

ISSUE NO. 06/09(15
APRIL, 2009)

A weekly Newsletter,
published by the UN
Information Centre, covering
the global and local UN
News on Thematic Working
Areas and the Cross Cutting
Themes of the United
Nations -Pakistan



United Nations
Pakistan 

Improving lives and helping people



Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty Reduction

Bioenergy boosts rural development in poor nations, UN-backed study finds

8 April 2009 – Bioenergy production reaps benefits for rural communities in poor countries, according to a new United Nations-backed report that examined projects in one dozen countries spanning the globe. Although the bioenergy debate has centered on liquid fuels used for transport, over 80 per cent of bioenergy used involves other sources, mainly wood, that are used for household cooking and heating in the world's poorest areas, the study – published jointly by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) – **said**.

Concern over the impact of transporting the biofuels on the environment, water resources and food security has obscured bioenergy's many positive benefits for poor people in rural areas.

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Among the benefits of bioenergy cited by the study are increased natural resource efficiency because energy can be created from waste that would otherwise be burned or left to rot and the creation of useful by-products such as cheap fertilizer.

In the 15 'start-up' bioenergy projects in 12 countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia assessed by the report, "the local community benefited from improved energy access both for domestic and business use," said Oliver Dubois, a bioenergy expert in **FAO's** Natural Resources Department.

He said that "virtuous cycles" have developed where people have access to the energy needed for development without funds flowing out of communities or depleting local natural resources.



Cooking with biogas from animal and human waste in China

Ban outlines Laos' progress, challenges in meeting development targets

13 April 2009 – Laos has made considerable strides towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the eight anti-poverty targets with a 2015 deadline, but the nation must continue its efforts to slash child malnutrition and maternal mortality rates to make the country more competitive in the global economy, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has **said**.

"There have been steady improvements in health, education, living standards and life spans," with progress having been made in literacy rates and access to safe drinking water, Mr. Ban said on Saturday in Laos' capital, Vientiane, at the launch of the latest progress report on Laos' progress towards the MDGs.

"These gains are underpinned by greater macro-economic stability and increasing integration with the global economy," he added, congratulating the Government on its achievements.

But the Secretary-General, who met with President Choummaly Sayasone while in Laos, cautioned that much remains to be done for the country to achieve the eight targets.

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon visits the Lao PDR

“Poverty is prevalent, especially in the countryside,” he said. “Inequality – especially between rural and urban areas – is getting worse.”

Mr. Ban expressed his particular concern over the high rates of child malnutrition, noting that Laos has the highest maternal mortality rates in the region. Additionally, the country’s education index is the lowest among the countries belonging to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

“This is not only a human tragedy; it will have serious implications for the future of this country’s workforce and its ability to compete” economically at the international level, he said.

In order for Laos to achieve its twin goals of meeting the MDGs by 2015 and pulling itself out of the list of least developed countries by 2020, the Secretary-General said that the country must maintain sustainable growth, which will require stepped up investments in human development and the social sector.

His remarks were also made to mark the opening of the UN House, a compound in central Vietiane hosting the world body’s agencies, which “will foster greater economies of scale, improve collaboration among UN agencies, and present a unified UN image to the country.”

Mr. Ban said that at the UN House, “we will all join forces to benefit the people of this country, especially those who need it most.”

He was scheduled to depart from Laos to neighbouring Thailand to co-chair the third ASEAN summit in the resort town of Pattaya with Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva.

However, mass protests in the area forced the gathering to be postponed.

The Secretary-General expressed his regret at the deferment of the gathering, emphasizing that he values “the long-standing relationship between ASEAN and the United Nations and their cooperation in various fields.”

He also voiced hope for an early restoration of normalcy in Thailand and for the settlement of differences through dialogue and peaceful means.

AJK Prime Minister appreciates the Skills Development Programme of the ILO

Muzaffarabad: Wednesday, April 8, 2009: The Prime Minister of AJK, Sardar Muhammad Yaqoob Khan, has greatly admired the skills program implemented by the International Labour Organization (ILO) under its Community-Based Livelihood Recovery Project (CBLRP). The Prime Minister visited the Skills Exhibition arranged in the sidelines of 2-days conference on “Livelihoods Recovery through Participatory Development” organized by the CBLR Project in Muzaffarabad.

