



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - Four members of the joint United Nations-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur have been abducted but the kidnappers have yet to make any demands, UN officials say. The four South Africans, serving as part of UNAMID's police force, are the latest in a string of abductions involving expatriates over the past year.

CLIMATE CHANGE - The world cannot agree a final climate deal this year, outgoing U.N. climate chief Yvo de Boer says, the focus should be on practical steps to help the poor and save forests. De Boer was speaking on the sidelines of the first U.N. talks since a bad-tempered summit in Copenhagen in December fell short of agreeing the full legal treaty many nations had wanted. Negotiators at the April 9-11 talks in Bonn struggled to find a formula to revive negotiations on a pact to combat global warming and agree a schedule before the next annual ministerial meeting in Cancun, Mexico in November and December.

HEALTH - Donor money for health care in developing countries could be spent more effectively if it were channelled through a single global fund, experts say. A study found that in some recipient countries, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, foreign health aid was partly replacing - not supplementing - domestic health budgets. In such countries, for every \$1 given in aid, governments move between 43 cents and \$1.14 of their own health funds to other sectors, such as education or sanitation.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - Increased application of Information and Communications Technology to marry sustainable agriculture practices and renewable energy can help drive Africa's economic development. Affordable access to technology at the village level can not only improve families' economic situation, proponents argue, but trigger a series of broader improvements in the environment, health care and other development priorities.

KENYA - Lightweight kit for small farmers - A new piece of kit in the form of a backpack could help small farmers in Kenya increase yields, profits and agricultural know-how in a sustainable way.

SENEGAL - Hundreds of religious leaders running Koranic schools in Senegal are keeping their students in "slave-like" conditions, forcing them into exploitative labour through begging on the streets and keeping them in deplorable living conditions, says US-based Human Rights Watch in a new report.

SOMALIA - HIV education goes to school - A new programme is targeting about 800 primary and junior high school students in northwestern Somalia's self-declared republic of Somaliland with HIV/AIDS messages for the first time.

ZAMBIA - Unruly refugees sent home - A shadow has fallen over Zambia's long history of generously hosting refugees from troubled countries since 36 foreigners were deported to neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), but the government says it is only trying to ensure security and order in camps that still shelter some 57,000 people.

■ASIA

CHINA - Chinese authorities are struggling to mount a sweeping rescue mission in the remote area shaken by a series of earthquakes Wednesday morning as the death toll continues to rise. More than 600 people are confirmed dead, with tens of thousands more injured or left homeless. Chinese soldiers and paramilitary forces have rushed in to help with rescue efforts, but survivors are expressing worry over a dearth of food, shelter and digging supplies.

PAKISTAN - The United Nations says that humanitarian aid for thousands of Pakistanis affected by military offensives against al Qaeda-linked militants might cease because of scarce funds. U.N. aid agencies in February launched a \$537 million aid appeal for people impacted by the fighting between government forces and militants in the northwest of the country.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL's heaviest rains in four decades have killed at least 205 people, most in mudslides that devastated poor hillside communities, and left thousands homeless in and around Brazil's second-biggest city Rio de Janeiro.

BOLIVIA - Scientists, world leaders and Hollywood celebrities are convening in the tiny Bolivian town of Cochabamba for unofficial climate talks geared toward uniting people from the poorest countries. Bolivian President Evo Morales says that the World People's Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth - an assembly of grass-roots groups and representatives for more than 100 countries - seeks to encourage the world's poorest countries to vote in a referendum on the direction that an ambitious climate-change treaty should take.

WFWO's Communications Team