



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) came into existence in the right place, the United Nations, but at a most unpropitious time, in September 2000, when ideas about the invincibility of market forces still held sway in the world. This fact has to a great extent determined the outcome of the MDGs, conceived to eliminate or reduce, by 2015, various social and economic evils such as extreme poverty, hunger, illiteracy and gender inequality, which prevent the construction of more advanced and egalitarian societies. In spite of this failing, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) recognises that the MDGs are the best development policy that the UN has devised in its 65 years of existence.

CLIMATE CHANGE - Representatives of 52 countries have agreed on guidelines for a non-binding framework that will release aid to protect forests in the developing world. Germany, France, Norway, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia and Japan pledged four billion US dollars to fund the new programme, called REDD Plus (Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation). It aims to encourage rich countries to finance forest conservation projects while ensuring transparency and preventing aid waste. The deal was made at the Oslo Climate and Forest Conference. It is being hailed as the first concrete sign of global action on climate change since international leaders failed to reach legally binding agreement on carbon emissions at the United Nations climate summit last December in Copenhagen.

ENVIRONMENT - Despite a federal moratorium on offshore oil drilling, new permits and controversial environmental waivers for oil rigs continue to be granted, sparking criticism from policymakers and environmentalists.

HUMAN RIGHTS - Members of gay communities in poor countries continue to face assaults on their rights from a combination of legislative restrictions and broad societal disdain. More than six dozen countries have laws that criminalize consensual gay relationships with several, including Uganda, Burundi and Zimbabwe, mulling additional anti-gay legislation. Such laws, opponents charge, help drive violence against gays which in turn forces them underground and hobbles efforts to address public health concerns.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - Eliminate bottlenecks to end mother-to-child HIV transmission - Making services for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV available without addressing the factors that keep mothers from accessing these services was an exercise in futility, experts told a press briefing in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

KENYA should encourage the use of bamboo in building affordable shelters, especially for 60 percent of the population who live in poorly constructed dwellings in rural areas, says a specialist.

■ASIA

Asia Region - The Natural Disaster Risk Index (NDRI) released on 28 May, ranks 229 countries according to the human impact of natural disasters in terms of deaths per annum and per million of population, plus the frequency of events as well as the likelihood of earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, storms, flooding, droughts, landslides, extreme temperatures and epidemics. Bangladesh, Indonesia, Iran and Pakistan top a new ranking of countries at "extreme risk" of experiencing natural disasters compiled by a global risk assessment company.

INDIAN authorities believe Maoist rebels may be behind an explosive train derailment that left 65 dead and more than 200 injured today, after the discovery of a broken rail track and pro-Maoist literature near the crash site. Maoist rebels have been violently challenging the Indian government for four decades.

NEPAL - Access to safe drinking water is deteriorating across parts of Nepal, activists say, despite the prevailing monsoon season from May until September.

SRI LANKA - Residents in southern and western Sri Lanka displaced by heavy flooding last week are returning to their homes, authorities say.

■MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL / OPT - The amount and quality of food available to the estimated 1.5 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip has been severely restricted by more than 1,000 days of a near-complete blockade, states a UNFAO report.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

PERU - Indigenous peoples in Peru finally have a law that obliges the state to consult them about any project or provision that affects their territory or communities. But it will be difficult to implement, as the body charged with this task is in need of reforms, and additional legislation is needed before it can be fully enforced.

WFWO's Communications Team