

NEWS BULLETIN

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GLOBAL

DEVELOPMENT - Rising unemployment rates and the high prices of food and gasoline are pushing the world toward a "global social crisis," the United Nations warns. Governments are not doing enough to help the 200 million people unemployed worldwide and other battling the effects of the 2008-2009 global economic downturn.

FOOD - The United Nations World Food Programme welcomed today's declaration adopted by the Group of 20 (G20) as a message that the world's largest economies are serious about helping the poor and strengthening food security. G20 agriculture ministers meeting in Paris, plus international specialists, announced a series of measures they said are aimed at stabilizing world food prices.

AFRICA

CONGO - Three new cases of cholera have been diagnosed in the Congolese capital of Kinshasa, the second most populous city in sub-Saharan Africa, as health officials warned of an epidemic of the disease that already has struck down 32 people. "People are living in very precarious conditions, there are zones along the river which are very exposed," said a UN World Health Organization spokesman.

MALAWI - The decision by the Malawian government to introduce value-added tax (VAT) of up to 16.5 percent on products such as bread, meat, milk and dairy products is being blamed for losses incurred by small-scale businesses. The move comes in response to a loss of revenue due to regional trade commitments.

ASIA & PACIFIC

AFGHANISTAN is likely to face a significant food shortage in the coming months, following poor rains which have affected this season's wheat crop. Wheat is the primary food staple for most families.

INDIA - Fewer child marriages have been recorded this wedding season in a region near Hyderabad, India, after government officials in less than two months to stop 400 such marriages between brides and grooms ranging in age from 12 to 18. The main deterrent has been the threat of considerable fines for parents, who are compelled to sign a bond saying they would not perform marriages before the legal ages of 18 and 21 for women and men, respectively.

PHILIPPINE - United Nations aid agencies are supplying blankets, plastic mats and tarpaulins to families on the Philippine island of Mindanao, where floods have displaced nearly 400,000 people this month.

MIDDLE EAST

YEMEN - Hundreds of people have been killed or injured in the four-month-long protests against the regime of President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

WFWO's Communications Team