

Issue #8, September 2009

VOICES

INTERNAL

**the
climate
change
issue**



VOICES INTERNAL

ARTICLES

OPINION

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Editorial

Climate change is undeniably the defining issue of our time. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon emphasised that climate change is “simply the greatest collective challenge we face as a human family” in a speech given in Seoul, Korea, in August 2009. The Secretary-General has made climate change his top priority and dedicated himself to galvanising support for reaching a post-Kyoto climate agreement in Copenhagen in December 2009. The decisions



Viivi Erkkilä, intern at the Nordic Desk at UNRIC in Brussels

made in Copenhagen will have significant effects on energy production, industry, traffic and housing, thus shaping the way for a more sustainable future.

Climate change is, therefore, not only an issue on the agendas of world leaders, it affects all of us. This concern for

the future of our planet is reflected in the number and wide range of contributions to the eight issue of Internal Voices. UN interns around the world want to make their voices heard in the climate change discussion pointing out urgent threats, as well as suggesting possible solutions to the crisis. Many of the contributors are especially concerned about the impact of climate change on the livelihood of people in developing countries. Suggested ways to manage the crisis include new forms of energy efficiency on the governmental level and subsidies for developing countries to help them switch to renewable technologies.

In compiling this issue, I have, however, come to realise that even though some people seem to be overwhelmed by the amount of information on climate change, many are still ignorant of the urgency of the situation. Why should we change our behaviour when others are continuing as if nothing is happening? Changing old consumption patterns and attitudes is not easy, but it is necessary in order to preserve our planet for future generations.

Awareness-raising is a key component in facilitating a global change in attitude and behaviour, and this is something which we all can participate in. Turning the lights off when leaving the room or riding a bike to work are simple choices that take little effort, but if masses of people decide to make these changes, they will have an immense impact on a global level.

I hope the eight issue of Internal Voices will be a wake-up call for those still in doubt about the real impact of climate change on our lives. Everyone’s support and efforts are needed to stop the current course of climate change. There is no time to waste: let’s help world governments to ‘Seal the Deal’ in Copenhagen by showing our support for a new global and effective climate agreement. ■

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<http://internal-voices.blogspot.com>

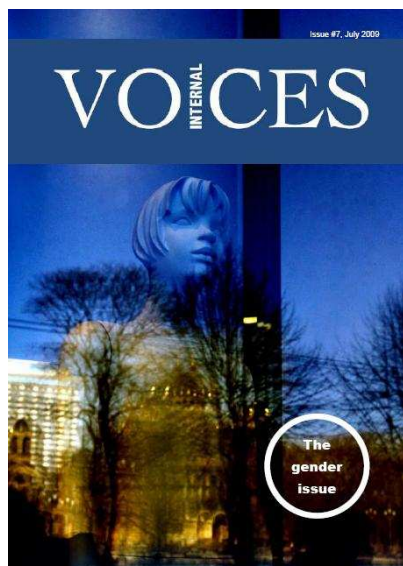
Say it to us! We welcome your comments on issues or topics from this issue - or feel free to tell us what you think of Internal Voices.

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United Nations
Regional Information Centre
for Western Europe

Disclaimer: This publication is created by interns from UN agencies. The views and opinions presented in this publication are those of the authors, and do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.

Letters - from the gender issue, #7, July 2009



Dear Internal Voices,

It is impressive how your magazine is becoming the "voice" of the United Nations interns of the world. For someone who works closely with the interns, I can't help admiring the potential that lies in these young talents. In addition to being fully qualified and skilled, interns bring with them a high level of motivation and dedication to the United Nations' cause. It is no secret that this added value brought by the interns is a big support to the United Nations when it comes to delivering peace, security and well-being to the world. Internal Voices is simply a reflection of how important the interns' participation is.

It is with contentment that I always distribute each volume of your magazine to the interns working with the UN Secretariat in New York.

I'm also confident that you will soon reach out to every single intern in the UN system. My wish is to have more staff members reading your articles, because each publication covers at least one challenge encountered by the UN. I cannot wait to read more about how interns are seeing Copenhagen 2009.

*Boris Z. Lissassi
Internship Programme Co-ordinator,
United Nations Headquarters,
New York*

Dear Internal Voices,

First of all, let me congratulate you on putting together the edition on gender. I really like the layout - easy to access, informative and catchy!

As the editorial states, there are gender issues present in all our work and we need to be aware and sensitive to these issues, and that gender issues do not end with the working day. In addition, we also need to know, understand and relate to the meaning of "gender". Many times it has been said to me

that gender is about "women's issues". But, thirty years of experience has taught me to have evidence ready at hand to clarify the meaning of gender and to address this issue keeping in mind the sensitivities related to work on gender equality.

UNDP has produced a handbook on [Gender Mainstreaming in Practice](#). It is a tool kit for practitioners and I hope your readers will find it useful in their day to day work. Keep up the good work!

*Roohi Metcalfe
Gender and Governance
Specialist, UNESCAP Bangkok*

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I.V. is a 100% UN interns' magazine giving all UN interns the opportunity to network, express opinions and share knowledge, points of view and experiences. Everything from articles to layout and editing is done by UN interns. If you want to get involved, the intern team at UNRIC in Brussels would love to hear from you!

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Effects of climate change on women



Simona Donini,
intern at the Italy, San
Marino, Malta and the Holy
See Desk at UNRIC in

There is an array of literature on gender and the environment, gender and water, gender and conflicts, and gender and disasters, but there is surprisingly little research on gender and climate change. Climate change will affect everyone. Will women be hit the hardest by its consequences? Why is it important to consider the gender aspects of climate change?

The impacts of climate change on women have not been in the mainstream focus of the key international agreements on climate change. In fact, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change

([UNFCCC](#)) and the Kyoto protocol, the two most important treaties addressing the global efforts to combat climate change, do not even mention neither the word 'gender', nor the word 'women' (Margaret Skutsch, 2002). In addition, all key decision-making institutions related to climate change have a male-dominated hierarchical structure (Aguilar, 2007).

Nevertheless, during the UN Climate Change Convention in Bali in December 2007, a world wide coalition of women presented their position papers on how gender issues relate to climate change. One of the key issues [in the papers](#) is that "women are the most affected by climate change, but they are also key catalysts for positive change. Their knowledge and experience is fundamental for a successful mitigation of climate change, as well as for climate change adaptation."

In developing countries women in rural areas are typically expected to take care of families' subsistence; they have the major responsibility for food security, household water supply, energy for cooking and heating. Denton (2000),

for instance, argues that women are more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change, because they are, in general, poorer and more dependent on natural resources threatened by climate change both in agriculture and fisheries. Jyoti Parikh (2003) suggests that for women, climate change could mean extra hardship in their activities, such as farming, fishing and water collection.

How does climate change affect women?

Food Security. Despite unequal access to land, information and technologies women are responsible for 60-80% of the food produced in developing countries (FAO, 1997). Climate change will reduce crop yields and food production, and therefore, it will compromise women's ability to preserve food security within the household. (FAO, 1997)

Water supply. Access to water will be the biggest threat to livelihoods in developing countries. Women are often the collectors and managers of water supplies in the household, as well as farmers of

“Women were adapting to environmental change long before scientists gave it a name”

– *Winnie Byanyima, Director of UNDP Gender Team*



UNDP/Benoit Marquet

irrigated and rain-fed crops (FAO, 1997). Nevertheless, their access to water is often restricted, because of preferential treatment to irrigation of mono-crops, dominated by male farmers rather than the diversified cropping pattern of women farmers. Furthermore, in areas affected by desertification, the task of water collection will become harder and more time-consuming as women will need to travel greater distances (Broody, Esplen, 2008).

Health. Climate change will exacerbate the transmission of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, hepatitis and trachoma. As the collectors of water, women come into contact with poor quality water, which makes them more vulnerable to water-borne diseases than men. Climate change will also lead to higher rates of malnutrition due to food shortage, and women are likely to be the first to go hungry. As primary caregivers in many families, they may see their responsibilities increase. Further, in the developing world, women frequently have less access to medical care than men.

Natural disasters. Climate change will bring an increase in floods. Indeed women are more vulnerable than men during natural disasters and often less informed. For instance during the 1991 cyclone in Bangladesh, warning information was

only communicated to men and not the rest of the family, consequently women made up 90% of the deaths during the cyclone (Aguilar, 2004). As women have to spend more time maintaining their houses after flooding their work load will increase. It is also known that violence against women dramatically rises after a natural disaster (Duncan, 2007).

... women are more vulnerable than men to the effects of climate change, because they are, in general, poorer and more dependent on natural resources threatened by climate change.

Furthermore, women commonly have unequal access to information and resources; they are under-represented in decision-making, which makes them even more vulnerable. Nonetheless, women have a strong body of knowledge and expertise that can be used in climate change mitigation, disaster reduction and adaptation strategies to build community resilience. A recent participatory project from [Action Aid](#) and the Institute for Development Studies ([IDS](#)) at the University of

Sussex has shown that women in rural communities in the Ganga river basin are adapting their practice to secure their livelihood in the face of changes in flood's duration and frequency (Broody, Esplen, 2008). Their knowledge and experience should be used to inform adaptation programs.

There are important gender perspectives in the issue of climate change and in order to successfully reduce its impact, women need to be considered: the way women use their environment, in comparison to men, and the way women are affected by environmental change are important factors in a successful climate change adaptation program. Also, it is important to mainstream gender in the institutions that deal with these issues. Failing to include women in climate change mitigation and adaptation will not only exacerbate gender inequalities but also undermine the effectiveness of climate change response. It is time to recommend that gender issues are expressly mentioned in the next climate change treaty. ■

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Acting on energy efficiency

Technology meets political will

“Even as we are changing the ways we are producing energy, we are also changing the ways we use energy. In fact, one of the fastest, easiest, and cheapest ways to make our economy stronger and cleaner is to make our economy more energy efficient.”

- U.S. President Barack Obama and Energy Secretary Steven Chu, 29 June 2009

Energy is lost during the painful process of using steam to work turbines, the antiquated means of energy storage, the faulty distribution through old and unintelligent electricity grids, and finally, during the inefficient use of home appliances that often continue using electricity even when switched off. It is this chain of energy loss, which creates a multiplier effect that artificially inflates our growing energy demand. Depending on the country, due to all these losses, one kWh saved by a consumer translates into two or more kWh saved at the point of production – additional energy supporting a country’s energy security.

While political resistance to seemingly rational arguments like these used to be popular in times of excess and cheap energy supply, it was only recently that governments around the globe started committing themselves to a demand-side approach on energy security. An inflation of catastrophes around the world, increased awareness of climate change, depleting oil resources, and the first agreements on climate change targets have now led most countries to an implementation stage: making energy efficiency compulsory is one of the cheapest ways to save costly energy. It is only in the 21st century that a true acceptance of this concept has taken place, and first results from forerunner countries like Sweden and the U.S. have encouraged other



Olivia O.C. Gippner,
intern at UNESCAP in
Bangkok



governments to follow suit: there is a proliferation of action plans, energy efficiency agencies, and energy labelling strategies created on a daily basis. These mainly focus on building codes and energy efficiency labelling for green buildings and appliances, such as the Energy Star and LEED.

Other plans place emphasis on fiscal stimuli that help overcome the initial financial barriers imposed by the often costly installation of energy-efficient technology. Through subsidies

and taxation, as well as awareness-raising, investors and consumers are encouraged to consider more energy-efficient alternatives.

Studies in the European Union have demonstrated that the highest levels of efficiency come from the use of market-based policy tools such as a Tradable White Certificate Scheme, which has already been implemented in the UK, France and Italy. Under this scheme energy suppliers are obliged to hold a number of white certificates, which correspond to energy savings achieved through energy-efficient installations. By opening the possibility to trade these certificates, investments in energy efficiency are more likely to take place in locations where improvements can be achieved most cost-effectively.

Making energy efficiency compulsory is one of the cheapest ways to save costly energy. It is only in the 21st century that a true acceptance of this has taken place.

Another promising trend lies in Energy Performance Contracting, in which energy service companies are paid through future energy savings incurred by a project. The main problems remaining for this policy

center on how to measure, monitor, and evaluate energy savings in order to achieve globally comparative data. Within the EU, the Commission is now working on a methodological “toolkit” to facilitate common procedures.

While traditional actors like the European Union and the United States have been among the first to implement energy efficiency measures on a larger scale, there is yet a lack of understanding of the strong link between energy efficiency and energy security. It is China that actually plans to go the furthest: The eco-city of Dongtan near Shanghai, which has been developing since 2005, was planned not only to provide all of its energy supply through renewable energy, including the city’s recycled waste, but also intelligent hydrogen-fuelled public transport. Although, the project has been stalled in its initial phase, a number of similar cities are buying into the concept of offering energy efficient buildings and “a green lifestyle experience”, like in the planned eco-city Dalian Tiandi. With new energy efficiency projects under construction, a coal-dependent China can set an important example and has considerable leverage in strengthening this long-overdue global change in direction: the political will that carries through from the highest policy level to final implementation, however, remains the most vital ingredient. ■

tck
tck
tck

time for climate action

7 dec 09, copenhagen

Further reading

[Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential China-US Energy Efficiency Alliance](#)

P. Ford, “[The World’s First Carbon Positive City Will Be...in China?](#)”, 16.8.2009.

[ENERGY STAR](#)

[EPC Watch - watching the worlds of energy performance contracting](#)

[COM 2002/91/EC: Directive on the Energy Performance of Buildings](#)

[Euro WhiteCert Project](#)

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U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC), LEED, “[Dongtan - the world’s first eco-city](#)”, 21.7.2006

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Officially launched on the 27th of August – 100 days before Copenhagen – the [TckTckTck](#) campaign aims to show that the world is ready for bold climate action towards a [fair, ambitious, and binding climate deal](#). [TckTckTck](#) is a global alliance of civil society organisations, trade unions, faith groups and individuals working to mobilise the civil society in support of an agreement on climate change in Copenhagen in December 2009.

