



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

CLIMATE CHANGE could significantly reverse progress made towards reducing hunger and poverty in Africa, the United Nations said on Tuesday. The UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation warned at a conference being held in Angola this week that crop yields are likely to be reduced as a result of global warming and increasingly erratic weather patterns. Maize production could decline by 6.9 per cent, UNFAO said. The agency added that climate change will affect Africa's poorest people disproportionately, especially subsistence farmers, as one third of its population lives in drought-prone areas. African governments should focus on developing agriculture, sustainable natural resource management and climate change adaptation practices such as the promotion and protection of traditional and local foods, the UNFAO said.

ENVIRONMENT - As oil seeps into the environmentally and economically critical Gulf of Mexico following an explosion on a rig there two weeks ago, some groups are saying this catastrophe should mark the end of offshore drilling for oil - and be a "clarion call" for moving away from fossil fuels.

HUMAN RIGHTS - Delegates from 27 African countries assembled in Senegal in support of a UN ban on female genital mutilation - a practice that affects some 120 million women through Africa and the Middle East. The UN Population Fund reports that about 91 million girls aged 9 and under have undergone genital mutilation, with 3 million operations performed each year. The African Union has warned that migrants who leave for Europe and other areas in the West are bringing with them the practice and that the West must work to combat it also.

■AFRICA

NIGER is once again in the grips of widespread famine, in the wake of a recent drought and failed crops. But the country's military government, which seized power in a February coup, is adopting a more open approach than previous regimes by distributing food from government storage centers and by openly discussing the famine with the population and with aid agencies and the UN.

SOUTHERN AFRICA - Same problems, less funding - Without adequate funding, barriers to HIV treatment are likely to remain unchanged in spite of growing demand, a new report has warned.

■ASIA

PAPUA NEW GUINEA - Volcano displaced still in limbo - The government of Papua New Guinea has put on hold plans to return thousands of internally displaced persons (IDPs) to their homes on the northern island of Manam.

VIETNAM - Children learn to swim and to survive - In some countries swimming is an extra-curricular activity for children, but in Vietnam it can be key to survival. Throughout the year, an average of 10 children and adolescents drown each day, according to the Ministry of Health.

WFWO's Communications Team