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Topic of the Month: Victorian Bushfire Tragedy

Ban voices sadness at Australia's deadly fires

11 February 2009

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has voiced his sadness at the deadly fires that have swept across south-eastern Australia, reportedly killing at least 180 people and leaving dozens missing.

"The Secretary-General is deeply saddened about the deaths and

injuries of hundreds of people as a result of bushfires in the state of Victoria in Australia," a [statement](#) issued last night by his spokesperson said.

"He extends his deepest condolences to the families of those who have been killed or injured in the fires."

[More Details](#)

Kevin Rudd: Parliamentary Address

11 February 2009

The 7th of February will become etched in our national memory as a day of disaster, of death and of mourning. This nation has been scarred by natural disasters, disasters that remind us of our tenuous hold on this vast and forbidding land: 'Her beauty and her terror', as our nation's poem reminds us, of this 'wide brown land'. Except that the land is now black, the earth scorched, and the people in mourning.

Fire holds a great terror for us all. Its power, its speed, its roar, its relentless destruction, its capricious shifts in course, its want of mercy; all personal stories I've heard from

its survivors in recent days.

And the numbers just mount and mount. So far 173 deaths, more than 500 injured, nearly 1,000 homes destroyed, thousands now homeless, 365,000 hectares burnt, 25 local government authorities affected, entire towns gone.

Mr Speaker, our first response as Australians must be as it has been, to extend the open hand of friendship, of empathy and of giving. The people of Victoria are not alone in this disaster because the entire nation is with them. And not just the nation but good people across the world, an expression of our common humanity.

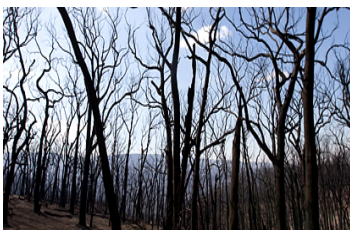
[More Details](#)

Queen offers sympathy to fire victims



**Victorian Bushfire
Appeal 2009**

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The Queen has expressed shock over the death toll exacted by the Victorian bushfires and extended the Royal Family's heart felt condolences to the victims and families of the victims of the fires.

In a statement issued to the Australian High Commission late on Sunday night in London, Queen Elizabeth said she had been deeply saddened by the tragedy: "I was shocked and saddened to learn of the terrible toll being exacted by the fires this weekend. I send my heartfelt condolences to the families

of all those who have died and my deep sympathy to the many that have lost their homes in this disaster.

"On so dreadful an occasion as this for Australia, the firefighters and other emergency services have been making extraordinary efforts to contain the situation and tend to those who have been injured. Please also convey to them my renewed admiration for all that they are doing" the Queen said.

[More Details](#)

Peace and Security

Global fiscal stimulus funds could jump-start world economy — UN report

16 February 2009

Investing one-third of the roughly \$2.5 trillion planned stimulus funds in "greening" the global economy will give a large boost to efforts to lift the world out of recession, according to a new United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) released today. The estimated \$750 million – or some 1 per cent of current global Gross Domestic Product (GDP) – could spur significant returns, including stimulating innovation and job growth, slashing greenhouse gas emissions and making strides towards curbing poverty.

The 154-page "Global Green New Deal" report – written in consultation with experts from over two dozen UN and external organizations, including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank – was released today as more than 100 Environment Ministers have converged in Nairobi, Kenya, for UNEP's four-day Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, which began today.

[More Details](#)

Ban more determined than ever after Gaza war to achieve Middle East peace

11 February 2009

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon [said](#) today his recent visit to war-racked Gaza had left him more determined than ever to achieve the two-State solution of Israel and Palestine living side by side in security as well as a lasting peace between Israel and all its Arab neighbours.

"The peace process must be revitalized, and negotiations should resume leading to a lasting settlement of the conflict, based on relevant Security Council resolutions, the Road Map, and the Arab Peace

Initiative," he [told](#) the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, referring to the two-State solution and the Saudi plan for full Arab peace with Israel in return for full withdrawal from territory it seized in 1967.

"I renew my pledge to do all I can to ensure that this goal is achieved. The international community must also do its part. This is now more urgent than ever."

