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Nations -Pakistan



Humanitarian Assistance to IDP's in Pakistan

Hunza Landslide

On 4 January 2010, a landslide hit Atta Abad and Sarat villages in the Hunza Nagar District, killing 19 people and displacing more than 1,600. Forty-three houses were completely destroyed and a huge amount of rubble was swept into the Hunza River. The debris of the houses has blocked the course of the river, causing the creation of a lake with constantly rising water levels. If this newly created dam breaks, another 18,000 people could be affected by floods. However, efforts to drain

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the water are underway which, according to the local government, has greatly reduced the risk of a dam break. About four kilometres of the Karakorum Highway have also been blocked by the landslide. As it could take up to two months to clear the road, the affected population is in need of food assistance for the coming months.

Relief and rescue operations have been carried out by the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), the Gilgit-Baltistan Disaster Management Authority (GBDMA), FOCUS Pakistan and the Pakistan Red Crescent Society. Four camps have been established on school grounds providing shelter for around 1,650 IDPs, who receive food, Non-Food Items (NFIs), health services and temporary shelter.

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Agriculture, Rural Development, and Poverty Reduction

Senior UN officials urge greater efforts to help least developed countries



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer

18 January 2010 – Senior United Nations officials today called for greater efforts to help the world's poorest countries meet their development targets, as a three-day meeting kicked off in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to examine a decade of assistance to this group of nations.

Ministers and senior government officials from 15 States classed as least developed countries (LDCs) are meeting through Wednesday to assess and develop a regional position for Asia and the Pacific ahead of a global review next year in Turkey on progress made since the adoption of the Brussels Programme of Action to assist LDCs.

Adopted in May 2001, the Programme provides a framework for action to help LDCs progress toward halving the proportion of people living in extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 and promote the sustainable development of these countries.

Noeleen Heyzer, the Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific ([ESCAP](#)), noted that the recent global food, fuel and financial crises took a heavy toll on LDCs, threatening to roll back their hard-won development gains.

She emphasized greater connectivity among countries in Asia and the Pacific to create new markets, and endorsed more cooperation among countries of the South to sustain growth and development in the region's LDCs.

In addition, Ms. Heyzer stressed the need for financial assistance from donors, and underscored the need for monitoring to ensure that the pledges reached their intended targets.

Cheick Sidi Diarra, UN High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, said the triple crises showed just how fragile LDC economies remain.

Next year's review conference, he said, will provide an opportunity for LDCs, development partners and others "to forge a clear vision, based on universal values, moral and ethical imperatives, and the requirements of fairness and equity, to enable the 800 million people in LDCs get out of poverty and onto the path to sustainable development."

Among the issues this week's meeting is addressing are concerns related to reducing poverty and hunger by promoting sustainable and inclusive development in the LDCs; promoting food security through sustainable agriculture; and enhancing the share of LDCs in global trade, aid and financial flows and promoting their productive capacity.

Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Kiribati, Laos, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Yemen are participating in the meeting.

Ban reiterates UN commitment to ensure food security at time of global crisis



18 January 2010 – With the global economic downturn causing the “disastrous combination” of high food prices and reduced buying power, leaving hundreds of millions more people unable to feed themselves or their families, the United Nations today reiterated its commitment to work with regional bodies to ensure food security.

“We are all strongly committed to working with you to help those at risk enjoy food and nutrition security, and to build up their resilience in the face of today’s grave economic, climatic and environmental threats,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the Summit of the World’s Regions on Food Security in Dakar, Senegal, in a [message](#) delivered by his Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition David Nabarro.

The seriousness of the UN commitment was underlined by the presence at the summit of a full array of the world body’s organizations – the Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)), the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), the UN Development Programme ([UNDP](#)), the [World Bank](#) and others – he said.

Mr. Ban noted the many factors creating the crisis, including the inability of farmers to produce enough food to meet demand, with volatile markets offering prices that are sometimes too low to cover their costs, seeds and fertilizers being too expensive, and trading systems often hobbling their access to markets at the right price.

Smallholder farmers are hit particularly hard, with their problems exacerbated by credit shortages, lack of access to technology and the impact of climate change. Women, who do most of the farming in the world’s poorest communities, suffer their own particular ill-effects from food insecurity, being forced to make stark choices between childcare and income-earning, leaving a disproportionate numbers of women and children mal-nourished.

“We must do a better job of listening to these smallholders and women farmers, and involving them in our response,” Mr. Ban said.

But he also noted some bright spots, with civil society, the private sector and governments working more concertedly at several levels. World leaders have become increasingly outspoken on the need for a sustained response to food and nutrition insecurity.

