



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development has said that the G8 is unlikely to keep to a \$38.7 billion aid commitment set for the 2015 UN Millennium Development Goals. Though the Paris-based group praised countries such as the U.K. for increasing its aid commitment, several countries drastically cut their budgets for aid spending. OECD Secretary-General Angel Gurría acknowledged that countries were struggling after the global economic recession but urged donors to keep to their commitments.

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has condemned the recent expulsion of 36 Congolese refugees by the Zambian government. UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said on Tuesday that the organisation had sent a letter to Zambian authorities to protest against the deportation of 36 residents from the Meheba refugee settlement. The group had taken part in a demonstration over the removal of a Zambian registration official who had been found to be corrupt, Fleming said. Six of the refugees were forcibly returned to the DRC in February, while others were sent back in early April. The refugees were not given an explanation for their expulsion or the possibility of challenging the decision under Zambian law. There are around 57,000 refugees living in Zambia.

DEVELOPMENT - Prominent microloan proponents are concerned the practice is increasingly dominated by traditional banks and financial institutions charging hefty interest rates on lending originally intended as a low cost, high impact means to combat poverty. "Microcredit should be seen as an opportunity to help people get out of poverty in a business way, but not as an opportunity to make money out of poor people," says Muhammad Yunus, microloan pioneer and Nobel laureate.

■AFRICA

D.R. CONGO - Humanitarian corridor opened for trapped civilians in northeast - The Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) government has opened a humanitarian corridor to provide safe passage for hundreds of civilians trapped by fighting between the army and rebel militias in Orientale Province, northeastern DRC.

KENYA - Extreme weather tests pastoralist perceptions - The effects of climate change - such as drought, livestock deaths and resource conflict - may be all too apparent for the pastoralists of northern Kenya, but there is much to be done to explain the true causes.

ZIMBABWE - A new report by Zimbabwe's National AIDS Council, showing a dramatic rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among people aged 15 to 24 in the capital, Harare, has health experts worried that the country's success in reducing HIV could be unravelling.

■ASIA

CHINA - At least 400 people died and more than 10,000 were injured after a magnitude 6.9 earthquake struck the mountainous Tibetan Plateau in southwest China on Wednesday. Chinese state media reported that a series of tremors in Qinghai province caused buildings to collapse and roads to be cut off by landslides. Up to 85 per cent of houses in the town of Jiegu have been destroyed, according to local officials. A crack has appeared in a nearby dam reservoir causing residents to flee to surrounding mountains amid fears that it could burst. Chinese authorities said local police have rescued hundreds of people from under the rubble but believe the death toll will rise.

KYRGYZSTAN - Civil war fears - Residents in the Kyrgyz capital, Bishkek, and some analysts say the threat of civil war is looming in the Central Asian country after thousands of protesters forced the government to resign and President Kurmanbek Bakiev to flee the capital.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - A serious outbreak of cholera in Papua New Guinea which has killed nearly 60 people shows signs of subsiding, government health officials say.

■MIDDLE EAST

SYRIA - New law to curb smoking "epidemic" - Experts believe the ban on smoking in public places, which comes into effect on 21 April, will improve people's health and ultimately reduce national health service costs.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

ARGENTINA has been asked by human-rights groups to open an investigation into human-rights violations including murder and disappearances that occurred in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and just after under the dictatorship of Gen. Francisco Franco.

HAITI - Authorities hope a new camp built by the United Nations will provide a more stable living environment for Haitians left homeless by the Jan. 12 earthquake and help ease some of the congestion in Port-au-Prince. The camp features water supply centers, a school and clinic, and is built to withstand flash floods and mudslides that routinely accompany hurricane season.

WFWO's Communications Team