ICC issues arrest warrant for Sudanese minister for alleged Darfur crimes


The International Criminal Court (ICC) had issued an arrest warrant against Sudanese Defense Minister Abdelrahim Mohamed Hussein for his alleged conduct of international crimes committed in Darfur.

Out of the 41 counts of international crime, Hussein is charged to be criminally responsible for 20 counts of crimes against humanity (persecution, murder, forcible transfer, rape, inhumane acts, imprisonment or severe deprivation of liberty and torture), and 21 counts of war crimes (murder, attacks against civilian population, destruction of property, rape, pillaging and outrage upon personal dignity).

The alleged crimes are believed to be perpetrated by Hussein during attacks on the towns and villages of Kodeoom, Bindisi, Mukjar and Arawala in the Wadi Salih and Mukjar localities of West Darfur state from August 2003 to March 2004.

From evidences gathered, the ICC Prosecutor strongly believes that Hussein is one of those who bear the greatest criminal responsibility for the same crimes and incidents presented in previous warrants of arrest for government minister Ahmed Harun and Janjaweed leader Ali Kushayb, both of whom have been indicted by the Court.

This is the ICC's fourth case in Darfur, which the Security Council referred to it in 2005 after a UN inquiry found serious violations of international human rights law.

(Theodore Manggala Amarendra)

International Criminal Court to deliver its first verdict next month


The International Criminal Court (ICC) announced its plan to deliver its first ever verdict on 14 March 2012, issuing a judgment

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in the war crimes trial of Thomas Lubanga Dyilo, a Congolese man accused of participating in the recruitment of child soldiers. The trial itself started in January 2009. Closing statements were presented by the parties and participants in August 2011.

Mr. Lubanga Dyilo is accused of having committed, with others, the war crimes of enlisting and conscripting children under the age of 15 into the rebel group known as Forces patriotes pour la libération du Congo (Patriotic Forces for the Liberation of the Congo), and using them to participate actively in hostilities in Ituri district in northeastern the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) between September 2002 and August 2003.

In accordance with Article 66(3) of the 2002 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, to convict an accused person, the trial chamber must be convinced of his or her guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

In the event of a conviction, the trial chamber will consider an appropriate sentence. Irrespective of whether the accused is acquitted or convicted, the court is required to establish the principles to be applied in relation to reparations, and it may make orders regarding awards of reparations to victims.

(Theodore Mangala Amarendra)

Security Council extends UN presence in Timor-Leste until end of 2012


The Security Council had extended the mandate of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Timor-Leste until the end of 2012. UN is hoped to continue promoting peace, stability and development in Timor-Leste along this year; an—expected to be—eventful year for the country.

Until its expected departure on 31 December, the UN Integrated Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) will assist with key tasks such as institutional development and capacity-building of the national police, known as the PNTL, as well as provide electoral assistance.
This year Timor-Leste will celebrate the 10th anniversary of its independence and hold presidential elections on 17 March, followed by a legislative poll at the end of June.

By its resolution 1969 published in 2011, the Council endorsed the plan of UNMIT’s phased drawdown, “in accordance with the wishes of the Government of Timor-Leste, conditions on the ground and following the successful completion of the 2012 electoral process.”

It also urged all parties in the country, particularly political leaders, to continue to work together and engage in political dialogue and to consolidate peace, democracy, rule of law, and sustainable social and economic development; promote human rights; and advance national reconciliation.

Aucrah Haq, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of UNMIT, told the Council yesterday that Timor-Leste has made significant progress in strengthening national peace and stability and that preparation for the upcoming elections are going smoothly.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will, after consulting with the Government formed after the elections, submit a report to the Council on his suggestions on UNMIT’s anticipated withdrawal and the scope of the UN’s future presence in Timor-Leste.

(Theodore Manggala Amarendra)

China, Philippines Argue Over Planned Oil Search

http://www.thejakartaglobe.com/nias/china-philippines-argue-over-planned-oil-search/591432

Lately in February, the Philippines have claimed that they have the right to invite foreign companies to explore the oil and gases located between its western coast and the South China Sea, dismissing China’s claim of sovereignty and jurisdiction over the South China Sea.

The verbal tussle erupted after Philippines’ Energy Secretary, Jose Almendras told reports in Manila that the Philippine government has invited major foreign oil companies to invest in fuel exploration in two offshore areas northwest of Palawan province, a region falling within the State’s 200-mile Exclusive Economic Zone.