Africa’s leaders have committed themselves to increasing investments in agriculture, infrastructure and food processing, especially for smallholders, and to strengthening social protection programmes, safety nets and direct assistance to the hungry, with similar twin-track initiatives emerging in Asia and Latin America.

Mr. Ban also cited the agreements reached last year by the G20 group of leading developed and developing nations and the G8 bloc of industrialized States on a comprehensive, country-led and coordinated approach to food security, and on the long-term investment to support it.

“It is at the local and regional levels that such initiatives need the greatest support,” he said.

Smallholders, rural producers key to slashing global hunger and poverty – Ban



17 February 2010 – Smallholders and rural producers have a vital role to play in overcoming global hunger and poverty, and new and varied partnerships are needed, with particular emphasis on the interests of women, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.

“With more than 1 billion people now suffering from hunger, the highest number in human history, there is simply no time to lose,” he told the International Fund for Agricultural Development ([IFAD](#)), a specialized United Nations agency dedicated to eradicating poverty in the rural areas of developing countries where 75 per cent of the world’s poorest – or some 1.05 billion people – live.

“The growing international recognition of the role of agriculture and rural development in poverty reduction is helping to build the Global Partnership for Agriculture, Food Security and Nutrition,” he added in a [message](#) to the 33rd meeting of the IFAD Governing Council in Rome, referring to a proposed public-private partnership to boost productivity.

Mr. Ban noted that despite the hardships of the global recession, last year saw an upturn in investment in agriculture, along with promises from world leaders of large additional increases over the next three years. But the food emergency in the Horn of Africa, the plight of Haitians compounded by last month’s devastating earthquake, and early warnings coming from other parts of the world are constant reminders of the need for both comprehensive and sustained action, he added.

“We need to continue creating diverse and innovative partnerships that can help people and communities achieve greater productivity, nutritional health and self-reliance,” he said. “In this respect we must give pre-eminence to the interests of women, who juggle their time between food production, processing, marketing, child care and balancing the household budget.”

Working with rural poor, governments, donors, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and many other partners, IFAD focuses on country-specific solutions, which can involve increasing rural poor peoples’ access to financial services, markets, technology, land and other natural resources. For example, the agency most recently granted Chad \$19.5 million to finance a water project for nomadic herders in the arid sub-Saharan Sahel region.

Health and Population

Health care must adapt to help conflict victims – UN expert



A doctor examines a Somali refugee at a UNHCR-funded clinic in Ethiopia

22 January 2010 – Governments, United Nations agencies and others have been slow to adapt to the changing nature of conflict in their efforts to provide health care to those affected by violence, according to a new study co-authored by an expert with the UN refugee agency.

The model of conflict settings that aid workers rely on was solidified during the last decades of the Cold War, when direct armed clashes between rival nations were more common and overcrowded refugee camps were more the norm, according to the authors of the report, led by Paul Spiegel, chief of the Public Health and HIV Section of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees ([UNHCR](#)).

But the “old paradigms for developing countries with large, camp-based refugee populations with infectious diseases and malnutrition do not address the complexity of present and future conflicts,” the new study, published in *The Lancet* medical journal, says.

Most wars today, it says, “are of protracted duration, intra-State, fought by irregular armed groups and fuelled by economic opportunities and ethnic rivalry.”

Direct armed conflicts not as common, but violence against civilians – including rape – is pervasive. “This violence takes place against a backdrop of increasing urbanization and aging populations,” it argues. Humanitarian space, or areas where civilians can seek shelter and relief workers can provide assistance safely, has shrunk in conflicts in recent years, hindering the provision of health care. Intra-State clashes have swelled the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs), while refugee populations have seen their numbers dwindle. Most of the refugees of concern to UNHCR now live in urban areas, making reaching them with health care assistance complex. As a result, the study calls for changes in four key areas: the delivery of health services; the treatment of chronic diseases; bolstering health care in urban areas; and surveillance, measurement and monitoring.

UN officials urge health focus in post-emergency Haiti



A mother shelters her children from the sun in Cité Soleil, Haiti

27 January 2010 – While United Nations agencies and their partners are providing immediate assistance to the survivors of Haiti’s earthquake, they are also stressing the need to ensure that those dealing with physical and emotional scars from the disaster receive the long-term support they need.

There are still no official figures on exactly how many people perished in the wake of the 7.0-magnitude quake that struck the impoverished Caribbean nation on 12 January or those left injured. But estimates indicate that at least 150,000 people may have died.

UN agencies, including the World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) and the UN Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)), have been working around the clock with their partners on the ground to ensure that survivors receive the health care services they need.