More than twenty organizations displayed their products and skill trades which they implemented in the rural areas of Muzaffarabad and Balakot during last three years.

The Project has trained around 9,000 men and women in different skills mainly focusing in construction-related trades to facilitate the



reconstruction process after the deadly earthquake of October 8, 2005. The skilled workforce trained under this project has been taking part in the reconstruction and has greatly contributed in restoring livelihoods in the area.

The Prime Minister was impressed with the quality of products produced by the local women trained by the Project. The Prime Minister said that he will facilitate these women producers in exporting their products to different European and other countries.

For the post-training facilitation, the Project has established an Employment Information Center (EIC) in collaboration with Government of AJK (Azad Kashmir Small Industries Corporation). The EIC is providing technical support to the trained men and women to access decent employments, both self-employment as well as wage-employment, in the local job markets.

This initiative was funded under the **Community-Based Livelihood Recovery Project (CBLRP)** jointly sponsored by UNDP and European Commission (EC) and jointly implemented by **ILO, UNDP, FAO** and **UNIDO**.

Education

Attacks on girls' schools jeopardizes Pakistan's future, says UNESCO chief



UNESCO
Director-
General,
Koichiro
Matsuura

1 April 2009 – The future of all of Pakistan is being endangered by ongoing threats to girls' education in the country's north, the head of the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (**UNESCO**) said.

For months, there have been attacks on schools, teachers and students, with girls' educational institutes being singled out for attack in the Swat district of Pakistan's North West Frontier Province (NWFP), UNESCO Director General Koichiro Matsuura noted, with both the Government and the Taliban having set up military posts in school buildings.

Last year, over 150 schools – two-thirds of which were girls' schools – were destroyed by the Taliban and their allies in the NWFP. In the Swat Valley, the Taliban decreed in December 2008 that all girls' educational facilities must close their doors by 15 January 2009, adding that they would attack schoolgirls and their schools after the deadline.

"Hostage-taking is never acceptable," he said. "But when the hostages are schoolboys and schools girls, the situation is even more shocking. The future of an entire country is taken hostage through its education system." In February, a ceasefire was signed between the Pakistani Government and the main Taliban group in the region, known as the TTP, which said that girls could theoretically return to school.

In spite of that agreement, "fear still reigns," with many parents still refusing to send their daughters to school and teachers having fled the region in recent weeks, Mr. Matsuura said.

Last month, there was a suicide attack on a girls' school in Baluchistan, in eastern Pakistan.

To reassure frightened parents and teachers, any agreement must reflect the Government's commitment to the goals of 'Education for All,' including facilitating girls' access to education, Mr. Matsuura stressed. "A strong signal must be sent, so that everyone can once more benefit from education, which is a determining factor for their future and for the future of the country," he declared.

Health and Population

UN urges States to strengthen life-saving facilities to better withstand disasters



7 April 2009 – The United Nations marked World Health Day with an urgent call for

greater investment in hospitals and other health care facilities that play a critical role in saving lives of survivors in the immediate aftermath of humanitarian crises.

In his **message** commemorating the Day, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted that “when disaster strikes, well-prepared, functioning medical services are a priority.

“Hospitals, clinics and other health facilities must react swiftly and efficiently [and] they must provide safe havens, and not become disaster zones themselves,” in the event of floods, earthquakes, the outbreak of infectious diseases and other natural or man-made disasters, Mr. Ban said.

This year’s World Health Day campaign – “Save lives, make hospitals safe in emergencies” – is a global call to countries to prepare their health systems for emergencies, he said.

Highlighting the need to protect public health by designing and building facilities that can withstand natural disasters, the Secretary-General said that when “a hospital collapses in an earthquake, burying patients and staff, the human cost multiplies.”

“When an infectious disease spreads because a hospital is poorly ventilated or constructed, or because health care workers lack adequate training, we are failing people at their most vulnerable,” he added.

The UN World Disaster Reduction Campaign for 2008-2009 has pooled the efforts of the World Health Organization (**WHO**), the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (**ISDR**) and the World Bank to produce durable health facilities that can stand up to disasters, such as cyclones and earthquakes, said Mr. Ban.

In addition, “we must also ensure they are not targeted during conflicts. Health care workers must be trained to work safely in emergencies, so they can save lives, rather than becoming victims themselves.”