[Join the campaign](#) today and show world leaders that we are ready for a global climate agreement!

Feed-in tariffs for the developing world



Samantha DeMartino,
intern at UN DESA Division
for Sustainable Development in
Washington, D.C.



Feed-in tariffs (FIT) have been a successful tool in the promotion of renewable energy sources (RES) for many years. According to Bechberger and Reiche (2004), 18 out of the 25 countries in the European Union (EU) that use financial incentives to subsidise and support the development and installation of RES employ a FIT system of some form. A FIT most importantly guarantees the owner of a RES a particular price over a set period of time for the electric energy produced, thereby helping the infant technology to be economically competitive with conventional fossil fuels.

As FITs have been successfully tested in a large number of developed countries, especially Germany, the benefits are known and widely documented. According to Ragwitz and Huber (2004), these include, but are not limited to: an increase in the market penetration of RES, protection of the climate and environment through sustainable development, minimization of the risk premium required by investors due to a high level of price security in the system, and the creation of jobs with

a low cost to society. Therefore, the question of feasibility in applying such tariffs to the developing world merits attention.

The rationale for the application of FITs to the energy markets in developing countries rests on several assumptions. First and foremost access to energy and the amount of energy consumed per capita are strongly linked to the human development index (HDI). This is partly due to the positive effects that energy access has on a variety of welfare indicators such as education, income and health. Furthermore, the FITs would strongly promote the accelerated deployment of clean energy sources, making the global climate a major beneficiary of such a system. It could, therefore, help to strike the delicate balance between promoting economic development in the developing world, while mitigating the detrimental effects that growth, and the increased energy consumption that invariably results from it, has on the environment.

With the help of my supervisor, David LeBlanc of the UN DESA Division for Sustainable

Development, I have calculated a simple model of a FIT to derive the total cost and critically examine the various steps needed to arrive at a global FIT for the developing world, via country-by-country estimates, provided there is a global fund made available by the developed countries.

As FITs have been successfully tested in a large number of developed countries, the benefits are known and widely documented.

The purpose of this model is to assess the order of magnitude of a subsidy which assists developing countries operating under 10 kWh per day of electrical access to have access to 10kWh per day by 2025 through investment in renewable energy technology. The tariff will be created via a digression system whereby the nominal fee at which electricity consumers buy renewable energy technology from suppliers will decrease incrementally over 16 years (until 2025) according to the

“experience curves” of the renewable energy technology. Each subsidy is for renewable energy projects and will be supplied for the twenty-year life span of the technology, thereby extending final payments until 2045. Renewal of obsolete facilities is not included in this model, and should be considered as additional needed investments.

Key issues with the model are the large price tag and implementation process. Which developed countries should provide funds for FITs in developing countries, and what percentages should they contribute? Furthermore, which countries should the global fund subsidise? We have suggested that the FITs be calibrated for those developing countries consuming less than 10 kWh of electricity per day per capita, but should the fund subsidize the entire population? The target populations for this model are countries with consumption under 10 kWh of energy per day, the very populations that may not even be able to finance the baseline for conventional technology. Hence, additional funding would be necessary. Nevertheless, we hope this model instigates a dialogue among developed countries seeking ways to assist developing countries to achieve emission reductions while still developing at high rates. ■

For the full report, including methodology and results, please contact Samantha DeMartino at sademartino@gmail.com.

What is a ‘Feed-in Tariff’?

A Feed-in Tariff (FIT) is an incentive structure to encourage the adoption of renewable energy through government legislation. The regional or national electricity utilities are obligated to buy renewable electricity (electricity generated from renewable sources, such as solar photovoltaics, wind power, biomass, hydropower and geothermal power) at above-market rates set by the government. (Source: [Wikipedia](#))

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Earth Overshoot Day

Jennyfer Leduc and Claire Saget,

interns at the French Desk at UNRIC in Brussels



What is Earth Overshoot Day?

No shortage of groceries in supermarkets, no unusual power or water cuts, no changes in the daily lives of human beings on this particular day and yet, according to the Canadian Global Footprint Network Association, the “budget” of nature will soon come to an ecological equivalent of deficit spending. Despite the fact that it can produce so many resources and absorb so much waste each year, nature cannot keep up with our ever-increasing demand for services. Since the 1980s, humanity has been in ecological overshoot, putting carbon into the air faster than it can be reabsorbed, cutting trees faster than they can regrow, and catching fish faster than they can reproduce; all in all, we use resources faster than they can be regenerated.

How is Earth Overshoot Day calculated?

$[World\ biocapacity / World\ ecological\ footprint] \times 365 =$
Ecological Debt Day

Earth Overshoot Day shows the day on which our total ecological footprint is equal to the biocapacity that nature can regenerate in one year. For the rest of the year, we are accumulating debt by depleting our natural capital and letting waste accumulate. This year, we will reach Earth Overshoot Day 2009 in early September.

You can find [more information](#) at footprintnetwork.org, where you can also [calculate your ecological footprint](#).

Climate change as a humanitarian crisis



AliReza Shams Lahijani,
volunteer at UNIC in Tehran

Today, we hear about one phenomenon more than any other: climate change. The planet's temperature is rising and as the climate changes, an increase in dramatic weather conditions and disasters, not just storms and droughts, will have devastating effects on people's lives.

Combating climate change disasters must be a top priority along with cutting our emissions. The 2004 tsunami is a prime example of a lack of disaster preparation, but there have been other incidents too. For example, a haze from the Arabian Desert recently polluted Iranian cities, forcing the government to close them down due to concerns for people's health. People were not sure what to do, even though the Arabian haze is a perennial occurrence in Iran. However, this year the dust storms were exceptionally

strong and widespread. Greater vulnerability, lack of education and inadequate disaster alert systems thus intensify climate change related threats.

Climate change disasters will undoubtedly result in more humanitarian crises. More people will be pushed into poverty as living costs increase and livelihoods dependent on the environment will become threatened due to the depletion of scarce resources. Furthermore, water and food shortages may cause or exacerbate tensions between communities. These have the potential to spill over into violent conflicts or lead to tensions between neighbouring areas. National security may also be endangered because many countries are dependent on foreign natural resources and energy. With this in mind, the UN Security Council held its [first ever session](#) on the impact of climate change on security in April 2007. The session also addressed doubts raised by certain delegates over whether the Council was the proper forum to discuss the issue.

Flooding, rising sea levels and land degradation can be forceful drivers of migration. We must be prepared for a new type of migrant or refugee, the so-called 'climate change migrant.' Craig Johnstone, the U.N.

Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, [warned](#) in December 2008 that six million people each year could be uprooted, about half of them, because of weather related disasters, such as floods and storms. Women and children are most vulnerable in migration and the most likely to be harmed by climate change. Furthermore, the Geneva-based [Global Humanitarian Forum's report](#) claims that the annual death toll caused by climate change is expected to rise to half a million by 2030.

Climate change disasters will undoubtedly result in more humanitarian crises.

Tackling climate change requires a global and comprehensive response. Reducing greenhouse gases, adapting to changing weather patterns, raising awareness, educating the public and getting prepared for natural disasters are all great challenges that must be addressed on the international level. However, common threats can also create new alliances. Climate change affects all the people of the world; tackling this threat together could be the basis for creating new forms of cooperation. ■

Water that threatens life



Aksel Sundström,
intern at UNESCAP in
Bangkok

Climate change will have severe consequences for people's livelihoods in south-western Bangladesh, where the already acute water crisis will certainly worsen and alter lives dramatically.



Rice paddies in the Khulna region affected by saline water. As the Bay of Bengal slowly rises, the possibilities of farming in southern Bangladesh will be increasingly disturbed, creating a need for adaptation and search for alternative livelihoods.

The filthy lukewarm water reaches up to your knees. The toilet is under the surface and the rice fields have been submerged for the last two years. Still, Zozna Mondul's biggest problem is the lack of water: fresh drinking water.

"I have to spend four or five hours a day carrying water from the nearest functioning well," she sighs.

Zozna and her family live in Lokha Danga, a village in south-western Bangladesh, where the region's water crisis is a part of everyday life. The barriers that were supposed to protect the area from rising water levels have the opposite effect when it rains; they keep the water within its boundaries, permanently flooding the village. Zozna, her husband and their two daughters are now forced to live under a tarpaulin on a muddy road, the only place in the village not yet submerged.

"We have not had any crops for the past two years. If we do not

get any the next year we are not sure what to eat or where to live," says Zozna quietly.

She continues to say how nothing functions well in the village, schools are closed and the men have to migrate in search of work.

"Water affects our entire life!"

The situation in this village will be an increasingly common phenomenon in Bangladesh in the



The waiting line by the only functioning well in Lokha Danga is long and frustration is visible among the women, most of whom have to spend around four or five hours per day in search for fresh water for. This situation will worsen with the impact of climate change.

coming years. This low-lying coastal country with more than 150 million inhabitants is among the ten nations that will be hit the hardest by climate change.

"Water affects our entire life!"

Mozaharul Alam from the Bangladesh Centre for Advanced Studies explains to me that the biggest challenges for Bangladesh will be the rising sea levels, heavier storms and longer monsoons, which together will worsen the existing water crisis:

"This will lead to health problems and affect livelihoods. Sure, people will adapt to these changes, but every monsoon is a reminder that the poor are already vulnerable. We will witness massive migration from this region in the near future," he says.

Farmers can adapt to changing conditions in innovative ways by building floating vegetable gardens, planting saline-tolerant rice,

or improving their house constructions, but the scarce fresh water supply in the southern part of Bangladesh is still an acute problem. However, it is not yet a major political question in national politics.

Despite promises from politicians and international aid agencies frustration is evident among villagers in need of a quicker response. Shahidul Islam, an activist from UTTARAN, an NGO working for community awareness among the poor, points out that the issue of responsibility should not be forgotten.

“It is we, the people in the south, who bear the cost of emissions made in other countries. We will adapt and find ways, but we need financial support. It is a great injustice that we have not yet seen a swift response from these polluters to our acute needs.” ■



Akeel Sunuátrám

Some families are already moving from the flooded village of Lokha Danga. As conditions worsen in southern Bangladesh huge numbers of people will migrate in search of new livelihoods. Coping with these environmental refugees will be one of the major challenges for the region's urban centers.



UN Photo/Evan Schneider

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon signs and stamps a “Seal the Deal!” banner in New York on 14 May 2009, which will be presented to the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen this December. Conducted by UN agencies and bodies, the Seal the Deal! campaign is calling on governments to conclude a fair, balanced and effective agreement on climate change in Copenhagen.

The winds of climate change in India



Kamayani Solanki,
intern at APCTT in Delhi

Climate change is upon us – it is real and it is happening. In countries like India, where the majority depend on rain-fed farming, climate change challenges to agriculture seriously threaten people's livelihoods.

It is widely recognised that the impact of climate change will not be uniform across the world. According to Professor M.S. Swaminathan, chairman of the M.S Swaminathan Research Foundation ([MSSRF](#)) in Chennai India, South Asia

is especially susceptible to the negative consequences of climate change compared to other regions, due to the sheer number of vulnerable people. The Indian Meteorological Department ([IMD](#)) has also found an upward trend in average temperatures, a downward trend in humidity, and a decrease not only in annual rainfall, but also in the number of days of precipitation per year.

Climate change affecting monsoon in India

The monsoon is essential for maintaining farming conditions in India. It is a seasonal prevailing wind that lasts for several months, caused by temperature differences between the land and the sea. However, changes in the monsoon patterns have led to more scattered rainfall, droughts, floods, heat waves, storms and out-of-season flowering of certain plants. Whether or not these occurrences and incidents can be exclusively attributed to climate change, it is evident that our capacity to address the challenges caused by changes in rainfall patterns

is currently limited.

At present, water emergencies threaten several parts of India, with about [246 districts](#) suffering from drought or drought-like conditions. Usually the monsoon starts in early June, but this year the rainy season began in late August in some parts of the country. This limits opportunities for sowing crops, as rainfall distribution is essential for India's agriculture. Losses caused by uneven rainfall can be seen especially in areas where the soil has a limited water holding capacity. Crop failures further threaten food and income security in these drought stricken areas. It is important to note that [over 70 per cent](#) of the Indian population lives in rural areas, where agriculture is the primary source of income. Crop failures would therefore have a serious adverse effect on the country's GDP.

Initiatives to address climate change in India

The G8 Summit in Italy this July, which India attended, reached a decision to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 40

per cent by 2020, in effect limiting the rise of temperature to two degrees Celsius. The magnitude of the problem, however, requires more than just a reactive response to change. Adaptation to climate change refers to a proactive approach - getting prepared for what might be ahead of us and attempting to minimise the negative consequences of climate change.