At the same time, there is a strong need for post-operative care for the many people undergoing surgery for trauma injuries, especially once the relief effort moves past the emergency phase, according to WHO.

“We need to have in place in Haiti at least one or two or three teams ... to deal with the consequences of these operations, amputations and infections,” Henriette Chamouillet, Country Director for WHO and its regional office for the Americas (PAHO), told a news conference, speaking from the quake-hit capital, Port-au-Prince.

Dr. Chamouillet said a major concern is rehabilitation for the thousands of amputees who will need support for months or maybe years. This will require that a number of skilled medical professionals, including surgeons and staff trained in rehabilitation, stay behind in the country.

A longer-term commitment is also vital to address the psychological trauma experience by both adults and children, both agencies emphasized.

UNICEF, which is leading the inter-agency effort on water and sanitation, has been distributing safe water to prevent outbreaks of waterborne diseases in Haiti, where only half the population of 9 million had access to clean water in the first place.

It is also addressing child nutrition needs, and working to keep children safe abuse and exploitation. A priority has been setting up child-friendly, safe spaces for children who are lost or separated from their families.

Noting that 40 per cent of Haiti’s population is below the age of 14, Guido Cornale, UNICEF Country Director, called the current situation in the country a “children’s emergency.”

The agency is currently focusing on “life-saving operations,” such as ensuring that all children have access to food, water and health care, he told reporters. In addition, it is working with WHO and PAHO to prepare an immunization campaign against measles, tetanus and diphtheria.

“It is urgent to get started with immunization of all children against highly communicable diseases,” said Dr. Cornale, noting that an outbreak of measles, for example, in the current situation could spread very fast considering the low immunization coverage prior to the quake.

The [flash appeal](#) for \$575 million, launched by the UN and its aid partners in the immediate aftermath of the quake, is now 77 per cent funded, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)).

Speaking to reporters today at UN Headquarters in New York, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon praised Japan and Saudi Arabia "for their recent and generous contributions" to the flash appeal.

But he emphasized that "we have a long way to go. We need tents and shelter, desperately. The aim, agreed with the Government, is to help people where they are, with relatively few new camps.

"The provision of food and escort security is also critical. I am confident, however, that the situation will begin to improve significantly by the end of the week."

Environment

UN opens Biodiversity Year with plea to save world's ecosystems



1 January 2010 – In a bid to curb the unprecedented loss of the world's species due to human activity – at a rate some experts put at 1,000 times the natural progression – the United Nations is marking 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity, with a slew of events highlighting the vital role the phenomenon plays in maintaining the life support system on Planet Earth.

"Humans are part of nature's rich diversity and have the power to protect or destroy it," the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity ([CBD](#)), which is hosted by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), said in summarizing the Year's main message, with its focus on raising awareness to generate public pressure for action by the world's decision makers.

"Biodiversity, the variety of life on Earth, is essential to sustaining the living networks and systems that provide us all with health, wealth, food, fuel and the vital services our lives depend on. Human activity is causing the diversity of life on Earth to be lost at a greatly accelerated rate.

These losses are irreversible, impoverish us all and damage the life support systems we rely on every day. But we can prevent them."

The Convention – which opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, entered into force at the end of 1993 and now has 193 Parties – is based on the premise that the world's diverse ecosystems purify the air and the water that are the basis of life, stabilize and moderate the Earth's climate, renew soil fertility, cycle nutrients and pollinate plants.

As a former UNEP Executive Director, [Klaus Töpfer](#), put it: "If any part of the web suffers breaks down, the future of life on the planet will be at risk." That is why the UN General Assembly proclaimed 2010 as the International Year of Biodiversity.

Although initial celebrations began in November under the slogan "Biodiversity is life, biodiversity is our life," the official launch will take place in Berlin on 11 January. This will be followed on 21 and 22 January by the first major event of the Year, a high-profile meeting at the Paris headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([UNESCO](#)), which is expected to bring together heads of state, royalty and their representatives.

A host of other events – meetings, symposia, multi-media exhibitions – will follow throughout the year in venues around world, from Trondheim, Norway, to Delhi, India, from Doha, Qatar, to Cartagena, Colombia, and from Shanghai, China, to Nairobi, Kenya, culminating in a high-level meeting at UN Headquarters in New York at the start of the General Assembly's 65th annual General Debate in September and an official closing in Kanazawa, Japan, in December.

"A wide variety of environmental goods and services that we take for granted are under threat, with profound and damaging consequences for ecosystems, economies and livelihoods," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#) in November at the start of the pre-celebrations.