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Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman, Hong Lei, replied that the offshore areas are China’s, and it would be illegal for any country, government, or company, to develop oil and natural gas under Chinese jurisdiction, without the Chinese government’s permission.

Rejecting China’s position, Philippine Foreign Secretary Albert del Rosario said in a brief statement that the offshore areas being opened to foreign investors are well within the Philippine’s sovereignty based on the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea.

Last year, Philippines officials separately accuse China for repeatedly intruding into its maritime territories, and at least once trying to disrupt a Philippine oil exploration in another offshore area called the Reed Bank, also off Palawan.

Palawan province, about 820 kilometers southwest of Manila, faces the South China Sea, The sea, which surrounds potentially oil – and gas–rich islands and reefs, is claimed entirely by China, but the Philippines, Brunei, Malaysia, Taiwan and Vietnam have made competing claims.

The Philippines has invited companies to explore for oil and gas in 15 areas nationwide, including the offshore areas lying 79 kilometers and 123 kilometers from Palawan.

Almendras said that the Philippine government would start awarding exploration contracts to investors next month. He did not say whether the first batch of permits will cover the two areas also being claimed by China.

(Theodore Manggala Amarendra)

EU leaders set to endorse Serbian candidacy

European Union leaders are expected to formally grant Serbia the status of a candidate for membership in the bloc during their summit on 1 March 2012 in recognition of its government’s efforts to round up war crimes suspects and normalize relations with its former province of Kosovo.

The move would represent a remarkable turnaround for Serbia, which spent much of the 1990s ostracized and isolated from the EU after its then-strongman Slobodan Milosevic instigated the wars in

http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2012/03/01/eu-leaders-set-endorse-serbian-candidacy.html
Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo. When Milosevic agreed to a U.S.-brokered agreement to end the war in Bosnia in 1995, about 60,000 NATO troops— including about 30,000 Americans—were deployed to that nation to enforce the accord.

And in 1999, NATO bombed Serbia to prevent a crackdown on ethnic Albanians— in the first military campaign in the alliance’s history.

Serbia had been widely expected to get candidacy in December after it captured two top war crimes suspects, but was disappointed when Germany delayed the move, saying it wanted to see more progress in talks with Kosovo.

EU foreign ministers recommended earlier this week that Serbia be granted the coveted status after saying it had fulfilled conditions set by the 27-nation bloc. The bloc’s leaders routinely affirm such ministerial decisions.

Kosovo, which many Serbs consider the cradle of their statehood and religion, came under international control after the 1999 war in which NATO forces ejected Milosevic’s troops. Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Serbia refuses to recognize the move.

Although the EU has not set recognition of Kosovo as a formal requirement for Serbia’s candidacy, it insists Serbia establish "good-neighborly relations" with its former province.

Over the past year, the two sides have been engaged in EU-mediated talks dealing mostly with practical matters such as recognizing each other’s official documents. A key agreement reached last month allows Kosovo to represent itself in international conferences and spell out the technical details of how Serbia and Kosovo will manage their joint borders and border crossings.

Candidate status is an initial step on the road to EU membership. Belgrade will still probably have to wait for about a year to open actual accession negotiations, which can then drag on for up to a decade.

The EU move would also be politically important for Serbia’s pro-EU President Boris Tadic, whose party faces elections soon.

(Theodore Mangala Amarendra)
Prosecutors propose new charge for Hariri suspects

Prosecutors at the UN-backed tribunal investigating the 2005 assassination of former Lebanese PM Rafik Hariri want to expand the charges against the accused.

The Special Tribunal for Lebanon (STL) said adding the count of "criminal association" had been proposed, an offence under the Lebanese penal code.

It was revealed in a request to the appeals chamber seeking clarification.

Arrest warrants have been issued for four members of the Shia Islamist group Hezbollah, but they remain at large.

Mustafa Badreddine, Salim Ayyash, Hussein Oneissi and Assad Sabra were charged in June on nine counts, including the murder of Rafik Hariri and 21 others, who died when a suicide bomber drove a van packed with 2,500kg (5,510lb) of explosives into his convoy in Beirut.

Last month, the STL's trial chamber said it would try them in absentia after "all reasonable steps" had been taken to arrest them.

Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah has rejected "each and every void accusation" and said no power would be able to arrest the men.

On Friday, a statement published by the STL said the prosecution was "seeking to add a new count to the indictment of 'criminal association', which is an offence under the Lebanese penal code (Article 335').