The Government of India has demonstrated its willingness to address the threat of climate change by setting up a National Disaster Management Centre ([NDM India](#)) under the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The centre was created to deal with disasters caused by climate change, which are already occurring in places like Maharashtra, Orissa and Bihar.

Nevertheless, despite significant advances in technology, Indian agriculture continues to be rain-dependent and fluctuations in agricultural production continue to be driven by variations in the spread and

intensity of the monsoon, which results in drought-like situations.

... changes in the monsoon patterns have lead to more scattered rainfall, droughts, floods, heat waves and storms.

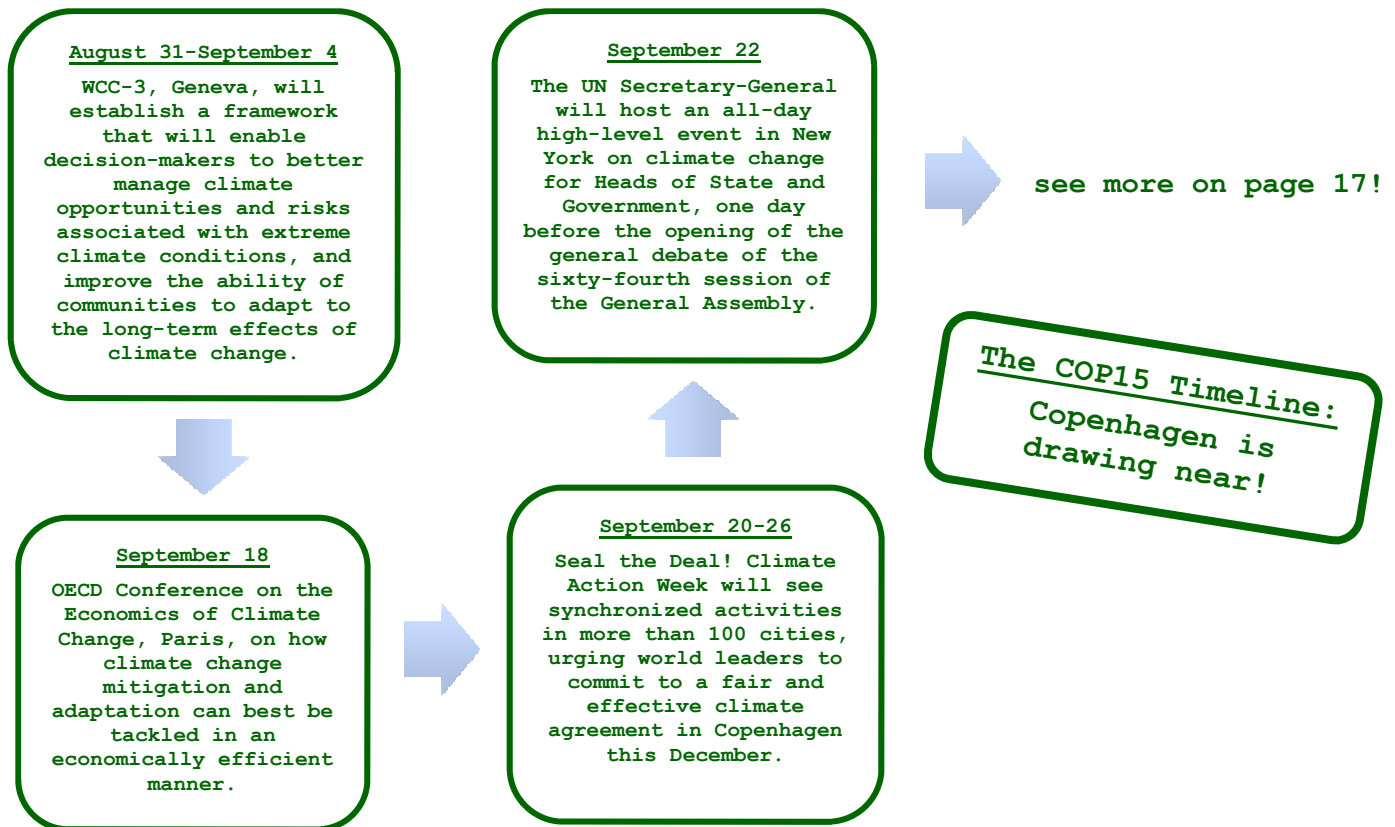
To meet the environmental challenges, the Government of India has strengthened and re-engineered the existing institutional framework at both national and state level. The Ministry of Environment and Forest has taken [many initiatives](#) regarding climate change. For example, there will be a global conference that will help to define a roadmap for enabling technology development and transfer to developing countries to meet their needs in climate change adaptation in support of the UNFCCC process.

At the same time the United Nations Development Programme ([UNDP](#)) is initiating several projects

to counter climate change. In India, UNDP's climate change work falls into four main areas: adaptation, information, carbon finance and supporting the MDGs.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Government of India, with support of the UNDP in India has been working in the region with community members and other stakeholders to evolve lasting solutions for conserving the biosphere.

In my opinion, the challenges posed by climate change require strategic interventions and creative solutions. The initiatives taken by the government of India are examples of positive steps that have been taken to tackle climate change. However, a lot still has to be done to fully address the threats climate change presents to Indian agriculture and the livelihoods of the people. We must fight this battle together: "It is better to light a candle than to curse the darkness". ■



Indian farmers fall victim to climate change



Prabhat Barnwal,
intern at UNESCAP in
Bangkok

In India, poor and resource-constrained farmers are facing severe economic problems because of frequent crop failures caused by erratic rainfall and global warming. Many such farmers get caught in the vicious debt trap and some of them end up committing suicide.

John F. Kennedy once said, “The farmer is the only man in our economy who buys everything at retail, sells everything at wholesale, and pays the freight both ways.” Indeed, the farmer pays both ways, but unfortunately the story is not limited to freight, it goes much further than that.

While world leaders are getting ready to seal the deal on a new climate treaty in Copenhagen in December, there are some on this planet for whom climate change poses a direct threat to their very survival. Among those worst affected are poor Indian farmers, with only small pieces of land, but dozens of family members to feed. They are laden with loans, and lack the basic modern agricultural infrastructure. They are already living on the edge, nearing collapse. Climate change just worsens the situation.

As a result, states vulnerable to climate change are witnessing a high and increasing number of suicides among farmers. Across India, more than 16,000 farmers killed themselves in 2007 because of crop failure and the resulting downward spiral of debt.¹ Government statistics show that one Indian farmer committed suicide every 32 minutes from 1997 to 2005, and this rate has increased to one suicide every 30 minutes since 2000.²

Not surprisingly, the most climate change vulnerable regions in India are the ones witnessing the highest suicide rates. Maharashtra tops the list with 4,298 incidents of farmer-suicides, while Andhra

Pradesh, another state high up the list, had 1,797 incidents in 2007.³ A recent World Bank study on South Asia found that both these states are among the most vulnerable to the negative consequences of climate change.⁴

There is increasing evidence of the direct impact of climate change on agriculture at farm level. Although studies have estimated agricultural productivity loss by 2080 for India as being one of the world’s highest at about 30%, the situation has already worsened in some regions.⁵ Farmers in the Himalayan valley are now finding their farms unsuitable for producing apples.⁶ Mango yields declined by almost 50% last year as a result of higher temperatures.⁷ Meanwhile, cotton farmers in Maharashtra have had to switch to soybeans because of the frequent failure of their main crop, which is also sensitive to changes in weather.⁸ Almost all Indian states share similar stories.

There are cases where farm-level adaptation is helping farmers to overcome the impact of climate change to a certain extent. In the north-eastern state of Nagaland, kidney beans are now being planted further up the mountains in response

to increased temperature.⁹ In Orissa, erratic rain fall in recent years has made rain-fed agriculture unfeasible, and farmers are shifting to high yielding irrigable agriculture.¹⁰

The most climate change vulnerable regions in India are the ones witnessing the highest suicide rates.

However, there is always a limit to such “shifting up” and “patch up” adaptation measures. Even when adaptation measures do succeed in keeping productivity stable, there are other costs, such as increased soil erosion from the mountains, loss in forest covers, and high stress to water resources, which might all be even more disastrous in the long run.

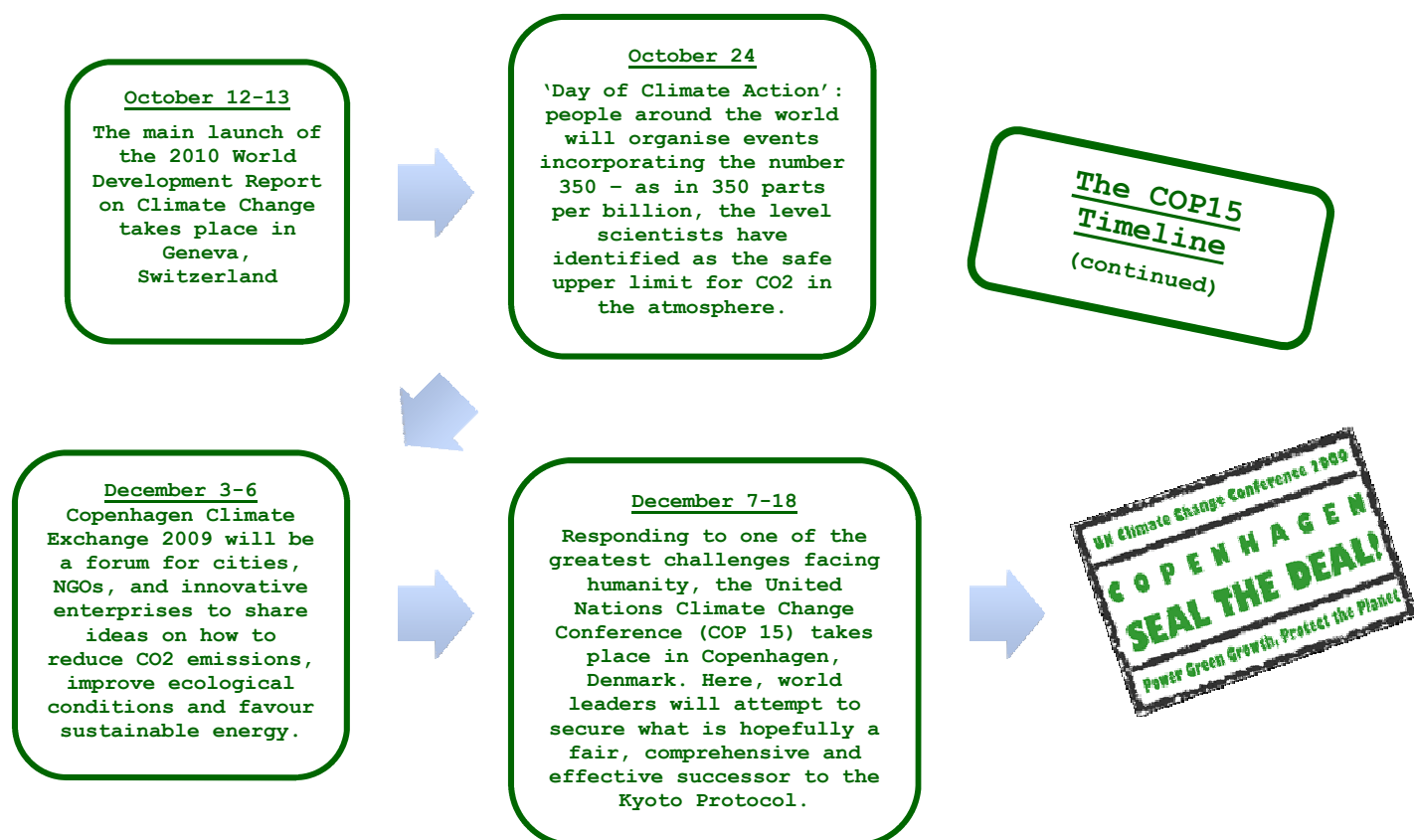
A behaviour modelling study at farm level conducted by the World Bank in Andhra Pradesh has shown

that despite the maximum level of pre-adaptation and diversification measures adopted by farmers, climate change may still cause up to a 25% loss in income.¹¹ Losing 25% of ones income is not an option for poor Indian farmers whose average net income is just USD\$25 per acre per year,¹² a sum not nearly sufficient enough to cover the obligations of daily living, such as feeding multiple family members and taking care of elderly parents.

The incremental irregularity of the monsoon and increases in temperature have caused a decrease in productivity and multiple crop failures, which have pushed poor Indian farmers into a vicious cycle of debt from local money lenders. Suicide, for some, has been the only way out. These deaths represent the scary but real face of climate change. Immediate action to help those in desperate need is essential. ■

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Climate modeling for the Caribbean region



Jonathan Stone,
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Caribbean in Port-of-Spain

Climate change is one of the greatest threats to human prosperity and security in relation to its negative social, economic and environmental impacts. In the Caribbean, climate change poses a significant challenge to the region's small island states, which are increasingly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. These vulnerabilities arise from the islands' small size and relatively low levels of development, which further limit their resilience and ability to respond to external pressures, whether environmental, such as sea level rise, tropical cyclone intensity and fluctuations in water availability, or socio-economic, including increased resource constraints and migratory pressures.

