



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The UN climate official opened talks in China by calling upon countries to identify goals that truly can be achieved before the global climate summit slated for later this year, in Mexico. "As governments, you can continue to stand still or move forward. Now is the time to make that choice," Christiana Figueres told 3,000 delegates in the northern port city of Tianjin.

HUMAN RIGHTS - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has revealed that 2009 saw the lowest number of refugees returning home in the past 20 years. Speaking on Monday, UNHCR chief Antonio Guterres said that around 250,000 refugees went back to their home countries last year. The figure represents around 25 per cent of the annual average over the past decade. Prolonged wars such as those in Afghanistan and Somalia are creating "a number of quasi-permanent, global refugee populations". He said that only 61 Somalis returned home in 2009, compared to 51,000 in 2001.

DEVELOPMENT - Donors must allocate an additional \$756 billion in order to bring electricity to the world's 1.4 billion people who do not have it, according to a chief economist at the International Energy Agency. Without greater access to sources of energy, the Millennium Development Goals of eradicating extreme poverty is likely to fail.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - A new report claims that democratic advances such as political rights, personal safety and the rule of law are receding in Africa despite economic and social developments. The Index, released on Monday, ranks 53 African countries according to 88 indicators, ranging from corruption to education, in a scale of 0 to 100. Mauritius is at the top of the list with a score of 82, while Somalia is at the bottom with only eight points. The index's economic indicators registered improvements in 41 of the 53 nations listed. But around two thirds of African states showed a deterioration in human rights, while security indicators in a further 35 countries also fell.

KENYAN health workers have been missing the opportunity to prevent HIV-positive people from infecting others because they lack the skills and knowledge to counsel this population, say specialists.

■ASIA

AFGHANISTAN - Tens of thousands of tons of wheat flour will be imported from Kazakhstan by the private sector to alleviate food shortages before the winter, officials say.

INDIA - The gala opening ceremonies of the Commonwealth Games on Sunday, in New Delhi, cast light on some of the world's best athletes, as well as two Indias: an emerging economic and political power that is trying to hide the impoverished Indians living in slums in the shadow of an athletes' village.

■MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA - Farmers and herders are being targeted with microfinance in an effort to relieve drought-related poverty in Syria. Widely used across the developing world since the 1970s, Syria has relatively few providers.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

HAITI - An international aid agency warned that donors' focus on providing food aid to Haiti following January's devastating earthquake is undermining the development of the island's agriculture industry. The agency released a report claiming that a massive influx of free foreign food has helped feed displaced people but has also harmed local farmers. The report called on the international community to support a 772 million US dollar government plan to boost the country's agriculture-based economy.

WFWO's Communications Team