



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS (MDGs) - The impact of the global financial crisis could cause Africa to miss the Millennium Development Goals of halving poverty by 2015, the United Nations said. The executive secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa said that Africa is the only continent not on track to meet the target. He said the fall in economic growth has prompted poverty and unemployment to rise in many African countries. In 2009 the African economy grew by an average of 1.6 per cent in comparison to 4.5 per cent in the previous year, according to Janneh. He said recurring conflicts, natural disasters as a result of climate change and the HIV/AIDS pandemic are also undermining economic growth in Africa.

ENVIRONMENT - Deforestation gets a mixed report - One of the most comprehensive forest reviews conducted by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization shows that the rate of forest loss halved every year between 2000 and 2010, but was still high.

DEVELOPMENT - Basic services that are collapsing or non-existent, overcrowding, pollution: these are big-city problems that are compounded in developing countries by poverty and inequality.

BIODIVERSITY - As details emerge about the backroom politics and contentious votes that led to the failure to protect any of the several marine species up for international protection at a key conference the past two weeks, conservation advocates are looking ahead to influence regional, local and even individual choices in the next round of battles to save the threatened species.

■AFRICA

KENYA - Schoolchildren sent home after cholera scare - Up to 11,000 students from various schools in Msambweni and Kwale districts on Kenya's coast have been forced to go home before the Easter holidays after an outbreak of cholera in the region.

NIGERIA - 156 dead from meningitis - As of 24 March 156 people have died of meningitis in Nigeria, of some 1,500 infected, according to the National Emergency Management Agency.

SOMALIA - High-risk truckers still unaware of HIV - The truck drivers who criss-cross Somalia are considered at high risk of HIV, but incomplete prevention messages mean they are ill-equipped to protect themselves against the virus.

SOUTH AFRICA - South African health workers will distribute 2.5 billion condoms and provide HIV/AIDS testing services to 15 million people beginning April 15 as part of a countrywide campaign. Authorities have asked 9,000 retired medical professionals and final-year medical students to assist in the effort.

West Africa food crisis - The UNWFP has warned that around 150,000 people in Mauritania are on the verge of starvation. The figure could rise up to 250,000, according to estimates from the UNWFP. The warning is the latest to be issued after erratic rains affected food production across West Africa's Sahel region, threatening at least 10 million people in Niger and Chad.

■ASIA

Asia Region - Seasonal monsoons could be spreading industrial pollution from Asian countries to the rest of the world and affecting global climate, researchers claim. A study, published on Thursday by the journal Science, suggests that pollutant emissions of black carbon, sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from countries such as China, India and Indonesia may be sucked up to 40 kilometres into the stratosphere by the Asian monsoon. The pollution could then be spread around the planet by strong stratospheric winds and linger for years before falling back to earth or breaking down. The researchers said the impact of this pollution is still unclear. They say it could have a cooling effect by reflecting sunshine back into space, trap heat or even affect the ozone layer.

CHINA - The wide social and economic gap between China's urban and rural communities means the health of children living in the countryside is at a greater risk than their peers in cities, researchers have said. A study published on Friday in the Lancet found that children born in rural China are three to six times more likely to die before the age of five than those born in cities. The leading causes of death are pneumonia, birth asphyxia and pre-term birth complications, according to the study. The researchers used public databases to determine that the child mortality rate in China has decreased from 64.6 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 18.5 per 1,000 live births in 2008. However, the great disparity between child health in cities and in the countryside remains severe, the study found.

PAKISTAN - Nearly a year after the army defeated the Taliban in Pakistan's Swat Valley, a district of North West Frontier Province, the physical impact of the conflict is plain to see in damaged or destroyed buildings, but the underlying psychosocial impact is harder to gauge.

■MIDDLE EAST

YEMEN - Hundreds of displaced families have returned to their homes in the northern governorate of Saada after more than six months of displacement after clashes between the army and Houthi-led Shia rebels.

WFWO's Communications Team