[More Details](#)

Health and Poverty

UN dispatches humanitarian mission to Zimbabwe as cholera deaths near 3,400

Peace & Security:

- [Ban repeats call for release of kidnapped UN staff member in Pakistan](#)
- [UN General Assembly on verge of negotiating Security Council reform](#)
- [UN calls on Côte d'Ivoire to push for presidential elections in late 2009](#)



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon gets first-hand look at Gaza devastation



UNICEF has brought assistance to a clinic in Chinrundu, Zimbabwe to deal with the cholera epidemic

A United Nations humanitarian mission will be going later this month to Zimbabwe, where the worst ever cholera outbreak in the country's history has now claimed almost 3,400 lives, the world body announced today.

The UN World Health Organization ([WHO](#)) said that as of 5 February, nearly 68,000 cases of cholera have been reported since the outbreak

began last August, and of those, 3,371 people have died.

The mission, led by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), will visit the southern African nation from 21 to 25 February and will also include the participation of WHO, the UN Children's Fund ([UNICEF](#)) and the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)).

[More Details](#)

Human Rights

UN human rights expert to visit Myanmar

13 February 2009

The independent United Nations expert on the situation of human rights in Myanmar will begin a six-day visit beginning tomorrow to assess developments in the South-East Asian nation since his previous mission last year.

Special Rapporteur Tomás Ojea Quintana, who was appointed to his post in May 2008 by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council, made his first visit to Myanmar last August.

In a [report](#) issued following that visit, Mr. Quintana proposed that four core human rights elements be

implemented: the revision of domestic laws that limit fundamental rights, the progressive release of the estimated 2,000 prisoners of conscience still in detention, the reform and training of the military so that it conforms with human rights, and changes to the judiciary so that it is fully independent.

These four elements must be completed before national elections are held in 2010, he added.

The Special Rapporteur will discuss the implementation of these four elements with relevant officials during his 14-19 February mission.

[More Details](#)

Human Rights:

- [Child abuse, rape, armed recruitment rampant in Central African Republic, UN reports](#)
- [Nepal: UN rights office welcomes progress in enforced disappearance case](#)
- [Survivors of Ugandan rebel massacres in DR Congo seek help from UN](#)

UNAA News & Events

UNAA World Environment Day Awards 2009

Nominations for the 2009 United Nations Association of Australia World Environment Day Awards are **now open**.

This awards program seeks to recognise businesses, local governments, organisations,

community groups, individuals and the media whose work serves to protect, manage or restore the environment.

For a complete list of categories, guidelines and entry criteria please visit our [website](#).

UNIFEM International Women's Day Fundraising Breakfast

United Nations Development Fund for Women (Australia) cordially invites you to the 2009 *International Women's Day Fundraising Breakfast*.

This year's international speaker is Ms Fozilitun Nessa, advocate for the Bangladeshi Acid Survivors Foundation. She will be sharing her story in a bid to raise awareness about this pervasive violation of

women's rights.

When: Wednesday 4 March

Time: 7:00am—8:45am

Venue: Leonda by the Yarra,
2 Wallen Rd, Hawthorn

Admission: \$35 student/\$50 adult

Please call 0448 388 191 or email melbourne@unifem.org.au for more information.



Everyday People. Everyday Rights Human Rights Conference '09

16 & 17 March 2009

The Melbourne Park Function Centre,
Batman Avenue, Melbourne.

Hosted by the [Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission](#).

Freedom, Respect, Equality, Dignity

This conference presents an exciting

opportunity to hear from respected human rights advocates, engage in lively panel discussions and be part of the latest discussion on protecting human rights.

Participants will gain a broader understanding of human rights as it applies to Australians, particularly youth and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

[More Details](#)

UN Observances

20 February: World Day of Social Justice

At its sixty-second session, in November 2007, the General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed 20 February as World Day of Social Justice. The day is to be observed for the first time in 2009.

Member states were invited to devote this special day to the promotion of concrete national activities in accordance with the objectives and goals of the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

As recognized by the World Summit, social development aims at social justice, solidarity, harmony and equality within and among countries and social justice, equality and equity constitute the fundamental values of all societies.

[More Details](#)

21 February: International Mother Language Day

International Mother Language Day was proclaimed by UNESCO's General Conference in November 1999. The International Day has been observed every year since February 2000 to promote [linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism](#).

Languages are the most powerful instruments of preserving and developing our tangible and intangible heritage. All moves to promote the dissemination of mother tongues will serve not only to encourage linguistic diversity and multilingual education but also to develop fuller awareness of linguistic and cultural traditions throughout the world and to inspire solidarity based on understanding, tolerance and dialogue.

[More Details](#)



21 February:
International Mother
Language Day

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