"In this International Year, we must counter the perception that people are disconnected from our natural environment. We must increase understanding of the implications of losing biodiversity. In 2010, I call on every country and each citizen of our planet to engage in a global alliance to protect life on Earth."

The Montreal-based CBD Secretariat likewise [stresses](#) the urgency in raising public awareness of the importance of biodiversity and the consequences of its loss.

"The goal for raising awareness of these issues is to generate public pressure for action by decision makers, and to create the conditions for governments, individuals and other important sectors, to be encouraged to implement the Convention and to engage with other international and national institutions, towards achieving the goals of the Convention."

The Convention covers all ecosystems, species, and genetic resources, linking traditional conservation efforts to the economic goal of using biological resources sustainably, setting principles for the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits from the use of genetic resources, notably for commercial use and covering the rapidly expanding field of biotechnology, and addressing technology development and transfer, benefit-sharing and biosafety.

While recognizing that ecosystems, species and genes must be used for the benefit of humans, the Convention stipulates that this must be done in a way and at a rate that does not lead to the long-term decline of diversity.

It offers decision-makers guidance based on the precautionary principle that where there is a threat of significant reduction or loss of biological diversity, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing measures to avoid or minimize such a threat. It acknowledges that substantial investment is required to conserve diversity, but argues that conservation will bring significant environmental, economic and social benefits in return.

Looking at the economic costs of action or inaction, a recent UN-backed Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity ([TEEB](#)) study estimated loss of natural capital due to deforestation and degradation at between \$2 trillion and \$4.5 trillion every year – "a staggering economic cost of taking nature for granted.

"It is estimated that for an annual investment of \$45 billion into protected areas alone, we could secure the delivery of ecosystem services worth some \$5 trillion a year," it said. "When compared to current financial losses on the markets, this is not a big price to pay. Sound ecosystem and biodiversity management, and the inclusion of Natural Capital in governmental and business accounting can start to redress inaction and reduce the cost of future losses."

UN report calls on policymakers to boost investment in ecosystems for higher profits



Green Economy

13 November 2009 – Governments that invest in natural resources and ecosystems are likely to yield stronger economic growth and higher rates of return, according to a new United Nations Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)) report released today.

The new [report](#) urges policymakers to scale up investments in the management and restoration of ecosystems ahead of next month's UN climate change conference in Copenhagen where Governments are expected to approve funding for developing countries to maintain forests.

The UNEP-backed study noted that some countries have begun to make the link and are glimpsing benefits in terms of jobs, livelihoods and economic returns that outstrip those wedded to last century's economic models.

"The economic invisibility of ecosystems and biodiversity is increased by our dominant economic model, which is consumption-led, production-driven, and GDP-measured," Pavan Sukhdev, who led the study, [told](#) reporters in Brussels.

"This model is in need of significant reform," stressed Mr. Sukhdev. "The multiple crises we are experiencing – fuel, food, finance, and the economy – serve as reminders of the need for change."

Underscoring government's role in providing incentives to shift away economies from short-term opportunism, he said that the right policies "can help us move toward a resource-efficient economy."

The study noted that investment in the protection of Guatemala's Maya Biosphere Reserve generates an annual income of almost \$50 million a year and created some 7,000 jobs boosting local family earnings. Part of the Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB) project, the report also called for more sophisticated cost-benefit analysis before policy decisions are made, citing a study on the conversion of mangroves into shrimp farms in southern Thailand.

Subsidized commercial shrimp farms can generate returns of around \$1,220 per hectare by clearing mangrove forests, but the losses to local communities linked with wood and non-wood forest products, fisheries and coastal protection services came to over \$12,000 a hectare. The profit to the commercial operators also failed to take into account the costs of rehabilitating the abandoned sites after five years of exploitation which was estimated at over \$9,000 a hectare.

Cross Cutting Themes / Other Issues

New UN-managed fund announces over \$9 million in grants to empower women



11 January 2010 – A new fund managed by the United Nations Development Fund for Women ([UNIFEM](#)) today announced over \$9 million in grants to support initiatives in 26 countries to empower women, ranging from boosting their political participation in Bosnia and Herzegovina to assisting those denied inheritance and property rights in Afghanistan.

The Fund for Gender Equality is a \$68 million multilateral initiative, currently funded by the Governments of Spain and Norway, designed to promote innovative programmes focusing on women's economic and political empowerment at local and national levels.

"This new Fund has tremendous potential to bring about concrete and sustainable changes in women's lives. Very impressive efforts to advance women's political and economic empowerment are underway in every corner of the world," said UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi.