WHO Director-General Margaret Chan **said** that it costs “surprisingly little” to build hospitals that can stand up to the shocks of earthquakes, floods, or high winds.

“It costs even less to retrofit existing facilities to keep their services running at critical times [and] it costs almost nothing to integrate risk management and emergency preparedness into a hospital’s operational plans,” she added in her own statement marking World Health Day.

In South-East Asia more than half a million people lost their lives to natural disasters between 1996 and 2005, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the global total death toll from natural disasters during that period, according to WHO.

The agency reported that in Aceh, Indonesia, 61 per cent of health facilities were damaged or completely destroyed by the 2004 tsunami and cyclone Nargis destroyed 57 per cent of public health facilities in the affected areas in Myanmar last year.

“In some cases, although a facility remains standing, it is still rendered non-functional. Non-structural lifelines such as water and power supply must not fail,” said Samlee Plianbangchang, WHO Regional Director for South-East Asia.

“A safe and functional health facility needs contingency plans and a well-trained health workforce ready to deal with emergencies,” he added.

Member States in the region have taken steps to make health facilities safer during a disaster with the "Twelve Benchmarks for Emergency Preparedness," a complete set of standards and checklists for making new and existing health facilities more robust created in collaboration with WHO.

As part of a campaign to raise awareness on the issue, WHO South-East Asia Regional Office has launched its "click-a-brick for safe hospitals" website www.searo.who.int.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has prepared a fact sheet on early warning systems related to weather, water and climate disasters to commemorate the Day, noting that from 1980 to 2005 nearly 7,500 natural disasters worldwide had taken the lives of over 2 million people. WMO said that while the number of disasters had increased over the past 50 years, the loss of life had decreased due to increasingly accurate disaster warning systems.

Meanwhile, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) launched its global campaign against drugs to coincide with World Health Day under the banner, "Drug control is not just about security, it's about health."

Around 200 million people take drugs at least once a year and 25 million of these are regarded as drug dependent, with around 200,000 people dying from drug-related illnesses every year, according to UNODC.

"Drug dependence is an illness and should be prevented and treated as such," said UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa. The agency's international anti-drug campaign will run until 26 June 2009, which is World Drug Day, the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking.

UN-backed forum commits to greater action, funding to fight drug-resistant TB



2 April 2009 –
Health ministers
from countries
suffering the

highest burden of drug-resistant tuberculosis cases have agreed to a series of measures aimed at accelerating efforts to stop and reverse the global epidemic, at a United Nations-backed meeting in China.

Representatives of 27 countries with a high incidence of multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) are meeting in Beijing for a three-day conference organized by the UN World Health Organization (WHO), China's Ministry of Health and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to secure funding and action to combat the spread of MDR-TB and extensively drug-resistant TB (XDR-TB).

Delegates, including Chinese Vice-Premier Li Keqiang and Bill Gates, kicked off the gathering yesterday, with WHO Director General Margaret Chan stressing that preventing and managing drug-resistant strains of TB was a health imperative for the whole world.

"We need high-level political attention because national TB programmes cannot by themselves manage these new threats. The problem has become too great," said Ms. Chan.

Only three per cent of the estimated new 500,000 multi-drug resistant TB (MDR-TB) cases each year are known to be receiving treatment according to WHO guidelines. Four countries represented at the meeting – China, India, Russia and South Africa, who account for 60 per cent of the world's MDR-TB – have increased their financing to back measures controlling the disease.

Participants also called for measures such as moving towards universal access to M/XDR-TB diagnosis and treatment by 2015, ensuring a sufficient supply of high-quality anti-TB drugs, the development of a comprehensive M/XDR-TB management and care framework, and the implementation of airborne infection control policies among others.

In addition, they pledged to raise the estimated \$15 billion needed to finance the TB and M/XDR-TB response through to 2015,

and called for increased investment in the research and development of new TB diagnostics, drugs and vaccines.

A report released by WHO last week noted that the total number of new TB cases had stabilized at 9.27 million in 2007 from 9.24 million in 2006. Rates reached their peak at 142 cases per 100,000 people in 2004, but decreased to 137 per 100,000 people in 2007.

The new WHO study also revealed that one-quarter of all TB deaths are HIV-related, twice as many as previously recognized. In 2007, 1.37 million people living with HIV fell ill to TB.