The proposal was disclosed because the pre-trial judge had asked the tribunal's appeals chamber to define the crime of 'criminal association'.

Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati said last month that the STL's chief prosecutor Daniel Bellemare would be submitting a revised indictment before he left office at the end of February.

He said Mr Bellemare had told him that the new charges concerned information on car bomb attacks on three other Lebanese politicians - George Hawi, a former leader of the Lebanese Communist Party who was killed in June 2005; and former Defence Minister Michel Murr and former Telecommunications Minister Marwan Hamadeh, who survived bombings in July 2005 and October 2004 respectively.
On Wednesday, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon named Norman Farrell, the Canadian deputy prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), as Mr Bellemare's successor.

Last week, Mr Ban extended the STL's mandate for three years and reiterated the UN’s commitment to uncover the truth behind Hariri’s death.

(Theodore Manugala Amarendra)

West seeks to pressure Iran at U.N. nuclear meet

http://www.reuters.com/article/2012/03/02/us-nuclear-iran-iaea-idUSTRE82110K20120302

Western powers hope to win Russian and Chinese backing for rebuking Iran at the UN nuclear agency next week over Tehran's weapons capability. Seeking to ward off any such diplomatic action, Iran has warned its opponents and others against making “provocative statements” at the March 5-9 meeting of the 35-nation governing board of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Western envoys seek broad support from nations, especially Russia and China that have backed four rounds of UN sanctions since 2006, for a new IAEA resolution.

An IAEA resolution, while containing no concrete measures, would be aimed at sending a united message to Iran that they must stop stonewalling the UN agency's investigation into possible military dimensions to its nuclear program. Iran’s lack of cooperation with a senior IAEA team, during two rounds of meetings in Tehran in January and February, represented a “gigantic slap in the face” for IAEA.

A report by IAEA said Iran was significantly stepping up uranium enrichment. Iran denied westerns accusation that they seek weapons of mass destruction, saying uranium enrichment is needed for the Tehran Research reactor making isotopes for cancer care.

The tensions between Tehran and the West could, at any time, escalate into military conflict.

(Theodore Manugala Amarendra)
EU summit: All but two leaders sign fiscal treaty

http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-12230760

UK and Czech refuses in signing a new treaty to enforce budget discipline within the European bloc, despite the treaty having signed by the remaining 25 EU states. The new fiscal treaty aims to prevent 17 EU states running up huge debts like those that sparkled the Greek, Irish and Portuguese bailouts.

UK Prime Minister David Cameron complains that his ideas for cutting red tape and boosting growth were being ignored, but later approves that the summit have taken into serious concerns about this issue. The newly reappointed President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, affirms that the British proposals were being taken seriously and he had sought to redraft the summit’s conclusion accordingly.

Critics argue that the fiscal treaty is mainly a political gesture aimed to reassure taxpayers in Germany, EU’s dominant economy, where there is reluctance to pay for further Eurozone bailouts. German Chancellor Angela Merkel described this treaty as a “great leap,” a first step towards stability and political union.

The idea of creating this treaty emerged at the EU summit in December, where Cameron vetoed plans to change the EU treaties so that greater budget surveillance would be enforced.

The fiscal treaty, taking into effect after being ratified by at least 12 EU states, will later go before national parliaments and, in the case of the Irish Republic, a referendum.

(Theodore Manggala Amarendra)
Why China So Resists Syrian Intervention

http://www.thejakartapost.com/dewa/2012/03/01/why-china-so-resists-syrian-intervention.html

The full totality of evil of the Syrian government is now on display for the entire world to see. The brutality of its political leader, President Bashar al-Assad, is beyond immense. It's times like these when 'intellectual precision' is especially vital in times of geopolitical passion.

Bashar undoubtedly tops the hateful along with the blame list, yet Russia and China are not far behind the ladder for refusing to vote resolutions against Damascus for major changes that are filed by the United Nations Security Council. The first is that Russia and China come at the issue from different perspectives.

Moscow works from strictly defined national interest. Damascus has been a friend that has given it broad and significant access to the strategic Middle East without which Russian influence would be much reduced. On the other hand, the Republic of China approaches the issue from a broader perspective of its geopolitical philosophy. They stated that international practice should not be exemplified by throwing stones at anyone else for the manner of their conduct of domestic security. In other words, the Chinese portray that its overall foreign policy is grounded in the long-held principle of "non-interference in the internal affairs of other states". The contrasting principle would be the "policeman of the world" approach, the practice of which the United States has sometimes been accused.

