



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appointed a three-man panel Tuesday to advise on human-rights violations committed during the Sri Lankan government's decisive offensive against Tamil Tiger rebels in 2009. Thousands of civilians died during the military action and both sides have been accused of war crimes by human-rights advocates. The panel will seek to help Sri Lankan authorities ensure accountability for abuses but will not investigate individual incidents.

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) - A report released on Tuesday revealed that Africa is making the greatest overall progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. The report said 11 of Africa's poorest nations were among the 20 countries making the most progress. Ethiopia reduced its rate of hungry people from 71 per cent in 1990 to 46 per cent in 2004, according to the report. In the same period Ghana more than halved its number of undernourished people from 34 per cent to 9 per cent. The report also suggests that around half the continent is on track to halve poverty by 2015. On the other hand, the report noted that child mortality rates have increased in six sub-Saharan countries.

CLIMATE CHANGE - The UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has selected 831 scientists from a pool of some 3,000 applicants to write its fifth report on global climate change - a report that will cover climate observations, global climate-change impacts on society and global climate-change prevention strategies. The fifth report comes even as a review of the fourth report, released in 2007, is under way. The new report is scheduled to be published in 2014.

AIDS - The first international standard to tackle workplace discrimination against HIV/AIDS sufferers has won overwhelming approval from the International Labour Organisation. The non-binding recommendation urges countries to set up AIDS prevention programmes in places of employment and help infected workers be productive for as long as possible.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - In a slow-motion disaster predicted months ago by aid agencies, Africa's Sahel region is lurching towards a food crisis which the world has only weeks left to avert. Yet even if more aid is pledged right now, the obstacles in getting succour to the most vulnerable and remote communities on the planet mean hundreds of thousands of children in Niger and Chad are already facing life-threatening hunger.

CHAD - Water levels in Lake Chad have been steadily dropping for decades, causing propellers to snag vegetation and sputter in the shallows, and making it harder for people who live on the islands to reach life-saving healthcare.

KENYAN authorities are planning to create a regional carbon-emissions trading mechanism to streamline African carbon-trading efforts, and promote conservation and poverty-reduction efforts inside Kenya. Under the plan, communities will be able to generate revenue by planting trees and supporting government efforts to address environmental degradation.

WEST AFRICA - Several UN agencies and NGOs are calling for a greater mobilization of aid workers and funding in the West African Sahel to meet the needs of a population facing one of the worst nutrition crises in recent years.

■ASIA

Asia Region - Pakistan is facing a "raging" water crisis that if managed poorly could mean the country will run out of water in several decades, experts say, leading to mass starvation and possibly war. Meanwhile, Afghanistan will ask the international community to invest in a \$12 billion dam construction programme in an attempt to raise power generation to boost irrigation, according to its economy minister.

CHINA - A flood-battered dyke in south China has suffered a fresh breach, as heavy flooding that has killed nearly 200 people in the past week intensified and about 100,000 residents fled after an earlier break in its wall. Residents whose homes were threatened had already been evacuated at night.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL - The government of Brazil has pledged \$100 million in aid to an area of northeastern Brazil where hundreds of people remain missing after heavy flooding. The food and reconstruction aid will go to some 115,000 people displaced by floods that killed at least 41 people. Thirty cities northeast of Sao Paulo are struggling with emergency conditions, leading governor Eduardo Campos to appeal for potable water and food aid.

WFWO's Communications Team