TB is an infectious bacterial disease most commonly affecting the lungs, which is transmitted through droplets from the throat and lungs of people with the active respiratory illness. The symptoms of active TB are coughing, sometimes with sputum or blood, chest pains, weakness, weight loss, fever and night sweats, which are treatable with a six-month course of antibiotics.

High birth rates hamper development in poorer countries, warns UN forum



A healthy mother with her newborn in India

1 April 2009 – Rapid population growth, fuelled by high fertility, presents a barrier to reducing poverty levels and reaching other internationally agreed development goals, experts attending the current session of the United Nations population body said.

The meeting of the Commission on Population and Development, which began on Monday and concludes on Friday, is examining the extent to which population growth affects the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), globally agreed targets on

reducing poverty and eliminating other social ills by 2015.

Although birth rates have been on the slide across the developing world since the 1970s, women in most of the least developed countries (LDCs) still have five children each on average, according to a **policy brief** presented by the Population Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

The lack of access to family planning and to modern methods of contraception is the major cause of this persistence in high fertility.

“When individuals and couples are given the possibility of deciding how many children they want to have, they usually opt for much lower numbers than they used to,” Hania Zlotnik, Director of the Population Division, told the press at UN Headquarters in New York at a briefing focusing on the work of the Commission.

Ms. Zlotnik noted that giving people the information and means for reaching their reproductive goals – without any kind of interference or coercion – has significant implications for economic and social development.

Reducing population growth through cutting fertility rates, versus increasing mortality or restricting migration, is beneficial to the economy, as low fertility increases the number of people of working age per capita as well as output per capita, according to the Population Division brief.

Benefits to economic growth also occur as lowering fertility leads to an increase in the supply of female labour, particularly in urban areas in developing countries.

In addition, smaller family size allows for greater investment in the health and education of children in the longer term both from the family and government.

Martial arts actor takes on role of Goodwill Ambassador for UN health agency



Film star Jet Li,
WHO Goodwill
Ambassador
(photo: Russell
Wong)

3 April 2009 – Martial arts expert and international film star Jet Li was **named** as Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO), which has lauded his efforts on global disaster relief and support for the well-being of young people.

Mr. Li, born in Beijing, is expected to use his worldwide celebrity to raise attention on key health issues including public health responses to emergencies and mental health.

"I am very pleased to appoint Jet Li as a Goodwill Ambassador for WHO," said the agency's Director-General, Margaret Chan, speaking from Sichuan, China, where she is attending an international conference on health response to natural disasters.

Ms. Chan highlighted the actor's commitment to promoting community involvement and young people's participation in social and health issues as an asset to WHO's work.

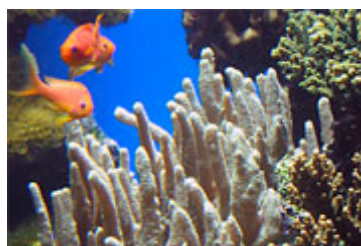
After experiencing the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami, Mr. Li took a break from acting and set up a charitable foundation supporting international disaster relief efforts, which has been involved in the emergency response to earthquakes in China. He also set up programmes to help young people to cope with psycho-social challenges.

"He has been personally involved in providing emergency response following natural disasters and has promoted mental health amongst youth. We are grateful that he is willing to use his energy and fame to promote health and well-being," said Ms. Chan.

In his first official function for WHO, Mr. Li will attend the 7 April launch of **World Health Day** in Beijing, where he will help spread this year's message of making hospitals safe during emergencies.

Environment

Latest round of UN talks on pact to combat global warming wraps up in Bonn



Coral reefs are in danger from climate changes and ocean acidification.

8 April 2009 – The latest round of United Nations talks aimed at reaching an ambitious new treaty on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions wrapped up in Bonn, Germany, having achieved what the world body's top climate change official called "important" progress.

"Countries have narrowed gaps in many practical areas, for example on how to strengthen action for adapting to the impacts of climate change," said Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (**UNFCCC**).

"This is important progress given the very limited time negotiators have to get to an agreed outcome in Copenhagen in December this year," Mr. de Boer added, referring to the climate change conference at which countries are expected to adopt an agreement to succeed the Kyoto Protocol, whose first commitment period for reducing greenhouse gas emissions ends in 2012.

More than 2,000 delegates from government, business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions, participated in the Bonn meeting, which began on 29 March and is the first of three sessions planned ahead of the Copenhagen conference.

