



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - Despite numerous factors that threaten the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 - a global financial crisis, a food crisis, climate change, natural disasters - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said this week that his main concern is "political will".

POVERTY - Radical reforms are needed in agricultural research in order to curb global warming and feed one billion hungry people in developing countries, a new study suggested on Thursday. It calls for the renovation of a fragmented food production system ranging from the moment that crop seeds are planted to the point when food reaches people's tables. This would improve cooperation between small-scale farmers, governments, companies, scientists, civil society groups and others, the report said. But researchers warned of the risk of increasing obesity rates if the wrong foods are produced, as there are now more overweight people than hungry people in developing countries such as Peru, Ghana and Tunisia.

CLIMATE CHANGE - The International Monetary Fund has published the first details of a proposed financing framework, dubbed the 'Green Fund', intended to mobilise 100 billion dollars a year by 2020 to help developing countries cope with the consequences of climate change and mitigate further emissions.

HEALTH - Millions of people in tropical climates are at risk of picking up deadly parasites, but accurate diagnosis is almost impossible in the locations where they strike: remote areas with no microscopes or health workers.

ENVIRONMENT - Deforestation rates have decreased in the last decade for the first time on record, the United Nations said. A UN Food and Agriculture Organisation report claims that between 2000 and 2010 an annual 13 million hectares of forest were converted to other uses or lost through natural causes. In the previous decade 16 million hectares were being destroyed each year.

■AFRICA

Africa Region - Rice is nice but not for long - The organizers of a week-long African Rice Congress in Bamako, capital of Mali, say African countries can decrease hunger and save millions of dollars if they wean themselves off rice imports and increase local production, but experts favour a "drastic" move away from rice to native grains.

KENYA - Tens of thousands of refugees living in Kenyan cities will continue to suffer police harassment, lack of protection, violation of their human rights and discrimination, as long as the government fails to properly implement recent legislation, says a report by the Humanitarian Policy Group, International Rescue Committee and Refugee Consortium of Kenya.

SOMALIA - Camp leaders are doing it for themselves - Managing camps for displaced people is usually a complex business involving aid agencies, governments and elaborate coordination mechanisms.

UGANDA - Almost one million at risk in Karamoja - At least 900,000 people in Karamoja, northeastern Uganda, are facing severe food insecurity due to consecutive rain failure and poor harvests over four years, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network.

■ASIA

Asia Region - Parliamentarians from 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region have gathered in Manila for the first regional seminar highlighting the role of indigenous people in the context of climate change and mineral rights.

AFGHANISTAN - Afghanistan's hard-won post-Taliban human rights achievements are being eroded due to the persistent immunity from prosecution of powerful figures, the intensifying conflict, and the adoption of laws which undermine justice and human rights, a UN official warns.

INDONESIA - Agriculture expansion plan under fire - The Indonesian government's plan to develop a food estate in Papua has come in for heavy criticism for potentially marginalizing small farmers and threatening the environment.

PAKISTAN - Return to broken homes, empty schools in northwest - Some of the estimated 430,000 people who fled Bajaur and neighbouring Mohmand agency near the Afghan border in northwestern Pakistan since fighting began in August 2008 have returned - to broken homes and empty schools.

PHILIPPINES - Government must counter "culture of disaster" - Filipino authorities say the country has learned tough lessons in disaster risk management after the deadly storms last year, but warn that a "culture of disaster" still prevails.

■LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

BRAZIL - A United Nations report published ahead of the Fifth World Urban Forum in Brazil says the proportion of the population of this country living in "favelas" or shantytowns was reduced 16 percent between 2000 and 2010.

COLOMBIA - The Colombian government must do more to ensure the country's intelligence agencies respect human rights and submit to regular civilian oversight, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights says in a new report. Last year, Colombia's intelligence agency was involved in illegal wiretapping of Supreme Court judges, journalists and government critics.

URUGUAY - Behind the explosive growth of the agriculture and plantation forestry industries in Uruguay lies clear proof of the indiscriminate use of chemical products that pose serious threats to the environment and human health.

WFWO's Communications Team