



■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations says that people should be prepared to spend more money for food next year, and that the world is on the cusp of another food crisis. Already the cost of imports of key commodities - such as wheat, corn, rice, oilseeds, dairy products, sugar and meats - is close to levels seen during the peak of the 2008 food crisis.

UNITED NATIONS - A new United Nations report has revealed for the first time a link between urban poverty and poor health. The UN's Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and World Health Organization (WHO) published the report on Wednesday to call on policymakers to act on health inequalities within cities. The report analysed different subgroups of city dwellers according to socioeconomic status, neighbourhood or other population characteristics. It found that urban children from the poorest families are twice as likely to die before the age of five as those from the richest families. The study also indicated that coverage for skilled birth attendants can vary from 40 to 100 per cent in low-and middle-income countries depending on household wealth and education level.

CLIMATE CHANGE - Less than 20% of the \$30 billion promised by wealthy countries in Copenhagen to help developing countries battle climate change will go toward efforts to mitigate global warming effects, the International Institute for Environment and Development reports. The bulk of donor funds have been allocated to support greenhouse-gas emissions cutting projects, despite the Copenhagen accord to split climate aid equally between adaptation and mitigation efforts

■AFRICA

D.R. CONGO - The Paris Club agrees on a reduction of the Debt of the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the framework of the enhanced heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative - The representatives of the Paris Club creditor countries and Brazil met with the representatives of the Government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) on 17 November 2010 and agreed on a reduction of the debt following the DRC having reached its Completion Point under the enhanced initiative for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (enhanced HIPC Initiative) on 1 July 2010. As a contribution to restoring the DRC's debt sustainability, the Paris Club creditors will provide a cancellation of USD 7 350 million, fulfilling all their commitments under the enhanced HIPC initiative. The Democratic Republic of the Congo's public external debt was estimated to be USD 13.70 billion as of end 2009 (source: IMF and IDA documents). Paris Club creditors expressed their concern over the business environment and urged the Government of the DRC to carry out further reforms to improve governance, strengthen the rule of law and fight corruption which are necessary conditions to ensure a sustainable development after the enhanced HIPC initiative. They noted the DRC's determination to implement a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy and an ambitious economic program providing the basis for sustainable economic growth, including the commitment to improve governance and business environment. The Government of the DRC committed to seek from all its remaining external creditors a treatment comparable to HIPC debt relief. The Government of DRC committed to devote the additional resources coming from the debt cancellation to priority areas identified in the country's poverty reduction strategy paper.

EAST AFRICA - At least 40 East African chief executive officers (CEOs) recently took public HIV tests, a move designed to show their commitment to fighting HIV in the workplace in an increasingly integrated region.

GUINEA - With military authorities having declared a state of emergency, Guineans face an anxious waiting period before confirmation of final results from the 7 November presidential elections by the Supreme Court.

KENYA - Hundreds of children are missing out on an education in Rift Valley's Mau Forest region as families seeking refuge in temporary camps, following their eviction from the forest, struggle to find alternative livelihoods.

■ASIA & PACIFIC

BANGLADESH - Community-based treatments may hold the key to whittling down high rates of severe acute malnutrition among children under five in Bangladesh.

INDIA - The wide-scale refusal by poor borrowers in India to repay small loans has brought the blossoming microfinance industry to the verge of collapse. The government is concerned that some lenders are using overly aggressive methods to collect debts, and extended credit to borrowers without regard for their ability to repay. The minister for rural development in the state of Andhra Pradesh, said that some lenders "aren't looking at sustainability or ensuring the money is going to income-generating activities."

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL - The agricultural frontier state of Rondonia in Brazil is a byword for deforestation in the Amazon jungle, much of which has been cleared in the northwestern state for cash crops and a cattle herd that has grown to 12 million head.

WFWO's Communications Team