The Russian approach is to not sever any ties with its 'long time friend', Syria, as the relationship goes back towards its history when they engaged in a military cooperation back in 1971 of the Cold War. In addition, it is reported that there are significant trade relations between these two countries. Russia's exports to Syria were worth $1.1 billion in 2010 and the investments in the country were valued at $19.4 billion in 2009. Therefore, one would agree or at least to understand the gravity of the Russian view, though it may create further tensions towards nations around the world.

However, the Chinese view is rooted in a more complex thought, emotion and experience. Where it fundamentally negates the exist-
ence of international practice and intervention conducted by the United Nations. They include a tortured history of centuries of intrusion and invasion by foreign powers eager to run China their own (colonial or neo-colonial or Western) way. This particular view also derives from the Treaty of Westphalia, which way back when (1648) ushered in the era of sovereign nations. The essence of sovereignty includes the right of countries to rule exactly as they wish as long as they stay within borders.

From the logic of the Chinese perspective, therefore, nothing that has been happening inside Syria should be said to be axiomatically a candidate for international intervention. In fact, it could be argued that Damascus is struggling mightily to maintain the territorial integrity of Syria so as to avoid national fragmentation.

Kofi Annan, the previous UN secretary-general, deserves credit for having insisted on the new global doctrine — “the responsibility to protect” (cleverly: “R2P”) — in the wake of the humanitarian disasters of Rwanda, Somalia, Srebrenica and Kosovo. The theory here is that the international community must exercise “the right to humanitarian intervention” when nation-states are visibly pulverizing their own people. It has a notion that pertains in upholding both the International Humanitarian Law and also the International Human Rights Law. Ban continued with both emotion and logic in this fashion, explaining that “R2P” is now the normative standard in the approach of the UN secretary-general to such issues of the so-called “Arab Spring.”

The UN secretary-general believes that “a natural evolution of history” will make the “see-no-evil, hear-no-evil” Westphalian approach outdated. If so, then Beijing might be viewed as being on the wrong side of history. But at least the Chinese tendency is rooted in something other than a narrow national interest.

(Dimas Sukirno)
UN rights experts urge Pakistan to end sectarian violence, protect minorities


There has been a report that at least 18 Shia Muslims were killed on Tuesday after they were ordered off a bus in the northern district of Kohistan. A group of independent United Nations human rights experts today urged the Government of Pakistan to take decisive measures to end sectarian violence and protect religious minorities after a second incident of targeted killings in two weeks.

"These killings are extremely shocking and constitute acts that require the strongest response," said Rita Izsák, the Independent Expert on minority issues. "They have sadly become a recurrent practice in Pakistan, and we urge the Pakistan Government to identify and prosecute the perpetrators and do everything possible to establish strengthened security measures." Stated by the three human rights experts in a joint press release.

The experts expressed their condolences to the families of those killed and to all the people of Pakistan who suffer from such acts of terror.

"These targeted killings once more display the appalling degree of religious hatred in a country where there seems to be a failure to protect the security of religious minorities," said Heiner Bielefeldt, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief."

Christof Heyns, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial said failure to take appropriate steps to prevent, investigate and punish for such acts is a violation of Article 6 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICPR). He furthermore emphasizes that the Government has an obligation to take all necessary measures to protect the right to life.

In addition, the three welcomed the condemnation expressed by Pakistani Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani.

"Such serious incidents demand, and communities have the right to expect, the most rigorous response possible from the Government," they said. They urged the Government to step up security in the face of the "clear and present threat faced by certain groups on the basis of their religion."
In a previous incident on 17 February, more than 30 people were killed or wounded when a suicide bomber detonated an explosive close to a mosque in a mainly Shia neighborhood in the Kurram tribal region.

(Dimas Sukirno)

After ‘critical’ year, UN official urges countries to boost human rights protection


The United Nations human rights chief today called on countries to increase measures to protect the rights of their citizens, particularly those facing discrimination and living in marginalized communities, as well as those that have been involved in civil movements. As they call 2011 as a ‘critical’ year in terms of the progress of universal human rights.

“It (2001) was a year of substantial challenges to human rights linked to the global economic, climate, energy and food crises, famine in the Horn of Africa, armed conflict, racism and xenophobia, and lingering poverty," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, told the Human Rights Council during her presentation of her office’s annual report.

