



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

Development Energy & Environment:

UNITED NATIONS - A 12-member review panel tasked with providing an assessment of Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change processes is scheduled to deliver its report to United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and IPCC chair Rajendra Pachauri today. The IPCC came under fierce criticism after leaked e-mails and apparent errors provided climate-change deniers ammunition to challenge the panel's conclusions on climate change in its 2007 assessment. IPCC officials hope to use the assessment to help define ways to update the panel's process for gathering and delivering information.

AFRICA REGION - The drive to produce crops such as sugar cane and palm oil that can be converted into biofuels is spurring land grabs across Africa that may contribute to food shortages and deforestation, Friends of the Earth says in a new report. Foreign companies have already purchased more than 19,000 square miles of land in 11 countries and in some cases local residents have been forcibly removed from their homes, the group said. Biofuel proponents believe production would be a boon for Africa, providing economic opportunities and helping to battle climate change.

AFRICA REGION - In cities across Africa, being an entrepreneur requires no office, business card or investors. All it takes is a cell phone, according to Adele Botha, a researcher at the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) in South Africa. More than a convenience, cell phones have become a means of livelihood and information for people in rural communities across Africa. NGOs and researchers are studying their effects on rural communities. Mobile phones have made deep strides into the African market in recent years, and are becoming important tools for helping rural and urban populations stay connected and promote business.

ASIA - With its thick forest cover and abundant wildlife, the Dawna mountain range in south-eastern Burma is coming in the way of a flagship highway project being pushed by one of Asia's premier financiers of roads. The still-to-be-built 40-kilometre stretch to go across the mountain in military-ruled Burma is key to making the Asian Development Bank's (AsDB) East-West Corridor a reality. It is part of the Manila-based bank's 1,450-km long highway, billed to facilitate easier transport of goods and services across mainland South-east Asia.

Human Rights:

Diplomatic immunity - Employment solicitor argues in the Guardian that diplomatic immunity contributes to human-rights abuses - from verbal to physical to sexual assault. Migrant workers employed under diplomats in the U.K. have little recourse for abuses due to a 1961 Vienna convention that prohibits diplomats and their families and staff from being prosecuted under criminal and civil actions in the host country. In 2007, 78 criminal offenses were alleged against diplomats - who are immune to any prosecution.

UNITED NATIONS - Among its unstable and conflict-ridden neighbours, Rwanda stands out. It has been pegged as a model of development and one of Africa's success stories: Since the 1990's, when a civil war ravaged the country, average incomes have doubled, its people have become healthier and less hungry and it has the highest proportion of women parliamentarians worldwide. Yet, maintaining this stability is a government accused of muzzling its opponents and committing human rights abuses.

■AFRICA

COMOROS - Paris Club creditors and the Government of the Union of Comoros agreed to a further restructuring of its external public debt following the Union of Comoros' reaching the Decision Point under the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries initiative on 21 and 29 June 2010. This agreement has been concluded under the so called "Cologne terms" designed by the Paris Club for the implementation of the HIPC initiative interim debt relief. As agreed in the agreement concluded in November 2009, a further reduction of 50% will be applied to the debt service of the Union of the Comoros from the date of the Decision Point. Several creditors intend to grant additional debt relief on a bilateral basis to the Union of Comoros beyond the terms set in the Paris Club agreement. The Union of Comoros is committed to funnel the resources freed up by debt relief, that otherwise would have gone to Paris Club creditors, to priority areas identified in the country's poverty reduction strategy paper.

D.R. CONGO - Displacement and discrimination - the lot of the Bambuti Pygmies - Conditions in Mugunga camp for displaced people on the outskirts of the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo city of Goma are tough, but tougher still are those endured by hundreds of people from the Bambuti Pygmy community living just outside the camp.

GHANA - Thousands of former leprosy sufferers continue to battle social stigma, official indifference and hunger as they struggle to survive. Ghana hospitals and NGOs try to help survivors and urge the government to provide more services. Some former patients try to earn a living as farmers or weavers but are restricted by physical deformities caused by the disease.

KENYA - Camel clinics bring condoms to nomads - In the remote and rural district of Samburu, northern Kenya, where paved roads are scarce and motorised transport hard to come by, reaching the mostly pastoralist and nomadic inhabitants with HIV/AIDS services requires an unusual approach.

NIGERIA - Nigerians and environmental groups are expressing outrage that a three-year United Nations Environment Programme investigation into oil spills and pollution along the Niger Delta over the past 40 years will find Royal Dutch Shell largely blameless. Niger Delta communities contend the company is responsible for massive damage caused by 300 spills and that the report, financed by Shell, is biased. The UNEP report will say 90% of the leakages were caused by locals attempting to sabotage the pipelines or steal supply.

NIGERIA - Educating the nomads - The children of most Nigerian nomads fall through the education net - the focus is to teach them the family trade, and their wandering lifestyle means they seldom attend school - but as the nomadic way of life becomes increasingly unsustainable, educators and state authorities are finding innovative ways to remedy this.

UGANDA - New strains of HIV spreading in fishing communities - A study of HIV-positive people in fishing communities on the shores of Lake Victoria in central Uganda has found that more than a quarter have "recombinant" viruses that might threaten both treatment and prevention efforts.

▪ASIA

PAKISTAN - Floodwaters have begun to recede in some parts of Pakistan even as they continue to threaten other regions in the country's south, and relief agencies remain unable to reach the majority of those affected by the disaster. United Nations officials are raising the alarm for Pakistan's children and the dangers posed by diarrhea, dehydration and malnutrition. Officials warn that 72,000 malnourished children in the flood-hit areas are at particularly high risk.

PHILIPPINES - Bracing for La Niña - The Philippines is bracing for severe flooding over the next few months as a result of the La Niña weather effect, which is expected to whip up heavy storms. Some specialists are saying the country is not adequately prepared.

WFWO's Communications Team