Although instrumental records already indicate noticeable rises in average global temperatures¹, climate models are necessary to quantify future temperature trends and associated impacts. Computer modelling provides an opportunity to better understand the workings of the climate system and examine the relative contributions of climate change drivers to the observed trends. However, climate models are

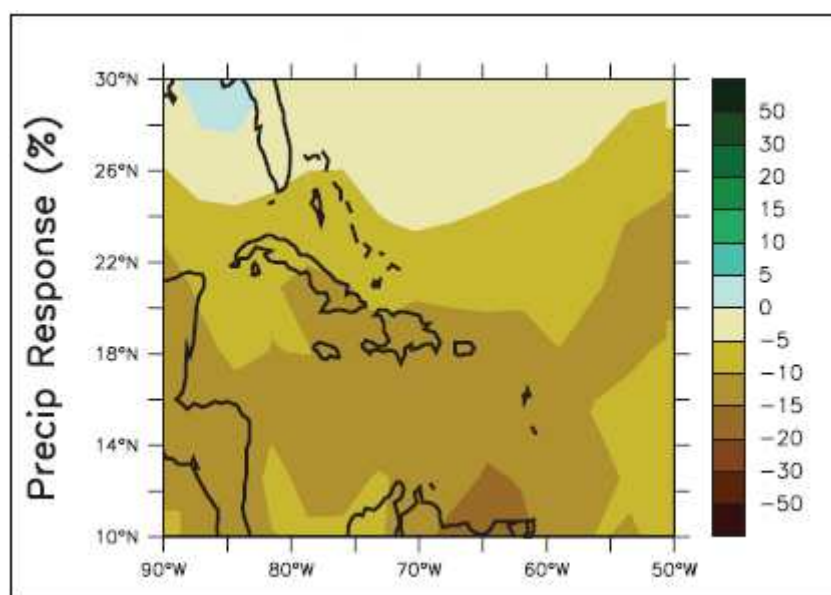
not without their problems. Generally problems arise as a result of constraints to the computing power and time available for modelling, as well as limitations in the level of scientific understanding and representation of certain climate processes involved. We can, nevertheless, have confidence in the model output due to the established physical laws upon which the models are based and more importantly, their ability to reproduce past and recent climate change trends as observed and reconstructed from the instrumental and proxy records².

For the Caribbean, climate model output has been documented for both Global Climate Models (GCMs) and regional climate models. However, GCMs are often solved at too low a grid-scale resolution to include representation of many of the small islands in the Caribbean (See

Explanation Box). To cover more accurately the effects on the islands and regional processes involved, the model has to be downscaled so that the GMC output is inputted in the regional model at a higher resolution. All models, including those for the Caribbean region, are unanimous in predicting the global trends of increased average temperatures and fluctuations in precipitation and water availability over the 21st century. Although the Caribbean region may experience slightly lower than average warming and sea level rise, decreases in average precipitation across the region are likely and these changes will still have a significant impact on human livelihoods within the region.³

While there is a level of uncertainty involved in the model outputs for the Caribbean region, as with any other region, there is a need

Figure 1: Average annual precipitation response across the Caribbean by 2099.
Source: Christensen et al., 2007.



to raise awareness of the likely impacts of the predictions. Less developed islands are particularly vulnerable to climate impacts as they have more limited socio-economic adaptive capacity. While an average rise in temperature of a few degrees may seem insignificant to the lay-person, such temperature changes are likely to worsen existing risks and developmental challenges to the region. There is a need for quantification of changes in extremes rather than averages, as well as the social and economic implications of the changes. As current model outputs may underestimate the level of changes to be expected, one should invoke the precautionary principle, and adequate mitigation and adaptation strategies should be urgently developed. ■

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What are climate models?

Global climate models (GCMs) solve physical mathematical relationships to simulate the interactions of the atmosphere, oceans, land surface, and ice. They are widely applied for weather forecasting, understanding the climate, and projecting climate change. 'Model Grid-Scale Resolution' refers to the spatial level at which the physical mathematical equations of a climate model are computed or solved. The higher the model resolution the finer the model representation and the more physical processes can be included in the model.



An oil refinery at Pointe-à-Pierre, Trinidad. In recent years, there has been concern that higher global oil prices will impair the Caribbean economies, as they are highly dependent upon oil for their energy needs. In response, the island nations have been discussing ways to promote renewable energy and better integrate their energy sectors.

Join us at the

World Climate Conference-3

Better climate information for
a better future



Geneva, Switzerland, 31 August – 4 September 2009

The World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), along with various partners, is organising the World Climate Conference-3 to advance the development of climate services and their application to socio-economic planning. The focus of the conference is on climate predictions for adapting to climate variability and change, and managing associated risks.

WCC-3 focuses on efforts to manage climate-related risks and opportunities. It will address the need to better understand, predict and cope with climate variability and change. The conference is expected to contribute to the provision of scientific knowledge necessary for post-Kyoto actions and the UN initiatives for adaption. WWC-3 aims to provide reliable climate information necessary for reaching a new global mitigation strategy on climate change in Copenhagen December 2009.

Visit the WWC-3 website at wmo.int/wcc3 for more information.

Small Island Developing States: What challenges do they face?

Small islands, along with the Arctic and low lying developing countries, are at the front-line of climate change. They are, as a result of their size, limited natural resources (including energy and water supplies), physical locations and distance from markets already vulnerable to extreme weather conditions and other economic shocks. Climate change intensifies this vulnerability but there is space for adaptive measures that can reduce and assist small island countries and communities ability to cope with climate change threats. Such measures have included, for example, the rehabilitation and conservation of natural sea defenses and fish nurseries, like mangroves and coral reefs, as well as reforestation projects aimed at building resilience against storms and more intense tropical cyclones. Furthermore, despite their negligible role in causing climate change, certain small island states have also committed to serious mitigation efforts, even aiming at complete CO₂-neutrality!



Country: Maldives
Location: Indian Ocean
Population size: 309,000

Challenges: When the tsunami hit the archipelago of the Maldives in 2004, two thirds of the country disappeared momentarily into the Indian Ocean, and when the sea withdrew, it took 62 percent of the country's GNP with it. Electricity, communications and freshwater supplies on many islands were destroyed by the saltwater. But perhaps the tsunami was only the first warning of what the Maldives can expect if the world's seas rise by up to one meter within the next century, as the latest scientific studies forecast, since 80 percent of the island state's only 235 km² are less than one meter above sea level. Furthermore, erosion is eating away at the vulnerable atolls, and climate change is already palpable in the shape of more rain and more disease-carrying mosquitoes.

Efforts: In November 2008, the new government of President Mohamed Nasheed announced an intent to create a sovereign wealth fund with money earned from tourism, that could be used to purchase land elsewhere for the Maldives people to relocate should rising sea levels due to climate change inundate the country. The government reportedly considered locations in Sri Lanka and India due to cultural and climate similarities, and as far away as Australia. But the focus on adaptation through relocation may have shifted since, as President Nasheed in March this year announced plans to make the Maldives the world's first carbon-neutral country within a decade (as has Tuvalu). Nasheed said his country would abandon oil and get all its energy from renewable sources. Nasheed said his country faced "a real threat to our survival" from rising sea levels produced by global warming. "Going green might cost a lot but refusing to act now will cost us the Earth," he wrote.



Country: Tuvalu
Location: South Pacific Ocean
Population size: 12,000

Challenges: At its highest, Tuvalu (comprising four small reef islands and five atolls) is only 4.5 m above sea level, so it could be one of the first nations to experience the effects of sea level rise. A tide gauge installed at Funafuti (pictured) has measured a sea rise of 1.2 millimetres per year over 23 years, a figure consistent with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) global mean estimate of 1 to 2 mm per year over the twentieth century. The 40 cm rise in sea level predicted by the IPCC by the end of the twenty-first century could thus have significant effects for Tuvalu. This concern is compounded by the effects of subsidence, both as the islands naturally sink into the sea and as non-natural land use (such as farming) causes compaction.

Efforts: Tuvalu has committed to becoming the first country to get 100% of its electricity from renewable energy sources by 2020, and renewable energy is for this reason a growing sector. This goal is considered possible because of the small size of the population of Tuvalu and its abundant energy resources due to its tropical location. Tuvalu sees its use of renewable energy as a moral example for others whose influence is greater. Kausea Natano, Tuvalu's Minister for Public Utilities and Industries stated that "we look forward to the day when our nation offers an example to all - powered entirely by natural resources such as the sun and the wind." The tiny South Pacific nation is part of a movement of countries and cities committed to going climate neutral. Since early 2008, 10 nations including New Zealand, Pakistan, Iceland and Costa Rica have vowed to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases as part of a goal of reaching zero emissions in the next decade.

Groundwater in the Sahara and Sahel zones



Sabria Regragui Mazili,
intern at UN DESA in
New York

*“Into the well from which you drink, do not throw stones.”
(Arabic proverb, meaning “care for the water upon which you depend.”)*

Imagine the vast desert landscapes of the Sahara and Sahel. Seething heat, interminable sand, and barren vegetation come to mind. But think again – how is it possible that people live in these areas? How can there be agriculture in North Africa? You might think that the only water in

these countries comes from the coastal areas or from rivers such as the Nile. However, the biggest water treasures are to be found where you least expect them. Buried deep underneath the perennial sands and sunshine lie gigantic basins of fossil groundwater, aquifers, which cover 90 per cent of the drinking water needs of North Africa’s populations.¹

The Nubian Sandstone Aquifer, for example, covers an area of just over two million km², comprising north-western Sudan, north-eastern Chad, south-eastern Libya, and most of Egypt, and contains an estimated 150,000 km³ of water. Just to put this into perspective, according to UNEP estimates, annual global precipitation onto landmass amounts to “only” 100,000 km³ on average.² These aquifers are crucial in economic development, which remains a key challenge in the region, but studies have also shown that they could also play a key role in adaptation to climate variability, in particular by providing a cushion against excessive drought. However, it is precisely due to climate

variability and ecological fragility that recharge levels are currently close to nil. Rising sea water levels may bring about potentially contaminating saline formations and sea water intrusions that will degrade the water quality in aquifers. The relationship between climate change and North Africa’s aquifers is thus a type of catch-22 situation – the region needs the aquifers to deal with climate change, but climate change is threatening to erode their usability for future generations.

How to get out of this catch-22? The first step would, of course, be to clearly define the parameters of the situation – but this is where the trouble starts. Many people within the water sector are aware that climate change is affecting water resource management, but they are unsure how to incorporate climate information into their management structures. The United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change suggests that climate change is likely to be associated with increased water stress in much of Africa;³ however, the scenarios for the Sahel region

are ambiguous, reflecting the lack of information on the current state of water resources. According to the groundwater experts at the Sahara and Sahel Observatory in Tunis, Tunisia, a crippling lack of knowledge about the exact effects of climate change on groundwater is exacerbated by a shortage of in-depth studies of these complex systems.⁴ Existing studies are often confined to a single country, and pay little attention to the cross-border effects of intensive water withdrawals. In fact, climate-induced water shortages combined with ever-increasing pressure from industrial and agricultural development have generated a situation where individual countries compete for access to shared water resources.

The relationship between climate change and North Africa's aquifers is a catch-22 – the region needs them to deal with climate change, but climate change is threatening their usability for future generations.

But not all is gloom and doom. Increasingly countries realise that it is in their best interest to think about their neighbours' interests as well. In the case of the North Western Sahara Aquifer, which is shared between Algeria, Libya and Tunisia, a consultation framework to build the cooperation between the countries is already established. In 2000, UNESCO launched a project on Internationally Shared Aquifer Resource Management.⁵ This has generated some of the first data sets on the basins' characteristics and brought in partners, such as the UNDP, to advise countries on management strategies that take into account both economic development and ecological sustainability objectives. These kinds of initiatives have to be reinforced, applied to smaller basins, and institutionally adapted to the new challenges posed by climate change.

As with almost everything in development, the hitch is financing. Adaptation to climate change in the water sector is clearly a top priority in the region, and while it is incredibly difficult to estimate the exact costs of adaptation, it is safe to say that it will take a significant commitment from

both national budgets and international donors. Now, the finance of climate change adaptation has been a key theme of the post-Kyoto negotiations. While we're at it, it is time to make some noise in Copenhagen about the invisible resource that may help us tackle the problems associated with climate change. ■

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UNEP/Germany

Man meets Mangrove

Kenyan coastal mangrove forests under threat



Moses Chege,
intern at UNEP in Nairobi

general and on mangroves, a species that takes a long time to regenerate, in particular.

Human threats to mangrove ecosystems can be roughly divided into two categories: consumptive and non-consumptive. A threat is consumptive when whole trees, or parts of them, are cut for products such as timber, fuel, or pulp. It is non-consumptive when forests are threatened by human activity other than the direct exploitation of the trees.

The main threat to any ecosystem is man. As human pollution increases, man continues to put more stress on mangroves.

Various sectors, such as agriculture, fisheries, industry, tourism or construction, have a damaging

impact on coastal ecosystems. Long-term effects may include loss of biodiversity and natural resources, which would impair future generations. In many countries, major cities and industries are located along the coast, causing increased environmental degradation through pollution, excessive water consumption, land misuse, beach erosion and inadequate waste disposal methods.