Navi Pillay also state that it was also a year when we witnessed the mobilization of civil society contesting repressive power structures and failed forms of governance... particularly in the Middle East and North Africa. Therefore, at a crucial time of change and uncertainty in the region, it is more relevant than ever to strengthen human rights mechanisms that bring justice to citizens whose rights have been abused.

Ms. Pillayscrutinized on all aspects of human rights issues such as:

1. The importance of protecting marginalized communities that face discrimination on a daily basis; such as indigenous peoples, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals, persons with disabilities, and the elderly.

2. Addressing an issue of developing legislation to criminalize caste-based discrimination in Nepal, and launching the Indigenous Peoples Partnership to advance the right of minorities to participate in
decision-making processes about their traditional lands. As this measures should be dealt by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

3. Rights of migrants, calling on Member States to explore alternatives to immigration detention that do not violate refugees’ rights, especially those of children.

She further said that opposing the criminalization of irregular migration, as well as drawing attention to the vulnerability and human rights violations experienced by migrants in the context of the Arab Spring, was a strong focus of our work last year. Moreover, she welcomed last week’s judgment of the European Court of Human Rights, which ruled that it is a violation of international human rights law for a country to collectively expel migrants who are intercepted on the high seas.

She concluded a statement with workers’ rights to have sufficient economic requirements and also environmental needs.

“I urge Member States to strive for coherence between efforts to advance the green economy, on the one hand, and human rights on the other; to recognize that policies and measures adopted to advance sustainable development must be firmly grounded in, and respectful of, human rights, including the right to development,” she said.

(Dimas Sukirno)

North Korea agrees to suspend nuclear activities


There has been a confirmation stating that North Korea has agreed to suspend any long-range missile activities, mostly on nuclear tests. This moratorium on nuclear has been validated by the United States.

The announcement comes little more than two months after the death of longtime ruler Kim Jong Il, and suggests North Korea has met the key U.S. preconditions for re-starting multi-nation disarmament-for-aid talks that the North withdrew from in 2009.

“The North (Korea) has agreed to allow International Atomic Energy inspectors to verify and monitor
the moratorium on uranium enrichment and confirm disablement of its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon,” as the State Department spokeswoman, Victoria Nuland, said.

Her statement says the US will meet with North Korea to finalize details for a proposed package of 240,000 metric tons of food aid.

This signifies the notion of a ‘healthier’ relationship towards the US-North Korea talks. As it further supported that the allowance of UN inspectors is to maintain positive atmosphere.

(Dimas Sukirno)

Indonesia-HK treaty official


The House of Representatives of the Republic of Indonesia has officially passed a bill on Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) with Hong Kong’s Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China.

The treaty will allow both countries to provide legal assistance, including evidence, witness accounts and suspect identifications to each other to assist with criminal matters.

Minister of Law and Human Rights, Amir Syamsuddin, highlighted that both countries could not refuse to provide legal assistance on behalf of bank secrecy.

This would boost the political ties as well as fostering legal certainty whilst SusiloBambangYudhoyono states that the bill reflects the government’s commitment to deal with transnational crimes. The statement was delivered in a speech on the endorsement of the bill.

(Dimas Sukirno)
Countries must invest in food security strategies to reduce poverty – UN official


Food security strategies and agricultural investment to reduce poverty are two priorities that every government needs to execute. This release was stated by the United Nations official today, stressing that supporting small farmers are paramount importance in preventing food crises.

David Nabarro, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative on Food Security and Nutrition, told a news briefing in Geneva that one of the main challenges the world faces today is ensuring that it can meet the demand for food for nine billion people by 2050.

Yet, Nabarro continued to be optimistic as he followed up with “To tackle this challenge”, he said, “countries should focus on making sure that they have the necessary measures in place to be able to provide food for their population.” However, throughout the years, this has become more complex in recent years due to the influx in volatile food prices.

Evidently, during 2007 and 2008, rises in food prices triggered a crisis which saw riots in more than 35 countries as prices soared by as much as 30 to 50 per cent and 700 million people suffered from hunger. Since then, prices have remained inconsistent due to uncertainty in the world economy as well as changes in demand and shortage of supplies.

Moreover, Mr. Nabarrosaid one of the UN’s priorities was to continue to sustain efforts in the 22 countries that experience recurring food crises, such as Somalia, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and parts of Uganda and northern Tanzania.