Negotiations on greenhouse gas emissions reductions to be achieved by industrialized countries after 2012 centred on issues related to the scale of the reductions, improvements to emissions trading and the Kyoto Protocol's carbon offset mechanisms, as well as concerns relating to land-use change and forestry.

"There have been positive discussions on a range of issues, including on technology cooperation between industrialized and developing countries, as well as on the specificities of reducing emissions from deforestation in developing countries," noted Michael Zammit Cutajar, Chair of the Ad hoc Working Group on Long-term Cooperative Action under the Convention (AWG-LCA).

Mr. Cutajar added that countries have the opportunity to provide input to the draft for the negotiating text ahead of the next round of talks in June.

"I invite countries to forward their input to the climate change secretariat by 24 April 2009, so that their views on how to shape the text and what to include in the text can be incorporated," he said.

Some 192 States have signed on to the UNFCCC, the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which has 184 parties and legally binds 37 highly industrialized nations and countries transitioning to a market economy to limit and reduce their greenhouse gas emissions.

The objective of both treaties is to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate

UN agency calls for inclusion of farming in talks on new climate change treaty



Farmers control soil erosion through crop cultivation

2 April 2009 – The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) urged policy makers gathered in Germany to include farming in their negotiations on an ambitious new international greenhouse gas reduction pact which will replace the Kyoto Protocol.

More than 2,000 delegates from government, business and industry, environmental organizations and research institutions, are meeting in Bonn, for the first of a series of three sessions designed to culminate in a draft climate change treaty for discussion at the high-level UN-backed conference in Copenhagen in December.

Crop production and livestock release large amounts of greenhouse gas into the atmosphere, including methane from cattle and wetlands, nitrous oxide from fertilizer use and carbon from deforestation and soil degradation, according to a news release issued by **FAO**.

The agency warned that annual greenhouse gas emissions from farming – already accounting of 14 per cent of the world's discharge while another 17 per cent comes from deforestation and soil degradation – are expected to increase in coming decades due to a rise in demand for food and shifts in diet. "But millions of farmers around the globe could also become agents of change helping to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," said Alexander Mueller, FAO Assistant Director-General on the occasion of the ongoing UN negotiations.

By keeping higher levels of carbon in the soil – a process known as "carbon sequestration" – farmers can help reduce carbon dioxide levels in the atmosphere, enhance the soil's resilience and boost crop yields, according to FAO.

"Agricultural land is able to store and sequester carbon. Farmers that live off the land, particularly in poor countries, should therefore be involved in carbon sequestration to mitigate the impact of climate change," said Mr. Mueller, who also noted that farmers and their families, particularly in poorer

countries, will become victims of climate change.

Farmers can alleviate agriculture's contribution to climate change by reducing tillage, increasing organic soil matter and soil cover, improving grassland management, restoring degraded lands, planting trees, altering forage and by sustainable use of animal genetic diversity, using fertilizer more efficiently, and improving water management. However, Mr. Mueller said, "Current global funding arrangements, like the Clean Development Mechanism [CDM] under the Kyoto Protocol, are inadequate and are not offering sufficient incentives for farmers to get involved in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

"For example, soil carbon sequestration, through which nearly 90 per cent of agriculture's climate change mitigation potential could be realized, is outside the scope of the Clean Development Mechanism under the Kyoto Protocol. Neither climate change mitigation, nor food security, nor sustainable development, benefit from this exclusion."

Cross Cutting Themes/Other Issues

Relief, joy at UN refugee agency over release of colleague abducted in Pakistan



John Solecki (right), who was abducted in Pakistan on February 2

7 April 2009 – The United Nations refugee chief and his staff around the world have welcomed the safe release of colleague John Solecki, who was freed over the weekend in Pakistan after two months in captivity.

"It is a very happy day," António Guterres **told** hundreds of staff gathered in the Geneva headquarters of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**) yesterday. "We were

all ecstatic the day before yesterday when the news came and when finally – I must say, it was one of the best days of my life – I could speak to him late Saturday."

Mr. Solecki, the agency's head of office in Balochistan's provincial capital Quetta, was abducted in an attack on 2 February that also left another colleague, Syed Hashim, dead.

Following a message from his abductors, the Baloch Liberation United Front, the 49-year-old Solecki was located on Saturday night in Khadkhutch, some 50 kilometres south of Quetta. He was flown out of Pakistan on Sunday and is now undergoing medical examination before flying to the United States to see his family.

