



■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The financial and economic crisis cut global wage growth by half in 2008 and 2009, according to a new United Nations report. Analyzing data from 115 countries and territories covering 94 per cent of the approximately 1.4 billion wage earners worldwide, the "Global Wage Report 2010/11 – Wage policies in times of crisis" shows that growth in average monthly wages globally slowed from 2.8 per cent in 2007, on the eve of the crisis, to 1.5 per cent in 2008 and 1.6 per cent in 2009. Excluding China, global average wage growth dropped to 0.8 per cent in 2008 and 0.7 per cent in 2009.

CLIMATE CHANGE - The modest gains on international agreement achieved at the Cancun climate summit pave the way for further action in the future and represent a success for a meeting that began with low expectations. While delegates did forge agreement on issues like funding climate change mitigation strategies for developing countries, the bigger questions - such as binding greenhouse-gas emission cuts - were left out for now.

BIODIVERSITY - The loss of marine biodiversity is hurtling forward at an unprecedented rate. At present, the UNFAO calculates that nearly 80 percent of the world's fishery resources are fully exploited, overexploited or depleted. Furthermore, marine scientists have suggested that if the current pace of exploitation continues, all fish stocks will have collapsed or disappeared by 2048.

HEALTH - After successfully suppressing scourges of fruit, tsetse and screwworm flies in the Americas, researchers are exploring whether the same sterilised insect technique can be used to control malaria, which kills some one million people every year, many of them in Africa.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - Development in Africa could falter as climate change grips the continent, increasing the length and severity of droughts and floods by altering precipitation patterns, among other impacts.

TOGO - The representatives of the Paris Club creditor countries and of the Togolese Republic agreed on 16 December 2010 on a debt cancellation following the Togolese Republic having reached its Completion Point under the enhanced initiative for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (enhanced HIPC Initiative) on 14 December 2010. As a contribution to restoring the Togolese Republic's debt sustainability, Paris Club creditors decided to cancel USD 203 million, which represents the Paris Club's share of the effort in the framework of the enhanced HIPC Initiative. Creditors welcome and support the Togolese Republic's commitment to seek comparable treatment from all their other external creditors (including other creditor countries). Paris Club creditors also expressed their intention to grant additional debt relief on a bilateral basis for an amount of USD 404 million. As a result of this agreement and additional bilateral efforts, the Togolese Republic's debt to Paris Club creditors will be reduced by 95%. Paris Club creditors welcomed the Togolese Republic's determination to implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and an ambitious economic programme providing the basis for sustainable economic growth in the context of a difficult global economic environment.

■ASIA & PACIFIC

Asia Region - Bangladesh, already four times more crowded than neighbouring India, could lose 20 percent of its land to sea level rise over the next 90 years, displacing 20 to 25 million people, scientists predict.

AFGHANISTAN - Spreading violence in Afghanistan is preventing aid organisations from providing help, with access to those in need at its worst level in three decades, the aid workers said.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

LAC Region - The traditional image of rural women in Latin America is shifting, from one of subsistence farmers raising their families to that of women playing a growing role in small- and large-scale commercial and productive activities.

WFWO's Communications Team