He also stated that one the main lessons learned by the international community in the past years was that repeated bursts of humanitarian aid were not the answer to help these countries in the long term. Instead, funding for programs that increase their resilience and investing in small farmers, who produce most of the food in Africa, proved to be a better strategy.
Long-term investment in Ethiopia meant it had been successful in providing a safety net to its citizens, while in Kenya poor infrastructure had hindered the ability to move food from plentiful to drought-hit areas, he noted. In Somalia a general lack of access led to famine being declared, and communities were still trying to recover.

Mr. Nabarro underlined that the Task Force, comprising the heads of more than 20 UN departments, will continue to engage with these countries and will pay particular attention to fighting malnourishment in children and increasing communities’ resilience to climate change.

(Dimas Sukirno)

UN-backed climate forum forecasts erratic rainy season in Horn of Africa

The United Nations climate forecasting forum reported that the rainy season in the Greater Horn of Africa is likely to receive ‘near normal to below normal rainfall’ over much of the region between March and May.

This rainfall outlook applies in particular to areas that were ravaged by severe drought last year, including much of Somalia; Djibouti; eastern and northern Kenya; and southern, eastern and Northeastern Ethiopia.

In spite of the near normal rainfall, the Deputy Regional Coordinator of the UN International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR), Youcef Ait-Chellouche, said this is not good news for farmers in areas that have been affected by agricultural drought in recent years.

Mr. Ait-Chellouche said that disaster managers and sector specialists are in agreement that disaster risk reduction must be embedded in long-term development plans for the region, while preparedness measures are put in place for the humanitarian consequences of a poor rainy season in many parts of the Horn.
The 30th Greater Horn of Africa Climate Outlook Forum (GHACOF30) also found that there is a “increased likelihood of near normal to above normal rainfall” over southwestern Tanzania, southwestern Ethiopia, South Sudan and southwestern Sudan. The near normal to below normal forecast also applies too much of Tanzania, western and southern Kenya, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda.

(Dimas Sukirno)

Security Council urges prompt action by Gulf of Guinea nations to counter piracy

On the 29th of February 2012, The Security Council urged countries of the region of the Gulf of Guinea to take immediate action to develop and implement to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea.

In a unanimously adopted resolution, the 15-member body also urged the countries, through regional organizations, to work towards the convening of the planned joint Summit of Gulf of Guinea States to develop a regional anti-piracy strategy, in cooperation with the African Union.

The main purpose is to encourage the international partners to provide support to regional States and organizations to enhance their capabilities to counter piracy and armed robbery at sea in the Gulf of Guinea, including their capacity to conduct regional patrols and establish and maintain joint coordinator centers, among other measures.

“Gulf of Guinea countries need a united front in order to respond to effectively to the growing threat of piracy along their coasts. Isolated national initiatives are only temporarily, at best, pushing the pirates to shift their criminal operations from one country to the next,” B. Lynn Pascoe, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, had stated.

He told the Council that piracy and armed robbery against ships increasingly undermine efforts by States in the Gulf of Guinea region to maintain peace, security and stability and to promote socio-economic development. The threat has become even more alarming as the pirates have become more violent.

A team deployed by Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, intervenes
to assess the scope of the piracy threat in the Gulf of Guinea. As facts were found that the scourge has become more systematic, with the pirates resorting to sophisticated modes of operations and utilizing heavy weapons.

(Dimas Sukirno)

Sudan: UN agency funds farming improvement projects


The increase of input towards smallholder farmers is seemingly a trend. The new initiative aimed at improving food security in Sudan will provide the country’s farmers with improved seeds and soil to fight the threat of drought, the United Nations fund tasked with promoting rural development has announced.

It is reported that the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) will provide a $10.7 million dollar grant to help Sudanese farmers increase productivity through the use of certified seeds, improved soil and water conservation techniques, with young people and women given priority.

The agricultural sector is Sudan’s most important as it employs 80 per cent of the active population and contributes 39 per cent to the country’s gross domestic product (GDP).

The country’s land area, however, is predominantly arid and as a result most of the country’s farms remain reliant on rainfall for water, leaving them particularly susceptible to the ravages of drought.

On the other hand, the IFAD is confident that this stimulus will improve food security, incomes and resilience to environmental shocks among the smallholder producers in areas reliant on rainfall. In addition, the project will promote the public-private partnership for the supply and production of seeds.

