



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - African leaders say they can do more to meet United Nations Goals to slash extreme poverty and have urged stronger leadership among developing countries to tackle hunger and disease and attract investment. While the world looks set to halve poverty and hunger by 2015, countries are behind on other MDGs such as improving education and maternal health. At a UN summit to review the goals, several leaders said aid alone will not pull countries out of poverty. And UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has pressed debt-ridden donor countries not to cut aid to the poor despite budgetary woes. "We should not balance budgets on the backs of the poor," Mr. Ban told 140 leaders at the start of the Sept. 20-22 gathering.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - Harassment and sexual exploitation by border officials seeking bribes constitute the biggest obstacles for female informal cross-border traders in Africa, according to a United Nations Development Fund for Women research study.

MALI - Rains have improved pasture in parts of northern Mali, bettering many animals' survival prospects, but with rain comes the risk of illnesses for animals weakened by months of malnutrition, making this a critical time for veterinary care, say aid agencies.

■ASIA

INDIA - More than 3 million people in northern India have been affected by floods that have washed away homes, swept through holy sites and damaged crops as the authorities step up efforts to contain the damage. Heavy monsoon rains have swelled mighty Himalayan rivers, which broke their banks in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Uttarakhand. United Nations Children's Fund says 1.7 million people have been affected in Uttar Pradesh and 1 million in Bihar - both poor states. More than 300,000 people have been forced from their homes.

NORTH KOREA - A convoy of South Korean trucks carrying the first rice aid to North Korea in three years crossed the peninsula's heavily armed border in the latest of a series of conciliatory moves between the rivals. At the same time, officials from both countries met in the North Korean border town of Kaesung to discuss the resumption of reunions of families split by the Korean War which were halted after the sinking of a South Korean warship earlier this year.

PAKISTAN - The World Bank and the United States have urged Pakistan to take steps to reassure donor countries it is capable of using their flood aid responsibly and transparently and that it can enact reforms. Meanwhile, a resurgence in political violence, after the devastating summer floods brought a lull, is causing the authorities concern over the safety of aid workers, who have been asked to use armed police escorts when travelling, but agencies are worried security restrictions will make it harder for them to operate in flood-affected areas. Pakistan's fight against militants has been constrained by the need to deploy troops to help victims of the floods, the senior US official for Pakistan and Afghanistan has said. The millions forced to flee their homes by the country's worst-ever floods could emerge as the most explosive issue for a feeble government in the wake of a disaster that will strain the economy for years to come. Pakistan's agriculture industry - a pillar of the economy - could take up to two years to start recovering from the floods, the Asian Development Bank has said.

■MIDDLE EAST

EGYPT - Rights activists met in the Egyptian port city of Alexandria this week to discuss and adopt effective strategies to persuade Arab regimes to abolish the death penalty. The two-day gathering of Arab and international civil society groups aimed to build upon the recommendations of the first Alexandria conference in May 2008, which urged Arab countries to enact a moratorium on executions as a step towards abolishing the death penalty.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

HAITI - Rebuilding earthquake-ravaged Haiti is a task similar to rebuilding Europe after World War Two and involves complex decisions on how to house or resettle more than a million people left homeless by one of the world's worst disasters, a senior World Bank official has said. Eight months after the magnitude 7 quake on Jan. 12 that shattered large parts of the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince, killing up to 300,000 people, the international aid community still faces criticism that efforts to clear rubble and relocate survivors from makeshift camps have been slow to materialise.

LAC Region - The fight against human trafficking in Latin America is ineffective and has led to the emergence of intra-regional markets for the trade, according to experts and activists meeting this week in this Mexican city.

WFWO's Communications Team