For example, the conversion of mangrove and sea grass areas into aquaculture ponds destroys critical ecosystems that nurture juvenile fish and filtrate sediments. Furthermore, illegal logging and mining cause soil erosion and contaminate rivers and seas. The harvesting of banned species and illegal fishing practices like blast fishing or the intrusion of commercial fishing vessels into municipal waters deprive local fishermen of food and income and deplete natural resources and

There are eight species of mangrove trees along the Kenyan coast. Approximately 53,000 hectares of the mangrove forest are found in the Lamu area, along the northern coast, and the Vanga-Funzi area, near the Tanzanian border. The main threat to any ecosystem is man. As human pollution increases, man continues to put more stress on vital ecosystems in

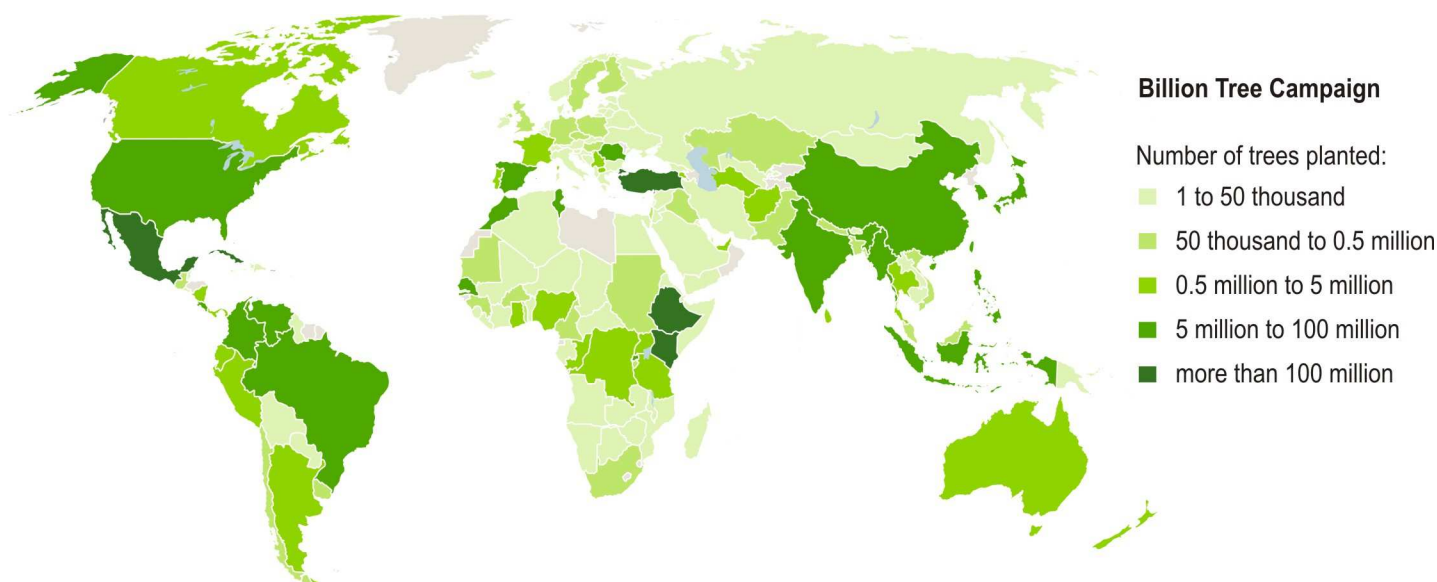
biodiversity.

There are other threats to these fragile yet important ecosystems. A few examples are the conversion of mangrove forests to other land uses, the collection of non-wood products and oil pollution through extensive tanker transportation.

There is an urgent need to address the problems facing mangrove forests in Kenya and in the world. This will promote sustainable development and thus economic development for today's and future generations. Action needs to begin at the individual level before communities and nations as a whole can take responsibility. ■

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Plant for the Planet: Billion Tree Campaign, UNEP's worldwide tree planting campaign, encourages people, communities, business and industry, civil society organisations and governments to enter tree planting pledges online. The objective of the campaign is to plant at least one billion trees worldwide each year. UNEP's goal for 2009 is to plant 7 billion by the end of the year.

Development and Climate Change: UN priorities and ideology



UN Photo/Sayed Baraz

Human development and climate change are arguably the two main challenges currently facing the planet. This is to a large extent reflected in the priorities of the United Nations system, where a myriad of agencies, funds and programmes devote their energy and resources to one or both of these issues: 33 such bodies are “UN partners on climate change”, while there are 32 members of the UN Development Group. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a key member of both, and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) also holds dual membership.

In the UN, it is increasingly common to see statements or claims that the issues of climate change and development are interrelated or interlinked. For instance, the Human Development Report 2007/08 states: “Development progress is increasingly



Søren Friis,
intern at the Nordic Desk at
UNRIC in Brussels

going to be hindered by climate change. So we must see the fight against poverty and the fight against the effects of climate change as interrelated efforts.”¹ The foreword to the report, co-signed by the heads of the UNDP and UNEP, also states: “In the long run climate change is a massive threat to human development and in some places it is already undermining the international

community’s efforts to reduce extreme poverty.” From these types of statements, there is little doubt that, from a UN point of view, the two issues are seen as closely linked.

However, from a critical perspective, reducing poverty – Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 1 and a central aim of development efforts – and combating climate change can seem like contradictory rather than interrelated goals. The reason, in simple terms, is that reducing poverty also means increasing the level of human production and consumption, which release greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere, and thus cause climate change. There is no doubt that both development and climate change are – and should be – priorities for the UN, but since they do not necessarily go hand in hand, it is reasonable to ask “how are the two issues reconciled within the UN?”.

I am particularly interested in the role of discourse or 'ideology' in this regard. I believe that the UN can be thought of as the playing field of a 'development ideology', in the sense that a system of thought concerning development exists, which is capable of encompassing a number of ideas, beliefs or priorities, some of which may seem contradictory. We see this most notably in the UNDP's embrace of such diverse issues as poverty reduction, democratic governance, gender issues, crisis prevention and, critically, climate change.² The embrace of climate change can also be seen in claims to the effect that "stabilising greenhouse emissions to limit climate change ... is an essential part of our overall fight against poverty and for the MDGs."³

But how has climate change become a development issue? For one, the past two decades have seen the creation of a novel terminology linking the two together, most prominently through the term 'sustainable development'. Sustainable development is a key UN concept, which can be seen, for example, in publications explaining "how sustainable development underpins the MDGs"⁴. While there is no MDG exclusively devoted to combating climate change, MDG 7 – ensuring environmental sustainability – speaks of reducing CO₂ emissions and prominently mentions integrating "the

principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes".⁵

However, the term 'sustainable development' has attracted criticism over its ambiguity, since it houses a never-resolved tension over whether we are pursuing 'sustainable development' for the sake of the environment (known as the 'ecocentrist' conception of sustainable development) or for the sake of people (the 'anthropocentric' conception).^{6 7 8}

From a critical perspective, combating climate change and reducing poverty can seem like contradictory rather than interrelated goals.

Considering the quotations above in light of this schism, it is clear that the UN system seems to prioritize 'anthropocentrism' rather than 'ecocentrism', i.e., "environment for development" as even UNEP's motto remarkably goes.⁹ A concrete example of this anthropocentric focus is agriculture. According to a statement by Ban Ki-moon, "if left unchecked, climate change will affect agricultural production."¹⁰ This is undeniably true, but if the statements were reversed so that it read "if left unchecked, agricultural production will affect

climate change", it would still be true! Yet one rarely, if ever, comes across statements to this effect. So although unsustainable agricultural practices have presented a significant challenge for both human societies and the environment through time,¹¹ the above quote places the focus on the needs of humans rather than on the environment in and of itself.

For that reason, I argue that in the UN 'development ideology', anthropocentric concerns are to a large degree considered over ecocentrist concerns. Of course, the UN *should* take into account the needs and concerns of "we, the peoples" and the states that make up its membership, but much could be gained from considering development and climate change issues from a vantage point that better combines so-called anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. I am not arguing that the UN is not taking climate change or other environmental issues seriously, but simply advocating the adoption of an approach to development and climate change that treats the two issues as equals, rather than merely looking at one (climate change) through the prism of the other (development). Notably, one finds a related tendency in UNDP publications that emphasise adaptation rather than mitigation, often focusing on "coping" or "increasing resilience" to climate change¹², rather than combating it. As

'Sustainable development' and its critics

According to the [Brundtland Commission](#), 'sustainable development' is a form of development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." In this way, the concept of 'sustainable development' ties together concerns for the planet's environmental carrying capacity with the socio-economic challenges facing humanity.

But although the term offers a handy way of conceptually linking these two vital issues, it has attracted criticism over its vagueness or eclecticism, masking an underlying tension between the two different views on its desired meaning. One of these is the so-called *ecocentric* (or nature-centred) conception, while the other is the *anthropocentric* (or

people-centred) conception.

Some critics have even gone so far as to call 'sustainable development' an oxymoron: Proponents of [de-growth](#) believe that no sustainable development exists, at least not for the 20 per cent of the planet's population who consume or exploit 80 per cent of its natural resources. Logically, nor would the planet be able to sustain developing countries reaching the 'developed' level of consumption.

The problem is, of course, that any insistence from developed countries that the developing world should pursue non-growth would be met with accusations of paternalism or hypocrisy, as is currently the case for calls to pursue a 'greener' form of growth.

the UNDP increases its visibility on climate change issues,¹³ I believe it should remember scholarly warnings that adaptation is not a substitute for mitigation.¹⁴

According to statements from the UNDP, climate change is “a central development challenge of this new century”, even “the defining human development issue of our generation”.¹⁵ We should remember that climate change – although certainly interlinked with development – is not only a development issue, but also an issue concerning the future of the planet itself. Therefore, we should be careful not to fit the issue of climate change solely into the framework of development.

Finally, the UN should prepare to engage in a vital discussion of the relationship between its broader climate change and development goals. Such a debate is likely to arise, not least concerning whether combining development and climate change efforts to “not slow down but rather accelerate socio-economic progress”¹⁶ is an achievable or a self-contradictory goal. ■

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Marketing can save the planet!

Non-profit organisations are increasingly using marketing tools developed for the profit sector to promote their work. The challenges facing the non-profit sector are similar to the ones facing companies aiming to make profit. Both have to deal with increasing competition, changing clients' needs and an unpredictable market.

But what makes a campaign poster or an advert effective? What kind of graphical and symbolical components can motivate us to take action? Read **Federica Galafate's** article (exclusively on our blog!) to find out what good and bad adverts are made of. Federica, an intern at the Italian Desk at UNRIC in Brussels, tells us her opinion on two campaign adverts from green NGOs, one from Greenpeace and one from WWF.

We want to hear your opinion too! Post your comments on Federica's and other articles at the Internal Voices blog: <http://internal-voices.blogspot.com>.

Clean energy is available in abundance



Helene Faure,
intern at UNIC in
Washington D.C.

A plan to install solar panels in the Sahara Desert could cover much of the energy needs of the planet.

It sounds too good to be true. A solar power plant in the Sahara desert could provide clean energy for all of Europe and, conceivably, for the world.

Munich Re, a German reinsurance group, brought together finance and energy companies on July 13th to study the possibility. The industrial initiative is based on the [Desertec Project](#), working to stabilise the world's climate.

According to this foundation's research, solar thermal power plants will be capable of generating more than half the electricity needs of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa within 40 years. While the Sahara desert could in theory provide enough energy for the whole world, it is more likely that other deserts will in turn be equipped with such technology, to avoid the costs of long-distance power transmission.

The implications are enormous. Two in particular come to mind. Firstly, we would become less dependent on fossil fuels. The solar technology would be installed in different countries, with at least 20 power lines to transfer the energy. This means that these solar facilities would not be concentrated in one particular country or area, thus reducing their vulnerability to political changes in particular countries or, in the extreme case, terrorist attacks. The other implication is, of course, environmental. The Desertec Project tackles two global challenges – shortage of energy and excessive emissions of CO₂.

"Within six hours deserts receive more energy from the sun than humankind consumes within a year," says Dr. Gerard Knies, Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Desertec Foundation. Even if it will take years before the project can be fully implemented, the idea is powerful; a possible solution could be at hand. Thus it has the advantage of motivating individuals

and businesses, and creating new forms of cooperation.

Solar thermal power plants will be capable of generating more than half the electricity needs of Europe, the Middle East and North Africa.

To me, what Desertec brings to the table is a refreshing, convincing and seemingly flawless solution, qualities that are necessary to garner political, industrial and popular support. This support is what can bring the project to the fore and help it gather enough momentum to become reality, sooner rather than later.

The Desertec concept, in other words, can channel the desires of people who, at every level, are concerned about climate change, and turn them into a viable solution. ■



UN Photo/Christopher Herwig

Time to act!

Climate change: A challenge to the world's food security

Bhagirath Jogdand,
intern at WFP in Rome

Earlier this year the global media was intensely focused on the financial crisis, airing programmes like 'Road to Recovery' and debates on the so-called 'financial stimulus packages'. Why was the role of climate change added to the agenda of the recent G8 Summit in Italy in July? Wouldn't it be more convenient and rewarding for the politicians to discuss such topics as the financial crisis, rather than issues such as the future of the world's food security? But I believe that climate change is an issue that deserves the full attention and concern of the leaders at the highest level, including the G8. The G8 Summit produced two initiatives relevant to the activities of the World Food Programme (WFP): 1) the Food Security Initiative, which aims to mobilise \$20 billion over the next three years, and 2) the Global Partnerships on Agriculture and Food Security initiative.