Mr. Guterres said his Saturday night phone call with Mr. Solecki convinced him that he had endured his ordeal "with lots of courage and determination and that we can all be very proud of him. And I think the same can be said about his family.

"I hope John will be able to join us soon, and it will be a great moment for all of us," he added.

At the same time, Mr. Guterres highlighted the increasing dangers faced by aid workers and called for respect for the humanitarian principles of impartiality, neutrality and independence.

"It is important that in this moment of celebration we do not forget other colleagues in these dramatic circumstances," he said. Just a couple of days ago, two international staff from the French non-governmental organization (NGO) Aide Medicale Internationale were kidnapped in Sudan's Darfur region.

"We need to make sure that these kinds of events do not go on multiplying in a way that is representing a major threat to the humanitarian community, narrowing our humanitarian space and a major concern for all of us," said Mr. Guterres.

UNDP to work on human security

Islamabad, 10th April 2009: In view of the varied threats to human security and development challenges facing the country, Mahbub-ul-Haq Human Development Centre (MHHDC) in partnership with UNDP Pakistan will produce a National Human Development Report (NHDR) on 'Human Security in Pakistan'. Broadly defined, human security means protecting fundamental freedoms and people from critical and widespread threats. Building on people's strengths and aspirations it helps create political, social, environmental, economic and cultural systems that together give people the building blocks of survival, livelihood and dignity.

The human security issues that have emerged in the last decade call for an in-depth analysis and detailed assessment of factors underlying them. There is an urgent need to raise awareness on human security at the policy level, and to build an institutional framework that will allow cross sectoral reforms to address these problems. The national report will provide a comprehensive facts-based analysis of the government's institutional capacity and policy commitments to tackle human security. It will be prepared by a renowned NGO set up by late Dr. Mahbub-ul-Haq who was the pioneer of the human development concept. The research will build on the 2005 South Asia HDR produced by the Centre on the theme of human security.

Ms. Khadija Haq, Chairperson MHHDC, who will play a key role in taking this project forward stated, "It is expected that the NHDR on human security will serve as a most relevant tool for today's Pakistan to revisit policies in light of the contemporary development discourse where human vulnerabilities other than poverty and lack of livelihood are being multiplied. This is due to

the absence of public policy and institutional responses required to address the challenge of human security."

Reiterating the need for this critical report, Mr. Alvaro Rodriguez, Country Director UNDP Pakistan, remarked, 'The analysis and recommendations provided by the report will also help the Government of Pakistan in instituting a nationally-owned framework for human security. This will be done in a consultative manner. I hope that the report will offer practical ways to build the ownership of the government and other stakeholders including civil society groups of interventions addressing human security and promote multi-sectoral and inter-agency collaboration, paying particular attention to the special needs and vulnerabilities of women, and other marginalized groups". The report will build on dialogue and feedback from policy makers, academia, civil society, youth, media and the general public and create awareness on these issues as well.

UN expresses concern over killings of top Pakistani provincial leaders

9 April 2009 – The United Nations voiced its serious concern over the killings of three leaders from Balochistan province, the largest in Pakistan, calling for immediate investigations into their murders.

The three men were members of the Balochistan Quam Dost Committee, recently created by the Pakistani Government to investigate missing persons cases in the province in the South Asian nation's east.

The UN, which expressed its sympathies to the families of the deceased, called on authorities to ensure that the committee continues its important work.

Last weekend, a staff member of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (**UNHCR**), was

released after spending two months in captivity.

John Solecki, the head of the agency's office in Quetta, Balochistan's provincial capital, was abducted in an attack on 2 February that also left another colleague, Syed Hashim, dead.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his gratitude to the Pakistani Government, Balochi authorities and others who helped secure Mr. Solecki's release, re-affirming the UN's commitment to helping the people of Pakistan.

For more information on the United Nations and its activities, please visit the main UN website at www.un.org or the UN Pakistan website at www.un.org.pk

For questions related to the content of this newsletter, please call (92-51) 227.0610 or 282.1012. If you wish to submit the name of an additional recipient to the email list, please send his/her address to unic.islamabad@unic.org. Should you wish to be deleted from the list, please send a message to the same address with the simple mention "unsubscribe".