



# News Bulletin

## ■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS - watchers suggest the practice among U.S., British and French governments of giving significant UN appointments to political allies has had a negative impact on the UN -- where the impartial international civil servant is becoming a rare find. Critics say that purely political appointments are on the rise during the tenure of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon.

UNITED NATIONS - Travellers can donate \$2 to help the fight against deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis when they book their plans through online sites under a program endorsed by former U.S. President Bill Clinton and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Supporters of the MassiveGood project hope to raise \$1 billion over the next four years.

UNITED NATIONS - The 15th meeting of the Poverty Environment Partnership (PEP 15) took place from Monday, 1 to Friday, 5 March 2010, in Lilongwe, Malawi, and was co-organized by UK Department for International Development, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank, in partnership with the Government of Malawi. The meeting was attended by approximately 110 participants, including representatives from bilateral donor organizations, UN Development Programme (UNDP), UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Bank, the European Commission, developing and industrialized country governments, African stakeholders, international and national non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and research institutions. The meeting convened under the theme "Climate and Environment Mainstreaming and the Green Economy to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals," with sessions on: Climate and Environment Mainstreaming; Development Agencies' Strategies; the Green Economy; Aid Effectiveness and the Environment; and Supporting African Stakeholders to put Ideas into Practice. environment mainstreaming before hearing concluding remarks from the organizers. The PEP is an informal network of development agencies, multilateral development banks, UN agencies and international NGOs seeking to tackle key poverty environment issues "within the framework of international efforts to achieve the MDGs.

## ■AFRICA

CONGO - United Nations peacekeepers will withdraw from the more stable regions of central Congo by June as Congolese authorities seek to regain control of the country's security. The forces will remain in troubled eastern Congo where fighting continues.

KENYA - The Nganyi rainmakers have been predicting the weather in the Luhya community of western Kenya for generations, using changes in nature to guide their advice on how the community should time its farming. But the erratic weather patterns brought by climate change mean the rainmakers can no longer use signs, such as when trees shed their leaves or the behaviour of ants, to make their predictions. And they don't have access to the technologies available to meteorologists.

## ■ASIA

AFGHANISTAN - Women's rights trampled despite new law - As the world marks International Women's Day, ambivalence, impunity, weak law enforcement and corruption continue to undermine women's rights in Afghanistan, despite a July 2009 law banning violence against women, rights activists say.

CHINA/INDIA - Tens of millions of females are missing from societies around the world thanks to neglect, gender-specific abortions, murder and sexual violence, leaving skewed gender ratios that endanger countries' survival. Traditional favoritism for male children combined with modern preferences for small families is helping to drive the trend.

INDONESIA - Aceh authorities are launching a program to pay former separatist rebels to protect the Indonesian province's jungles from poachers and illegal logging activities. Hundreds of former rebels have already joined the training program to ensure the area's natural resources are protected and benefit the local population.

PHILIPPINES - Food security warnings over El Niño - Warnings have been raised over food security in the Philippines as the El Niño phenomenon wreaks havoc across vast agricultural areas, leaving staple crops such as rice dying in parched earth, officials say.

PAKISTAN - Wheat rust threat rising - Experts say it is only a matter of time before wind carries a deadly wheat stem pathogen into Pakistan, the ninth largest wheat producing nation in the world. Known as Ug99, the disease could potentially decimate the country's highly vulnerable wheat crop and cause a huge food security problem.

THAILAND - Thai farmers keen to exploit high rice prices have made an outbreak of a devastating pest worse by overplanting and using too much pesticide, according to ecologists. An outbreak of brown planthoppers has destroyed 368,000 hectares — about four per cent of Thailand's rice paddies — since August last year. The pests have periodically plagued Asian rice farming for decades, eating their way through rice crops and spreading viral diseases that can stunt growth and prevent rice grain formation. The director-general of Thailand's Rice Department, said non-stop, dense rice planting has contributed to the problem. To ensure good yields, farmers overuse fertilisers — thought to increase the planthopper's fertility — and pesticides such as synthetic pyrethroids, which have no effect on planthoppers but kill many of their natural enemies such as spiders.

## ■MIDDLE EAST

EGYPT - Egypt has vowed to "maintain momentum" in building African science and technology (S&T) capacity when it takes over as chair of the African Ministerial Council on Science and Technology (AMCOST) this month. The two-year role will pass to Egypt from the current chair, Kenya, when AMCOST meets in Cairo next week (7–10 March). "Science and technology is at the top of our national agenda and we have made great progress in the past two years. We hope that our experience will be passed to our African colleagues, and we will keep the momentum going. Al-Sherbiny said that 25 African science ministers will attend the meeting along with a host of foreign organisations, including the WHO, various UN agencies and the US National Science Foundation. A delegation from Japan's Office of the Prime Minister will also attend to discuss ways in which it can support African science.

EGYPT - Egypt is moving to curb the spread of avian influenza (H5N1) after a recent upsurge in infections, the Egyptian Health Ministry says.

IRAQ - National election raises hopes for Iraqis - Amid tight security and strict limits on vehicle movement, millions of Iraqis hoping for change went to the polls on 7 March in what is the country's second parliamentary election since the US-led invasion of the country toppled former president Saddam Hussein in 2003.

## ■LATIN AMERICA

CHILE - Teams of geologists, seismologists, engineers and other specialists from Canada, Europe, Japan and the United States will arrive in Chile in the next few days to collect and analyse valuable data from the fifth biggest earthquake ever recorded. The 8.8 magnitude earthquake — which was followed by a tsunami — occurred along a 500-kilometre fault line where the oceanic Nazca tectonic plate is slipping beneath the continental South America plate. This is where 80 per cent of Chile's 16 million people live. Five days on, the death toll is estimated to be almost 800.

WFWO's Communications Team