The impacts of climate change on food security are manifold. The mean global temperatures are projected to increase between one to four degrees Celsius by 2100. This will bring benefits to agriculture in temperate latitudes, with increases in crop yields and growing periods, but in drier regions, previously cultivated areas will become unsuitable for agriculture. This scenario predicts regional disparities in food production and availability, though many scientists are confident that, even in the worst case scenario, the global food production will be robust enough

to provide food for the entire global population in the future, because of technological advancements in the area (Adejuwon, 2007: 12). However, with an increase in climate variability, the world will face increased frequency and severity of cyclones, floods, storms and droughts, causing fluctuations in crop yields and local food supplies. These inconsistencies will have serious effects on semi-arid areas, like Sub-Saharan Africa and certain parts of South Asia, which are already one of the poorest regions in the world with high levels of chronic under-nourishment. For example, according to estimates the Sub-Saharan region may have between 50 to 75 percent of the world's starving population by 2080 (Schmidhuber and Tubiello, 2007: 5).

Concern over the future of food security in semi-arid areas was shared by the leaders in the G8 Summit, when they declared: "We underscore that climate change severely affects developing countries and is becoming a major threat to their ability to achieve internationally agreed development goals including the MDGs." The summit's declaration identifies the developing countries' limited capability to adapt and cope with climate variability. Developing countries need to compensate food shortages through imports, which is impossible for the least developed countries or failed states. This means that the international community will have to respond to an increased need for humanitarian food aid as there will be more food emergencies.

Will the WFP be able to meet this increased demand for aid and will it be able to raise sufficient funds at a short notice? If not, the relevancy of the world's largest food aid agency is at stake. The WFP needs to come up

with innovative approaches to mitigate problems related to food emergencies in Sub-Saharan Africa. Market mechanisms and free trade cannot rescue these countries, and, therefore, an adequate response is needed to build up sufficient stocks located across vulnerable, disadvantaged and distant rural regions. This can be done in the form of 'food banks' or 'food reserves', in which farmers can deposit surpluses after harvest when the prices are the lowest and then withdraw the deposits when in need. These "store houses" will provide better storage facilities that reduce losses caused by spoilage and increase food availability. The reserves can function as food exchanges, where the farmer can exchange their produces for other food commodities, like seeds. Food pooling can help reduce sudden food emergencies. Lastly, WFP can maintain the emergency aid reserves through donations from national and international humanitarian aid donors, in partnerships with other humanitarian agencies, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, governments and local communities.

The situation may look hopeless on the outside, but similarly, many considered micro-financing infeasible and improbable in the beginning. A pilot project could make this solution a reality. ■

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Careers in the UN system

Part 2—The Inside Word



James Morris,
intern for the Director at
UNRIC in Brussels

My [last article](#) gave you the basics about getting jobs in the UN system. This one comes from an insider with advice I've heard and collected about starting your professional UN career. You won't find any verifiable, official UN information – you can find that information online easily – so there are no guarantees, but hopefully this will give you some tips that aren't so easy to come by.

The 8 UN headquarters duty stations:

New York HQ (NYHQ), Geneva (UNOG), Vienna (UNOV), Nairobi (UNON), Bangkok (ESCAP), Addis Ababa (ECA), Santiago de Chile (ECLAC) and Beirut (ECSCWA).

We're all interns and many of us are probably hoping that this will open the doors to the world of the UN. And it does. A major part of

getting into the system is knowing the system, and a UN internship will at least give you a head start. Moreover, knowing people on the inside means that you're likely to have people who can; 1. let you know where (which agency, duty station) you've got a good chance at finding something, 2. put you in touch with someone who might be able to help you out (networking), and 3. give you a reference from within the system.

Sometimes short and fixed-term contracts are possible for intern-level people: like an internship but paid. It seems that only some agencies practice this, but if you've got a contact at the agency, ask them about this possibility. In many cases it can lead to subsequent short contracts, if not something slightly more long-term.

[UNV](#), the UN volunteers programme is another option, but one where you're going to have to have some good experience behind you already. Many of these positions require you to have about 5 years of professional experience in a certain field. Keep this in mind if you aren't

already at that stage and/or apply anyway as you never know your luck!

NCRE applicants must:

- *be a national of any of the participating Member States.*
- *not be more than 32 years old by the end of the exam year.*
- *hold at least a first-level university degree relevant to one of the offered occupational groups.*
- *be fluent in either English or French.*

In the meantime, keep applying, complete the National Competitive Recruitment Exams ([NCRE](#)) if you're eligible, keep your knowledge up-to-date including advancing your university studies and maybe consider learning another official UN language. ■

'Galaxy' is going!

A new Talent Management System was announced in September 2008 that would replace the current Galaxy system for UN recruitment. Although some [official statements](#) have mentioned 1 July 2009 as the start date for the TMS, the [Galaxy system](#) is still in use, and little other information is publicly available.

Juan Camilo Arias and Hannah Leigh interview Christophe Nuttall, UNDP's HUB Director for Innovative Partnerships

The HUB for Innovative Partnerships at UNDP Geneva is highly involved in the fight against climate change. HUB Director Christophe Nuttall shared his insight, personal background, and vision for the future with UNDP Geneva interns Juan Camilo Arias and Hannah Leigh.

Could you tell us about your educational background and professional career?

I have a Masters in Biology, a postgraduate degree in Ecology and a PhD in Geography and Social Anthropology. After working for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the 'Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales', UNESCO and as deputy mayor in a city in France, I joined UNITAR, where I established a global network of local and regional training centres for sub-national authorities to better collaborate with the United Nations system. In order to be more involved in implementing the training that the local authorities had acquired I joined the UNDP, seeking to work with sub-national authorities at a deeper level at the time.

What is the HUB's strategy for combating climate change?

In order to tackle the large-scale effects of climate change, one has to work with other partners than just national governments, especially if leaders at the United Nations climate change conference in Copenhagen (COP15) agree on a 20 % reduction for 2020 based on 1990 emissions. UNDP believes it is also relevant to mobilise local and regional partners. As roughly 70 to 80 % of CO2 emissions and 100 % of adaptation measures are in the hands of cities and regional government, sub-national authorities should be directly involved in national policy implementation.

What does the UNDP's climate change funding situation look like?

We are entering into a new funding model. More financial resources need to be made available for developing countries using new finance mechanisms. UNDP is combining and providing different financing opportunities, and thus reinforcing the capacity of regions to create projects in order to attract 30 to 50 million dollars of investment from developed countries.

In your opinion, will the HUB's Territorial Approach to Climate Change (TACC) become UNDP's global strategy to tackle climate change?

TACC is more of a contribution to the UNDP's global strategy, but I do believe that the TACC is one of the methodologies that UNDP could adopt globally. During the past two years we have become a strategically valuable instrument for the UNDP. Maybe it is very ambitious, but we believe in it. ■



What is the 'Territorial Approach to Climate Change'?

A joint [UNDP/UNEP paper](#) has called for abandoning "the development of a wide array of small, dispersed and fragmented projects" in favour of a comprehensive, integrated local climate change planning framework. It is believed that local authorities need to integrate climate- and carbon-related constraints in their local planning.

The objectives of the territorial approach are: (a) to promote the local development of clean production and consumption, and in doing so improving energy access and creating growth, and (b) to reduce local vulnerability to climate variations and to fluctuations of energy prices.

Astrid Bothmann, intern at UNRIC in Brussels, on her interview with Prof. Dr. Reinhard Bettzuege, Ambassador of Germany to Belgium

Mr Bettzuege has been working as the Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Germany in Belgium since 2007. For over 30 years, he has been a member of the diplomatic core. Originally he hoped to become a foreign correspondent and while studying English, German and Law in Bonn, he worked as a journalist in order to finance his university education. In 1973 he traveled to Brazil as a foreign correspondent, staying for one year, but finally because of his interest in international politics, he applied to the German Foreign Ministry in Berlin. He underwent the obligatory two-year training programme at the Diplomatic Academy in preparation for working at German embassies all over the world. Since 1976 Mr Bettzuege has been in Lisbon, London and Belgrade. He has also been German Deputy Ambassador to the Permanent Representation of Germany at NATO in Brussels, as well as director of the permanent representation of the OSCE Ambassador in Vienna.

Could you give us an idea of your daily life as the ambassador?

The Ambassador told me that it is his task to improve and maintain good bilateral relations between the home country and the host country. Reporting back to the Foreign Ministry takes up about half of his daily work. Mr Bettzuege informs them of all politically relevant issues happening in Belgium, such as the Belgian elections, the economic situation etc. And being Ambassador is not a one-way street either. "I am in daily contact with the Belgian Foreign Ministry," he explained and said that "we are preparing a joint

Belgian-German conference on scientific cooperation." Another activity concerns the promotion of the German language in Belgium. Mr Bettzuege cooperates closely with Belgian schools and universities in order to organise a variety of events. Moreover, he establishes contacts with German firms who seek cooperation with the embassy. As for cultural activities, he works with the permanent representations of the German federal states in Brussels.

Do you see any disadvantages of being an ambassador?

"Personally speaking I do not see any disadvantages. Certainly, people wanting to become an Ambassador need to be aware of the fact that they are going to live an unsettled life. Every three to four years you have to pack your bags and move." Mr. Bettzuege explained that there are of course the obvious difficulties in having an international career with its impact on family life, but as Mr

Betzuege explained to me, there are so many great opportunities and interesting people. "People might say that such relations are more superficial, but I myself have had the opposite experience."

What advice do you give to people who want to become diplomats?

"Students should prepare themselves for the job during their studies. This means that they need to read at least three international newspapers in French, English and German, in order to be well informed about everything that is happening in the world," both the news and comment sections, so you can better understand all the angles. "French and English are absolutely essential" and he highly recommends studying at least one year in another country. It's not just about improving your language skills, but also "about experiencing different ways of living and thinking." ■



Viivi Erkkilä, intern at UNRIC in Brussels on her interview with Satu Hassi, a Member of the European Parliament from Finland

Satu Hassi, former Finnish Minister for the Environment and Development Cooperation and current Member of the European Parliament, has a long career in environmental politics. She sees climate change as one of the most important issues in her work as an MEP and aims to promote the political will to reach a new climate agreement.

I met Satu Hassi at the European Parliament to discuss her interest and involvement in environmental politics and climate change issues. Ms Hassi characterised the UN climate negotiations as “the biggest challenge ever for global diplomacy” and expressed concern over the obstacles on the road to Copenhagen. However, she told me that she remains hopeful that a major breakthrough will be made before the final negotiations begin next December. “Climate protection is a huge technological challenge,” she pointed out, “but the

most difficult challenge is to reach a new level of cooperation between countries.”

The first major energy crisis in the 1970s was a turning point in Ms Hassi’s life, as she realised that energy policy is a key issue for the future of all humankind. This was also the first time she heard about the issue of climate change. In the 1980s Ms Hassi became even more concerned about the unsustainable nature of mainstream energy policy based on non-renewable resources, which was causing several environmental problems like acid rain. Interestingly, she told me that discussions about acid rain at that time were very similar to the current climate change debate, with industry claiming that emissions control was too costly and a cause of unemployment.

But a lot has changed and progress has been made on the international level. Nevertheless, Ms Hassi feels that the climate change

discussion has been too focused on scientific and technological expertise. “We need a change in thinking among people in all kind of professions ... but many are continuing as if nothing has happened, like in the construction business, city planning and transport policy.” Ms Hassi emphasised that our personal responsibilities are not limited to the choices we make in our private lives, but also to the decisions we take in our professions. “Everybody who designs a house, transport network or any kind of technological gadget makes a climate decision.” Ms Hassi is certainly making an impact at the European level, but it is clear that climate change is everyone’s issue, and we must all get involved. ■

Satu Hassi is an MEP with the Greens -European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament, to which she was elected 2004 and reelected in 2009.

The European Union’s climate package

[The European Union’s](#) objective is to limit global warming to less than 2°C above the pre-industrial level, which is equivalent to around 1.2°C above today’s temperature. For the world to maintain this target, global emissions of greenhouse gases will have to peak before 2020 and then be reduced by at least 50% of 1990 levels by 2050.

EU leaders and the European Parliament agreed in December 2008 on [the EU’s climate package](#) and the measures were signed into law in April 2009. The package will help reduce emissions by 20% of the 1990 levels by 2020. The EU also supports the reaching of a global agreement to tackle the climate challenge. The emission targets are underpinned by three energy-related objectives (the 20 – 20 – 20 targets).

Central to the package is a strengthening and expansion of [the Emissions Trading](#)

[Scheme](#) (EU ETS), which aims to help cut greenhouse gas emissions cost-effectively. Emissions from sectors not covered by the ETS (e.g. transport, farming, waste and households) will be cut to 10% below 2005 levels by 2020. Member states will commit to binding national targets according to their wealth. The package also aims to promote safe use of [carbon capture and geological storage](#) (CCS) technologies, which would allow CO₂ emissions to be captured and stored underground where they cannot contribute to global warming.

The EU is prepared to scale up its own emissions reduction for 2020 from 20% to 30% if other countries agree to comparable targets in Copenhagen in December 2009. The EU is also proposing that developing countries should adopt low-carbon development strategies. The developing countries would be assisted to achieve their targets, for example, through the [Global Climate Change Alliance](#)

(GCCA). The EU also believes that a global carbon market needs to be built to support the post-Kyoto agreement by linking up domestic emissions trading systems, like the EU ETS.

