guerrillas, Government forces and right-wing paramilitaries, and UN offices have frequently issued appeals to prevent violence against and the displacement of civilians.

## **In its largest ever grant to a UNICEF project, Europe aids Nigerian water supply**

**12 September** - A new donation of €33 million (euros) – about \$41.4 million – will help provide safe drinking water for 2.1 million people across 1,400 rural communities in Nigeria, representing the largest ever grant from the European Union (EU) to a single project assisted by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

The project, which also supports hygiene education, improved sanitation and safe water supply in 120 schools, is part of a larger EU-funded water and sanitation programme in urban centres, small towns and rural areas in six states of the country.

It is also part of a major effort to eradicate Guinea worm disease in Nigeria. The disease is contracted through drinking water contaminated with microscopic fleas carrying larvae that develop into worms as long as three feet which can cripple children and stop them from going to school.

"Water is key for children's development," said UNICEF's representative in Nigeria Ayalew Abai. "Diarrhoeal diseases continue to have a very high prevalence rate in the country and Guinea Worm disease has not yet been eradicated.

"Studies also show that water and sanitation in school contribute to higher enrolment, especially for girls," he added.

At present in Nigeria, only 60 per cent of households have access to improved drinking water sources, while access to adequate sanitation facilities remains low. The situation contributes to high child mortality rates, according to UNICEF.

## **UN Children's Fund receives less than 20 per cent of appeal for flooded Tajikistan**



**12 September** - With a cholera outbreak, along with floods and mudflows from heavy rains and thawing snow and ice devastating Tajikistan, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) today said it has received just \$700,000 out of the \$4 million for which it has appealed urgently.

Several Tajik districts have lost infrastructure, including houses, school buildings, roads and bridges, and UNICEF's appeal covers health and nutrition, water and environmental sanitation, education and child protection. It received \$693,793, and Japan built a school for 530 children in northern Penjikent district.

UNICEF has allocated funds for reconstruction of water and sanitation facilities in schools in the affected areas and to pay for promoting hygiene. Future action will include establishing sanitation facilities and water supply systems in affected schools in seven districts. Construction of latrines and water supply systems will be supported by the provision of hygiene promotion materials, as well as peer-to-peer training among the children.

In the coming months, UNICEF said, it will continue to provide humanitarian assistance to ensure the survival of children in emergencies. Health kits, hygiene kits, supplementary drugs, vaccines, and other humanitarian health supplies will be made available, along with information, education and communication materials.

## **Carousels will pump drinking water in Mozambique through new UN project**

**12 September** - As schoolchildren in Mozambique spin and ride on a carousel in their schoolyard in the near future, they will be inadvertently pumping drinking water from boreholes into a tank for use by the school and surrounding communities, thanks to a new initiative unveiled today by two United Nations agencies and a Dutch company.



Children in Mozambique

Some 40,000 children in 60 rural Mozambican schools will benefit from the joint project of the UN World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Dutch logistics company TNT, using a concept that has already proved hugely successful in South Africa and Swaziland.

"This children's roundabout is really a unique and innovative solution to solve the water problems faced by rural areas," said Hennie Wesseling, TNT Director, who came to Mozambique from the group's headquarters in the Netherlands for the inauguration of the first play pump at Intaca Primary School in Maputo province.

"It is wonderful to see the children having so much fun on these roundabouts while at the same time bringing an essential service to the community," he added.

The roundabout pumps are part of a broader programme called "Flourishing Schools" initiated through a US\$444,000 donation from TNT. In the first phase, 30 roundabout play pumps will be installed in schools in the provinces of Maputo, Gaza and Inhambane. In addition, 30 conventional hand pumps will be installed in Manica and Sofala.

"By ensuring children have access to clean water, food and an education, we are giving the children of Mozambique the best possible chance of building a brighter and healthier tomorrow," said WFP Country Director Angela Van Rynbach at the inauguration.

In a joint effort to improve learning conditions in primary schools in Mozambique, WFP and UNICEF are supporting the Government of Mozambique through the Ministry of Education and Culture and the Ministry of Public Works, with the input of TNT funding.

"Partnerships are essential if we are to help Mozambique's education and culture sector as well as the sector of water and sanitation to get back on their feet after so many years of devastating war," Ms. Van Rynbach said.

## **UNESCO treaty to protect oral traditions on track to enter into**

## force next year

**12 September** - With 20 countries already ratifying a treaty to protect the world's oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, craftsmanship and knowledge of nature, the so-called Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage is on track to enter into force next year, according to the latest United Nations update.



Indian Ambassador presents her countries ratification to the Director-General

The Convention, adopted by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) General Conference in 2003, will enter into force three months after the 30th State Party deposits its instrument of ratification, acceptance, approval or accession.

“Few UNESCO conventions have been ratified by as many states in such a short time,” UNESCO Director-General Koïchiro Matsuura said. “If this pace is kept up, we can expect the Convention to enter into force as early as next year.”

“The interest shown by States for intangible cultural heritage is a source of joy and comfort for all who are concerned about its vulnerability,” he added.

The treaty, completing UNESCO's normative instruments on the conservation of tangible cultural heritage, aims to safeguard oral traditions and expressions, performing arts, social practices, rituals and festive events, traditional craftsmanship, as well as knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

It provides for drawing up national inventories of cultural elements that must be protected, the creation of an intergovernmental committee comprising experts from future States Parties, and the creation of two lists: one covering the intangible heritage of humanity, and the other featuring parts of that heritage considered to be in urgent need of safeguarding.

## Talks on summit outcome continue as General Assembly winds down current session



General Assembly

**12 September** - The General Assembly this evening wound down the work of its current session as intensive talks continued on a draft United Nations reform plan slated for consideration by national leaders gathering at the world body later this week.

The Assembly's fifty-ninth session will formally close tomorrow morning, paving the way for Wednesday's opening of a three-day summit meeting that coincides with the UN's sixtieth anniversary.

Secretary-General Kofi Annan's proposals for rendering the UN more capable of meeting global challenges now and in the future have been under discussion since March. While some agreement has been reached, notably in the areas of development, terrorism and management reform, much remains to be done ahead of the arrival of some 180 heads of State and government attending the summit.

In one of its last acts under the presidency of Jean Ping of Gabon, the Assembly this evening unanimously approved a series of measures aimed at reaffirming the 191-member body's authority to take up global issues of concern to the international community. It also deferred a number of items to the sixtieth session, including several related to the UN Capital Master Plan, which aims to refurbish the Organization's dilapidated Headquarters and bring it up to code, thus rendering it safer and more efficient.

At the outset of the meeting, President Ping expressed the Assembly's deepest sympathy to the Government and people of the United States for the tragic loss of life and material damage in the southern Gulf Coast states resulting from hurricane Katrina.