"Yet this work is critically under-funded. It is important that the Fund supports both governments and civil society organizations – and very significantly, partnerships between them as well."

The activities of the 27 initiatives which will benefit from the initial grants range from supporting women in the informal sector in Cameroon, Egypt and the Philippines to increasing greater political participation by women in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Dominican Republic, Uganda, Morocco and in the Pacific Islands. Initiatives also focus on indigenous women and those in high-risk groups, such as women affected by HIV and AIDS, as well as on assistance to women farmers facing food insecurity and climate change and those who are systematically denied inheritance and property rights such as women in Afghanistan.

The new grants fall into the Fund's Catalytic Grant category – one of two types of high-impact grants aimed to accelerate efforts of dozens of initiatives on the ground. The second category of Implementation Grants will be announced in June and will focus on the implementation of already-ratified national laws or policies.

UN report paints grim picture of conditions of world's indigenous peoples



Indigenous boomerangs in the rain forest of Australia

14 January 2010 – The world's 370 million indigenous peoples suffer from disproportionately, often exponentially, higher rates of poverty, health problems, crime and human rights abuses, the first ever United Nations study on the issue reported today, stressing that self-determination and land rights are vital for their survival.

Startling figures contained in The State of the World's Indigenous Peoples include:

- In the United States, a Native American is 600 times more likely to contract tuberculosis and 62 per cent more likely to commit suicide than the general population.
- In Australia, an indigenous child can expect to die 20 years earlier than his non-native compatriot. The life expectancy gap is also 20 years in Nepal, while in Guatemala it is 13 years and in New Zealand it is 11.
- In parts of Ecuador, indigenous people have 30 times greater risk of throat cancer than the national average.
- Worldwide, more than 50 per cent of indigenous adults suffer from Type 2 diabetes – a number predicted to rise.

"Every day, indigenous communities all over the world face issues of violence and brutality, continuing assimilation policies, dispossession of land, marginalization, forced removal or relocation, denial of land rights, impacts of large-scale development, abuses by military forces and a host of other abuses," the report's authors said in a news release.

Although indigenous peoples make up only 5 per cent of the global population, they constitute around one third of the world's 900 million extremely poor rural people. In both developed and developing countries, poor nutrition, limited access to care, lack of resources crucial to maintaining health and well-being and contamination of natural resources are all contributing factors to the terrible state of indigenous health worldwide.

At the report's launch at UN Headquarters in New York, UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues Chairperson Vicki Tauli-Corpuz said its value would be far-reaching because it comprises for the first time very clearly aggregated data.

"We believe this is going to be crucial for Governments and for the UN to address more seriously and comprehensively the issues of indigenous people," she told a news briefing. "It's very daring and bold in a sense because it does identify countries and the situation of indigenous peoples in various countries both in the developed world as well as in the developing world."

Indigenous peoples experience disproportionately high levels of maternal and infant mortality, malnutrition, cardiovascular illnesses, HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases such as malaria and tuberculosis (TB), while suicide rates, particularly among youth, are considerably higher in many countries, for example up to 11 times the national average for the Inuit in Canada. The Inuit TB rate is over 150 times higher.

The study repeatedly identifies displacement from lands, territories and resources as one of the most significant threats for indigenous peoples, citing many examples, including in Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, Hawaii, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Colombia.

"When indigenous peoples have reacted and tried to assert their rights, they have suffered physical abuse, imprisonment, torture and even death," it says, stressing that their rights to their own lands and territories must be respected while they need to develop their own definitions and indicators of poverty and well-being.

"Indigenous peoples suffer from the consequences of historic injustice, including colonization, dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, oppression and discrimination, as well as lack of control over their own ways of life. Their right to development has been largely denied by colonial and modern States in the pursuit of economic growth," it adds, warning that the importance of land and territories to indigenous cultural identity cannot be stressed enough.

Of the world's 6,000 to 7,000 languages, a great majority are spoken by indigenous peoples, and many, if not most, are in danger of becoming extinct, with some 90 per cent possibly doomed within the next 100 years. About 97 per cent of the world's population currently speaks 4 per cent of its languages, while only 3 per cent speaks 96 per cent of them.

Indigenous peoples, who are the stewards of some of the most biologically diverse areas, accumulating an immeasurable amount of traditional knowledge about their ecosystems, also face the dual and somewhat contradictory threats of discrimination and commodification.

They face racism and discrimination that sees them as inferior, yet they are increasingly recognized for their unique relationship with their environment, their traditional knowledge and their spirituality, leading to external efforts to profit from their culture which are frequently out of their control, providing them no benefits, and often a great deal of harm.

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