



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS Secretary General Ban Ki-moon expressed alarm over the continued ethnic fighting in Kyrgyzstan, where 117 people have died in three days of intense conflict. Observers say that the ouster of former Kyrgyz President Kurmanbek Bakiyev has likely inflamed ethnic tensions, as Bakiyev still claims supporters in Osh- and Uzbek-populated south.

UNITED NATIONS - Representatives from North and South Korea will each brief the UN Security Council on the sinking of the South Korean warship, an incident that South Korea blames on a North Korean torpedo. North Korea requested a separate session to brief the UN Security Council, an apparently unprecedented request. Though analysts see the prospect of war on the Korean Peninsula as unlikely, skirmishes could break out along the armed border or disputed territorial waters where the warship was sank.

ENVIRONMENT - After initially refusing international offers of assistance for dealing with the oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the U.S. has requested technical aid from countries with experience in cleaning oil spills, including European Union countries, Canada and Mexico. The US took nearly 10,000 feet of boom from Canada and accepted another 14,000 feet of boom and two skimmers from Mexico.

HUMAN RIGHTS - Somali human-rights groups and UN officials report that the Somali government is recruiting hundreds of child soldiers to fight on the front lines of its ongoing conflict with radical Islamic insurgent forces. The UN has named the Somali government as one of the most persistent recruiters of child soldiers - some as young as 9 - a charge that Somali government officials attribute to improper vetting. The beleaguered Somali government has not yet taken action on UN plans to remove child soldiers and has refused to ratify the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child - as has the US

■AFRICA

Africa Region - A team of international human-rights lawyers and advocates are looking to change the mores around sexual assault and women's rights in Africa, beginning with Kenya, Malawi and Ghana. All three countries are reviewing laws related to marital rape, but additional efforts will be needed to address the norms of customary law that equate women with property.

CHAD - Finding clean water is as difficult for people living on the islands in Lake Chad as it is for their neighbours along the shores. "Since 1963, the surface area of Lake Chad has decreased from approximately 25,000 sq km to 1,350 sq km," according to the UN Environment Programme.

KENYA has set aside an unprecedented 900 million shillings (US\$11.25 million) for the first time in its annual budget to purchase life-prolonging antiretroviral medication; AIDS activists have welcomed the move but say more needs to be invested.

NIGERIA - Campaigns to distribute Vitamin A supplements to reduce high rates of child mortality and morbidity in northern Nigeria have had the unexpected side-effect of encouraging heavily stigmatized polio immunizations in the region.

SENEGAL - Girls' safety hinges on families' willingness to speak out about sexual violence, researchers in Senegal's southern Casamance region said at the release of a study that reveals widespread violence against girls aged 10 to 13.

SOUTH AFRICA - The World Cup is wreaking havoc with a key Millennium Development Goals in South Africa: as the football tournament hit its stride, not a single child across the nation attended school.

■ASIA

AFGHANISTAN - Dozens of girls fell ill and were hospitalised on Saturday after a suspected gas attack at their high school in Afghanistan's eastern province of Ghazni.

KYRGYZSTAN - More than 117 people have been killed, hundreds more injured and thousands have fled their homes in southern Kyrgyzstan as fighting between ethnic Kyrgyz and Uzbeks entered the fourth day, say officials.

MYANMAR - Residents of coastal Kinwon Village in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Delta saw their houses flattened when Cyclone Nargis struck in May 2008; now they worry that not enough has been done to protect them from future cyclones, despite considerable efforts around the region by international organizations.

SRI LANKA - With thousands of war affected civilians still without livelihood and an economy still reeling from the aftermath of a decades-long conflict in Sri Lanka's northern region, plans should be in place to revive local economies and jobs, says a top United Nations official.

WFWO's Communications Team