More than 108,000 smallholder farmers and 1,280 seed growers in the Sudanese states of Northern Kordofan and Southern

It is informed that Kanayo F. Nwanze, the IFAD President, and Gafar Ahmed Abdalla Omer, State Minister signed the loan agreement for Agriculture and Irrigation of Sudan.

(Dimas Sukirno)

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US pulls UNESCO funding after Palestine is granted full membership

http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/oct/31/unesco-hits-palestinian-membership

The United States has cut off funds to UNESCO as a punitive action after the Palestinian Authority was accepted into the UN agency as a full member in defiance of American, Israeli and European pressure.

The overwhelming backing for the Palestinians’ bid to join the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation was a huge boost for their campaign for international recognition of an independent state, and a blow to Israel and the US, who had opposed the move.

Members voted by 107 votes to 14 to accept Palestine as a full member state to loud cheers from delegates in Paris. Fifty-two countries, including the UK, abstained.

Within hours, the US announced it would withhold its huge contribution to Unesco’s budget as a result of the vote. State department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland said the US had no choice due to a 21-year-old law prohibiting the payment of funds to any UN body accepting the Palestinians as full members.

A $60m (£38m) transfer that was due later this month would be halted in a move that will have serious consequences for Unesco activities. The US contributes 22% of the agency’s annual budget.

Mrs. Nulan said that the Unesco’s decision was regrettable, premature and undermines their shared goal to a comprehensive, just and lasting peace [between Israelis and Palestinians].

Israel also hinted at punitive measures. A statement from the foreign ministry said it would “consider its further steps and ongoing co-operation” with Unesco following the decision. Furthermore, it said that the move was a “unilateral Palestinian manoeuvre which will bring no change on the ground but further removes the possibility for a peace agreement”.

Nimrod Barkan, Israel’s ambassador to Unesco, described the vote as a “tragedy”. He said that the Unesco dealt in science, not science fiction. He further explained that the State members forced Unesco a political subject out of its competence.

Palestinian officials who described the vote as historic, were jubilant. Foreign minister Riyad al-Malk told the Unesco gathering in
Paris that the vote would erase a tiny part of the injustice done to the Palestinian people.

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, said that the vote represented support for freedom and justice.

In a statement to the Palestinian news agency Wafa, Mr. Abbas said that the vote was for the sake of peace and represented international consensus on support for the legitimate Palestinian national rights of their people, the foremost of which is the establishment of its independent state.

The swift action of the US in withdrawing funding is likely to increase cynicism among Palestinians about the credibility of the US as a mediator between them and the Israelis.

Membership of Unesco is largely symbolic, although it will allow the Palestinian Authority to seek world heritage status for historical sites. Israel would be expected to vigorously object to applications for sites in areas of the West Bank and East Jerusalem currently under its control. The Palestinian Authority is expected to seek Unesco world heritage status for the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, believed to be the birthplace of Jesus.

A nomination attempt was rejected earlier this year because the Palestinians were not a full Unesco member. The nomination of other sites is expected to follow.

The vote was the first taken in a UN body since the Palestinians embarked on their campaign for recognition of an independent state in the international arena. The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, submitted a formal application for full membership of the UN in September in defiance of US opposition.

The process has become mired in UN bureaucracy after the Security Council set up a subcommittee to examine the application. No date has been set for a decision, which is bound to go against the Palestinians as the US has pledged to veto the move.

The Palestinians may then take their case to the UN general assembly, which is barred from granting full membership without Security Council approval.

Monday’s vote at the Unesco general conference is an indication of the extent of support for the Palestinian case in the international community.

France was among those voting in the Palestinians’ favour, a move which could indicate its as yet unstated stance in the forthcoming security council vote on full membership of the UN.
The UK has not declared its voting intentions but is expected to line up with the US.

Others countries that voted in favour included China, Russia, India, Brazil and South Africa. The US, Canada, Germany and the Netherlands voted against. US and European diplomats made unsuccessful efforts to seek a postponement of the Unesco vote in the runup to the debate at the general conference in Paris.

Despite US and EU insistence that negotiations are the only way to secure a lasting settlement and an independent Palestinian state, efforts led by the Middle East Quartet envoy Tony Blair to restart talks between the two parties have made little progress.

Palestinian negotiators have largely despaired of securing a state through talks with Israel while the latter continues to build and expand settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

They are also deeply disappointed in the lack of pressure exerted on Israel by the US. Many feel that taking the Palestinian cause into the international arena has a greater potential for progress.

(Dimas Sukirno)