

NEWS BULLETIN

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GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations has initiated a major drive to help an estimated 2.6 billion people around the world who currently have no access to basic sanitation. The program, announced Tuesday, would seek to cut that number in half by 2015. The UN General Assembly has recognized clean drinking water and sanitation as a human right essential to the full enjoyment of life.

WOMEN & GIRL - US first lady Michelle Obama is using a visit to Africa to encourage young Africans to push for greater respect of women's rights and an end to stigma associated with HIV/AIDS. At a speech in South Africa, Mrs. Obama told the young crowd that the current generation has the power to fight violence against women, help ensure education for girls and end the spread of HIV/AIDS.

AFRICA

BURKINA FASO - The Burkina Faso authorities have sounded the alarm over the increased rate of degradation of forests in this Sahelian country. According to a study by the Ministry for the Environment and Sustainable Development, some 110,550 hectares of forest are destroyed each year, just over four percent of the country's total wooded area – around three-quarters of this annual loss linked to farming. The data covers forest loss between 1992 and 2002, but the trend continues, according to the ministry.

BURUNDI - With a population expected to grow by more than half within a generation, Burundi needs to expand its agriculture's economic potential, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization said today, calling for continued support from the international community.

SOUTH AFRICA - Thirty years after the discovery of AIDS, conspiracy theories that posit the virus as man-made continue to enjoy support among a segment of South African youth - and these beliefs may be putting them at greater risk of HIV infection.

ASIA & PACIFIC

PAKISTAN - Up to five million Pakistanis are at risk from floods this year, partly due to the inadequate rehabilitation of survivors still reeling from last year's unprecedented deluge there and poor reconstruction, the United Nations has said. Monsoon floods began roaring through Pakistan in late July last year, submerging one-fifth of the country – an area the size of Italy – and disrupting the lives of more than 18 million people.

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

HAITI - The United Nations urged all governments to refrain from sending back Haitians to their country, which is still reeling from an earthquake 18 months ago. The joint appeal by the UN refugee agency UNHCR and UN human rights office followed reports of countries including the Bahamas, Jamaica, Brazil and the United States deporting Haitians, a UNHCR spokesman said.

WFWO's Communications Team