EU 20–20–20 targets:

- *20% cut in greenhouse gas emissions.*
- *20% increase in use of renewable energy.*
- *20% cut in energy consumption through*

Meet other interns



Kamayani Solanki,
intern at APCTT in Delhi

Kamayani Solanki, from Delhi, India, graduated with a degree in sociology and later obtained a postgraduate degree in business administration with a **specialisation in human resources**. Currently, she is pursuing a Masters in sociology at Indira Gandhi National Open University.

Although she is busy with her degree, Kamayani still found time to begin an internship with the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology (APCTT) in July. She works on the “**Training of Trainers**” programme, where she carries out a review of technology transfer programmes that have been developed for Small and Medium Enterprises and technology intermediaries in India and other United Nations member countries. Much of the research required for this programme revolves around collecting data, conducting interviews, and visiting government agencies and ministries.

Kamayani works at APCTT with a staff of 20 other employees, whose **team spirit**, enthusiasm, and hard work she admires. She considers her two supervisors as mentors, since they are always willing to discuss her progress and help improve her understanding of the **core concepts** related to her work. Ultimately, Kamayani hopes to pursue a career with the UN, focusing her attention on India, where the poor and marginalised still require a lot of international support.

From Atlanta, Georgia, Jessica is completing her undergraduate degree from the University of Georgia in International Affairs with a minor in Spanish. Her areas of interest include economic and **sustainable development**, particularly in Latin America – a love she discovered while studying in Costa Rica and Guatemala.

Now Jessica is enjoying her internship at UNIC Washington, where she spends her time covering various **think-tank** panel discussions and congressional briefings around the capital city. Her other projects have included coordinating visits to Washington and arranging Senate committee meetings for UN Working Groups, as well as organizing a ‘**UN Family blood drive**’ in observance of World Blood Donor Day.

Her workplace in Washington is 10 minutes from the capital, in the heart of DC. She is living in the George Washington University dorms, which house many of DC’s summer interns. She walks the 6 blocks to work every day and makes sure to stop off at PRET for a **warm crispy croissant**. The UNIC office has 9 full time staff and 5 interns from diverse backgrounds. In a demanding and fast-paced environment, the staff manage to maintain an open and **friendly atmosphere** and regularly enjoy social activities together outside of work.

This experience has allowed Jessica to gain knowledge and familiarity in her areas of interest as well as discover the inner workings of the United Nations. She plans to pursue a career in research and implementation of sustainable development projects in Latin America. **Costa Rica** would be nice.



Jessica Lopez,
intern at UNIC in
Washington

Interns can make a difference!



Anna Kern,
intern at UNEP in Brussels

Greening the UN House in Brussels

During my internship at the UNEP Brussels Liaison Office I have acquired an understanding of how environmental issues are dealt with at the European level. 2009 is a crucial year for the fight against climate change, culminating in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen in December. In this respect, you have probably already heard about the global “Seal the Deal!” campaign, which was launched in April by the UN Secretary-General in Brussels. UNEP is intensively involved in coordinating the campaign and the Brussels office is in charge of spreading the message in Belgium and Europe.

We have organised several events to increase public and political awareness of the importance of reaching a new climate agreement in Copenhagen, for example, on World Environment Day and during the European Commission’s Green Week conference.

On World Environment Day 2007, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on all UN offices around the world to join him in the fight against climate change and to set a good example for others.

In reaction to this appeal, the heads of UN offices in Brussels agreed to set up an environmental management system within the UN agencies located in Brussels. This initiative aims at reducing the carbon footprint of the UN House through technical adjustments and through “greening” the UN staff’s day-to-day behaviour around the office.

Several interns, including myself, played a significant role in this long “greening process”. For example, we co-wrote a leaflet containing suggestions on how to adopt “green behaviour” - coming to

work by public transport or bicycle, using recycled paper, separating waste properly, printing recto verso, etc. We also found green office stationary suppliers and eco-friendly catering for meetings and events.

These efforts were all taken into account when the Belgian authorities awarded the UN House with the label ‘Entreprise Eco-Dynamique’ in June 2009. The project shows that changing our daily practices involves minimum effort, but has an immense impact! Adopting “green behaviour” is something that should be done in all United Nations offices, since it reflects the mission of the organisation and its commitment to sustainable development.

In the words of Mahatma Gandhi: “You have to be the change you want to see in this world.” ■

The chance to be part of a newly launched campaign, follow its developments and try to mobilise networks and key actors has been a very interesting and captivating experience. Even though, at first I thought the campaign was too general and not ambitious enough, I now understand that raising awareness is a necessity. Many people are still not aware that climate change is already affecting us, and that some countries have a special responsibility and need to make stronger commitments than others.

Seal the Deal! is a powerful tool that offers information and facilitates actors to position themselves in negotiations, while raising awareness on climate change issues among the general public. Let’s hope political leaders will turn Copenhagen into a historical event for future generations. ■



Nicolas Fournier,
intern at UNEP in Brussels

The Seal the Deal! campaign

Travellin' with Interns



United Nations interns give you the low-down on their favourite places to eat, drink, dance and relax in cities around the world

Europe

Brussels, Belgium

Best Café: [Café Fontainas](#)
Best Bar: [L'Athénée](#)
Best Club: [Bulex](#)

London, United Kingdom

Best Bookshop: [Daunt Books, Marylebone High Street](#)
Best Park: [Hampstead Heath](#)
Best Café: [Candid Café](#)

Oporto, Portugal

Best Café: [Café Piolho](#)
Best Bar: [Maus Habitos](#)
Best Museum: [Serralves Museum of Contemporary Art](#)

Tampere, Finland

Best Café: [Pyyrikki Tower](#)
Best Bar: [Telakka](#)
Best Club: [Doris](#)

Lyon, France

Best Restaurant: [L'ourson Qui Boit](#)
Best Pub: [Johnny's Kitchen](#)
Best Park: [La Tete d'Or](#)

Africa

Nairobi, Kenya

Best Safari: [Joyland Safaris](#)
 Best Bookshop: [Books First](#)
 Best Market: [Maasai Market](#)

Cartagena, Columbia

Best Café: [Café Havana](#)
 Best Dancing: [Mister Babilla](#)
 Best Historical Site: [Cartagena & San Felipe de Barajas Castle](#)

Cape Town, South Africa

Best Food: [Simply Asia](#)
 Best Bar: [Baraza](#)
 Best Sight: [Penguins!](#)

México City, Mexico

Best Restaurant: [Café Tacuba](#)
 Best Salsa Bar: [Mama Rumba](#)
 Best Club: [UTA](#)

America

Montréal, Canada

Best Restaurant: [Juliette & Chocolat](#)
 Best Club/Bar: [Les Deux Pierrots](#)
 Best Club: [Altitude 737](#)

Washington, DC, United States

Best Bar: [The Raven Grill](#)
 Best Restaurant: [Bread and Brew](#)
 (Other) Best Bar: [Asylum](#)

New Orleans, United States

Best Restaurant: [Rivershack Tavern](#)
 Best Bar: [Cooter Brown's](#)
 (Other) Best Bar: [St Joe's](#)

Asia and the Pacific

Wellington, New Zealand

Best Café: [Deluxe](#)
 Best Bar: [Mighty Mighty](#)
 Best Bookshop: [Unity Books](#)

Sydney, Australia

Best Restaurant : [The Iceberg](#)
 Best Bar/Club : [Cargo Bar](#)
 Best Beach: [Manly Beach](#)

Vientiane, Laos

Best Food: [Le Silapa](#)
 Best View: [Mekong Riverfront](#)
 Best Club: None! Try [Pha That Luang](#) temple instead!

Lhasa, Tibet, China

Best Food: [Yak Hotel](#)
 Best Afternoon: [City Centre Market](#)
 Best Sight: [Potala, the Winter Palace of the Dalai Lama](#)

From the small German town of Unna to Eastern Tibet: Astrid Bothmann recalls her secondary school experience on the Tadra Project, helping two children's villages with education, fundraising and awareness.

I will never forget my two journeys to Tibet. On my second visit in 2003 I went with a group of 20 students, three teachers and one dentist. Our backpacks were filled to the brim primarily with clothes, but also toys, medicine, gifts for the children and donations from private people. We grew slowly accustomed to the Asian culture on our adventurous bus drive through the Tibetan mountains and Chinese cities, which appeared bewildering but impressive to my western mind.

On our arrival I saw young children running towards us waving their small hands excitedly and then throwing themselves into our arms. I can find no words to describe that heart-warming experience. The openness with which these children approached us was indescribable. They weren't scared or alienated but full of love. With 3-4 children at each

hand, we walked towards the entrance gate where the 'fathers' and 'mothers' of each house greeted us enthusiastically. Katakas, white scarves, were laid around our shoulders, a typical Tibetan gesture to welcome visitors. Then we were brought into the biggest house, where we were served a grand Tibetan meal, a sign of how much effort had been put into preparing for our visit.

During our few weeks there we painted the houses and playgrounds, cleaned the pool that was also used as a big wash basin, put new books in the school's library, distributed clothes to the children, checked their teeth with the help of the dentist in our group, brought some children to the nearest hospital for specialist medical treatment and, most importantly, organised the annual sports and games competition. We

had thought of games, show-jumping courses and other activities in which the children could show their abilities and gave out prizes, including the main prize - jerseys sponsored and signed by the German soccer team Borussia Dortmund.

Both visits were eye-opening experiences. The children from Tadra have truly taught me the meaning of gratitude, happiness and pure love, a love that comes directly from the heart, that does not expect and demand any favours in return and that will last for a lifetime. Even six years after my last journey I still receive letters and drawings from the children which they give to new UNESCO groups that visit the village annually. ■





COOLPLANET

2009

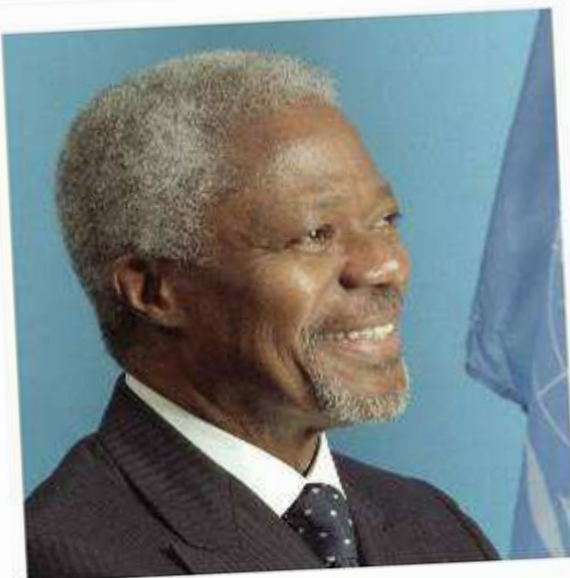
Stay Cool!

Cool Friends for a Cool Planet

The CoolPlanet2009 climate campaign features the section 'Cool Friends': These are people committed to working for a more environmentally sustainable future. Visit coolplanet2009.org to learn more the Cool Friends!

Kofi Annan

The former UN Secretary-General is the President of the Global Humanitarian Forum, which launched its climate change campaign [TckTckTck](#) on 25 June in Cannes. Annan's involvement in this campaign and his commitment to the fight against climate change have made him one of CoolPlanet2009's Cool Friends. [TckTckTck](#), created in partnership with Live AID founder Bob Geldof, aims to organise mass public support for a successful outcome at the UN conference on climate change in Copenhagen in December 2009. The campaign is urging everyone to join the movement to prevent the catastrophic impacts of global warming.



Björk

The Icelandic singer-songwriter Björk has earned her title as a Cool Friend because of her great commitment to environmental issues and sustainable development. Last year she founded the organisation [Náttúra](#), which aims to promote Icelandic nature and grass-root industries. In June 2008 she organised and headlined a free concert in Reykjavík with Icelandic band Sigur Rós to raise awareness on environmental issues. In collaboration with Audur Group, Björk has also set up a venture capital fund named "BJÖRK" to support the creation of sustainable businesses in Iceland.



Seal the Deal! is a global UN campaign for a fair, balanced and effective climate agreement at the Copenhagen climate conference from 7-18 December 2009

Sign the online petition at www.sealthedeal2009.org

Gro Harlem Brundtland

This international civil servant and former Norwegian politician has served as Prime Minister of Norway, Director-General of the World Health Organization and is currently the UN Special Envoy on Climate Change. She chaired the so-called Brundtland Commission on the Environment and Development. The commission's report "Our Common Future" is credited for developing the broad concept of sustainable development.

Brundtland is one of the three chairwomen of the [Road to Copenhagen](#) initiative, a member of the Club of Madrid and a founding member of the Elders with Kofi Annan, Mikhail Gorbachev and Nelson Mandela, among others. Her work in support of sustainable development and on climate change issues makes her one of CoolPlanet's Cool Friends.

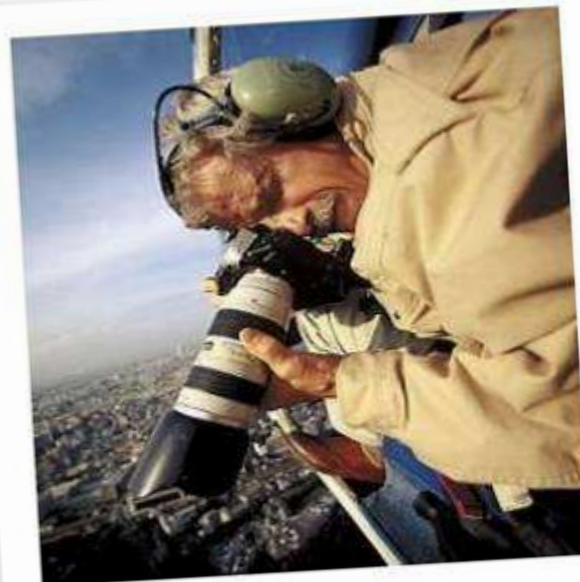


Yann Arthus-Bertrand

Yann Arthus-Bertrand is a renowned and internationally recognized French photographer, famous for his aerial photographs. He is one of CoolPlanet2009's Cool Friends because of his long engagement in environmental and climate issues. He is the President of [Good Planet](#), a non-profit organization created in 2005 to raise public awareness on environmental protection and to find concrete solutions to the ecological crisis.

One of his latest contributions to the fight against climate change was directing the documentary film [Home](#), where he aimed to show the world the current state of the planet, how our lives have made an impact on it, and the challenges we are facing.

enjoy!



Maria Erdal Askim,
intern at the Nordic desk at
UNRIC in Brussels

www.coolplanet2009.org

Interns rip into reviewing

Documentary: ***Policy Peril: Why Global Warming Policies are More Dangerous than Global Warming Itself***, by Marlow Lewis, Jr.

Designed to exhibit a view on climate change not usually heard, a good portion of this documentary is spent explaining why climate change is actually not a big problem, painstakingly taking the time to discredit each of the claims made in Al Gore's *An Inconvenient Truth*. The documentary's arguments against climate change policy are recycled opinions lacking in insight about limits on free trade and skyrocketing energy prices. 2/5 stars (Kimberly Ostrum)

Documentary: ***Zeitgeist Addendum***, by Peter Joseph.

This film-slash-documentary may be an astonishing eye opener for many people. For those who are aware of the corruption among people with power, it will provide even more substance. Everyone should see this film! 5/5 (Pedro Sousa)

Film: ***In the Loop***, by Armando Iannucci, with Peter Capaldi and Tom Hollander.

This satirical movie derides the decision-making process in both Downing Street and the White House, with a deluge of small details that will ring true to anyone who has worked in a political or administrative environment: exaggerated use of acronyms, eager interns trying to impress their boss. The end of the movie takes place at the UN Headquarters in New York, so a must-see for all Internal Voices readers! 4/5 (Helena Faure)

Film: ***(500) Days of Summer***, by Marc Webb, with Joseph Gordon-Levitt and Zoëy Deschanel.

As the previews say, it's not a love story, but that's what makes it terrific. Stellar performances from Joseph-Gordon Levitt and Zoëy Deschanel

allow the audience to fall in love along with the actors. A must see for anyone who appreciates creative directing and an honest portrayal of relationships 3/5 (Camille Danvers)

Film: ***Brüno***, by Larry Charles, with Sacha Baron Cohen.

The combination of stereotypes and provocation is comedy at its most inane. It's not that stereotypical characters can't be funny, but Brüno lacks substance and is ultimately a failure in both comedy and social commentary terms. Sacha Baron-Cohen is not confronting the issues of homophobia, misogyny, racism and sexual abuse, he is exploiting them. Baron-Cohen's Brüno is the gay character that homophobes want to see: a sexual predator that wants sex with every man. Brüno plainly perpetuates this stereotype and obfuscates the issue that gay men are most often the victims of sexual violence, not the perpetrators. 0/5 (James Morris)

Book: ***1984***, by George Orwell.

This amazing book is a classic dystopian novel that tells us what happens when a government becomes an all-powerful totalitarian regime. The novel is a portrayal of pervasive government surveillance and control with great political and social insight. 4/5 (Pedro Sousa)

Book: ***Sea of Poppies***, by Amitay Ghosh.

The first in a trilogy, *Sea of Poppies* chronicles the lives of an opium farm widow, a half-Chinese criminal, a convicted raja, a transgender servant and a half-black American sailor as their lives intersect against the backdrop of the 19th century Opium Trade in India. Ghosh has crafted a remarkably written, page-turner which leaves the reader eager for the second in the series. 4/5 (Camille Danvers)

Book: ***The Duel***, by Anton Chekhov.

The Duel is a definitive portrait of Chekhov's masterful style and lyrical language. It is a tale about a group of people trapped in a remote Caucasian town. Chekhov leads the reader in scattered scenes and with the simplest language into the lives of his characters. However, the story is not simply about gloomy people and their spineless lives. Chekhov reveals the cruelty and disingenuousness of human relationships in the *Duel* by displaying the psychology of his characters and the hidden emotions in their subconsciousness. With consistent attention to detail and poignant style, Anton Pavlovich Chekhov proves himself as a distinguished story teller in Russian literature. 5/5 (Elçin Haskollar)

Concert: ***Kaiser Chiefs at Rock Werchter***, Belgium, 5.7.2009

British indie band Kaiser Chiefs played one of the most energetic shows at Rock Werchter. Lead singer Ricky Wilson got the audience singing and jumping, even though the band had to play in between such diverse acts as Black Eyed Peas and Nine Inch Nails. The strong performance exceeded any expectations and showed that the Kaiser Chief's truly belong to the British indie elite. 4/5 (Viivi Erkkilä)

Concert: ***U2 at Wembley Stadium***, London, UK, 15.8.09

Irish rockers touched down in London for the 360° tour, playing to the biggest ever crowd at the Wembley stadium! Bono and his band used a mammoth set-piece, which enabled them to squeeze more fans into the venue and the fans could surround the stage rather than stand in front of it. "Sunday Bloody Sunday" was dedicated to Iranian pro-democracy demonstrators and "Walk On" was transformed into a gauche act of solidarity with Aung San Suu Kyi. 5/5 (Federica Galafate)



*Elçin Haskollar,
intern at UN
Headquarters in
New York*

In(tern)ing) the Kitchen!

Turkish Spinach Pie (Ispanakli Borek)

Ingredients:

- 20 phyllo (a.k.a. 'fillo') pastry sheets
- 1 lb fresh or frozen spinach
- 1/2 cup feta cheese (or mozzarella cheese)
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- 1/3 cup oil
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 1/2 tsp black pepper
- sesame or poppy seeds for decoration



1. Thaw the pastry sheets according to the instructions on the package.

2. Place fresh spinach in a bowl and add a little bit of salt. If you're using frozen spinach, let it thaw first. Rub spinach leaves with your fingers until wilted. Then squeeze to drain excessive water. Add the cheese and black pepper to the spinach and mix well.

3. Beat the eggs in another bowl. Add milk and oil to the mixture. Mix well.

4. Grease a large casserole dish. Layer 10 phyllo pastry sheets in the dish and generously brush every layer with the egg mixture. Then add the spinach mix. Keep layering the rest of phyllos by brushing each layer with the mixture. Once finished, add the left over egg mixture on top.

5. Decorate with sesame/poppy seeds. Bake in a pre-heated oven at 400°F (about 205°C) for 30 minutes or until golden brown. Wait to cool down for 10 minutes. Cut into squares and serve with a green salad.

***The Green Jukebox:** In recent years, musicians from around the world have been playing to raise awareness of global environmental issues, creating a global, green jukebox of sorts. Pedro Sousa, intern at the Portuguese Desk at UNRIC in Brussels, writes about his favourite bands' music and their inspirational work for the environment.*

Australian **Xavier Rudd** is a singer and songwriter, whose music is a unique blend of reggae, acoustic, and folk, combined with socially charged lyrics. Born in Bells Beach, Victoria, Rudd is a veritable one-man band, playing eight instruments or more, including the guitar, harmonica, didgeridoo, djembes, and drums. His live performances are known for their energy and diversity. Rudd's socially conscious lyrics are particularly passionate in support of environmental conservation and respect for Aboriginal peoples. For instance, his

song entitled "Better People" lauds the efforts of those who are making a positive impact on the world through their environmental and social-justice activism. Another song, "Footprint," examines the damage being done by global warming: "There are leaders who lead / our leaders prefer to deceive / as our oceans they rise, they rise / still now they choose to deny."

Another band to join the global effort to raise environmental awareness is the Icelandic group **Sigur Rós**, whose music is said by many to reflect the 'magical' nature of

Iceland. The group has voiced its concern, even anger, over the destruction of Iceland's nature due to industrial development and the band was recently named "Friends of the United Nations" for its dedicated work in promoting environmental awareness. In a documentary on the group, "Heima," the members of Sigur Rós criticise the greed of those who seek money in complete disregard for the long-term consequences of that pursuit on Iceland, its landscape, or its people. ■

The Summer of Ban



Starting out easy: Mr. Ban dines with the Japanese Foreign Minister in Tokyo, 30 June.

UN Photo/Mark Garten



Human rights abusers beware!: Ban gets an archery lesson while visiting Mongolia's nomadic herder communities, 26 July.

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



Ban in Burma: The SG visits Kyun Da village in Myanmar in July to see first-hand the reconstruction following the tropical storm 'Nargis' last year.

UN Photo/Mark Garten



Tell me more!: The BBC interview Mr. Ban on climate change following the G-8 meeting in L'Aquila, Italy, 9 July.

UN Photo/Mark Garten

Are you thinking "I wonder what the UN Secretary-General has been up to this summer"? Well look no further!



That's 'Dr. Ban' to you: The SG receives an Honorary Doctorate Degree from the National University of Mongolia in Ulanbaatar, 28 July.

UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe



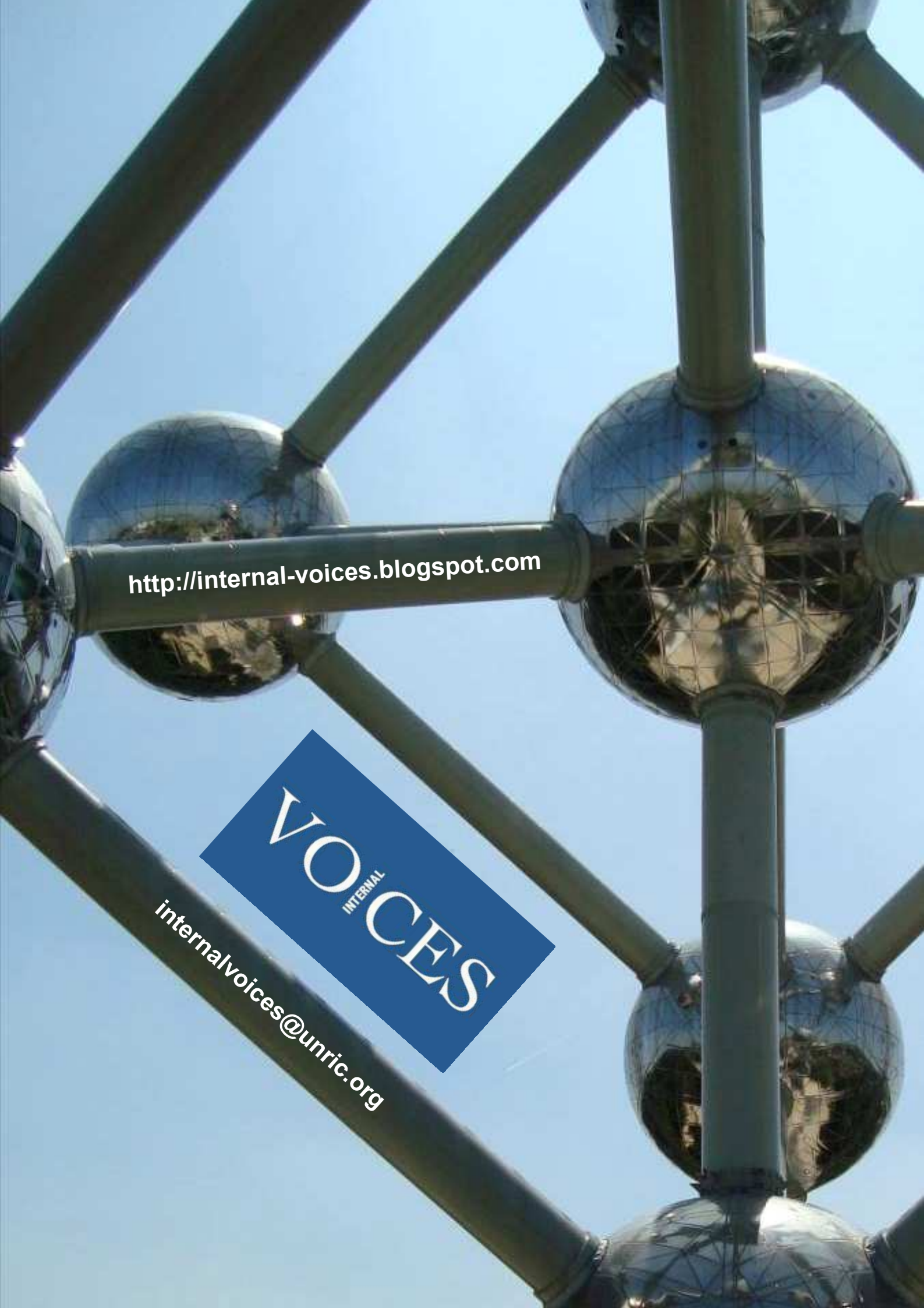
Pleased to meet you: Ban meets with WFP Celebrity Partner and 2006 Miss Universe Kurara Cibana, 1 July.

UN Photo/Mark Garten



Back in NYC: After a long summer of travelling, the Secretary-General returns home to address the Security Council on women and security, 7 August.

UN Photo/Jenny Rockett



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