

Climate change threatens world security: UN chief

AFP, United Nations

Climate change is generating an "unholy brew" of extreme weather events that threaten global security, the UN chief said Wednesday as the Security Council recognised the issue's potential effect on world peace.

But the 15-member council apparently failed to agree on whether climate change itself was a direct threat to international peace and security, even after a rebuke by the United States which described the lack of consensus as "pathetic."

Secretary General Ban Ki-moon urged concerted action and called on developed countries to lead the charge in mitigating effects of climate change, while encouraging the developing world to do its fair share. "Extreme weather events continue to grow more frequent and

intense in rich and poor countries alike, not only devastating lives, but also infrastructure, institutions, and budgets -- an unholy brew which can create dangerous security vacuums," Ban told a Security Council debate on the issue.

Climate change, he said, "not only exacerbates threats to international peace and security; it is a threat to international peace and security."

The Security Council issued a presidential statement in which it "expresses concern that possible adverse effects of climate change may, in the long run, aggravate certain existing threats to international



Ban Ki-moon

peace and security." But it stopped short of calling climate change a threat in itself, despite pleas to do so by Pacific small island developing states.

Nauru President Marcus Stephen spoke for states such as the Maldives and Seychelles at the meeting, warning that several islands could disappear altogether, forcing large cross-border relocations.

He said that while the council members understood such security challenges, he said sympathetic words were not enough.

Speaking before the Security Council issued its statement, US ambassador to the United Nations Susan Rice blasted the council for

being unable to reach a strong consensus despite "manifest evidence" that climate change posed a direct threat to peace and security.

"This is more than disappointing. It's pathetic, it's shortsighted, and frankly it's a dereliction of duty," she said.

Russia's UN envoy Vitaly Churkin said that while his government shared the concerns of island states regarding rising sea levels, the UN's climate convention remained the fundamental way to address the problem.

He also said Moscow was skeptical about repeated attempts to place climate change on the council's agenda.

Two regions of Southern Somalia, hit by a devastating drought, were declared in a state of famine Wednesday by the United Nations, which called it the worst food crisis in Africa in 20 years.

The next climate conference will take place in Durban in December.

Egypt's new cabinet sworn in

AFP, Cairo

New ministers in a sweeping reshuffle of Egypt's cabinet took their oaths in front of the country's military ruler yesterday, the official MENA news agency reported.

"The new ministers in the government of (Prime Minister) Essam Sharaf took their oaths today (Thursday) in front of the commander of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces, Field Marshal Hussein Tantawi," the news agency said.

Roughly 14 new ministers and a deputy premier were to take their oaths, but the cabinet has not issued the final line-up.

State media reported that at least two nominees in the new cabinet, which was scheduled to be sworn in on Monday, have been replaced after protests.

PHONE HACKING SCANDAL British police expand probe

AFP, London

Police have expanded their hacking inquiry beyond Rupert Murdoch's empire, asking for files from an earlier probe into the use of investigators by other British papers, regulators said yesterday.

The 2006 report by the Information Commissioner's Office, called "What Price Privacy Now," alleged that Britain's middle-market Daily Mail newspaper made the most request to private investigators for confidential information.

The Sunday People and the Daily Mirror tabloids, both owned by Trinity Mirror Group, were next on the list, according to the report by the office, an independent body promoting data privacy.

"The information was handed over to the police three months ago," a spokesman for the Information Commissioner's Office told AFP, following a BBC report that the files had been turned over to police.

"It was at their request." A spokesman for London's Metropolitan Police said: "We are not prepared to discuss specific lines of inquiry."

Scotland Yard's investigation into phone-hacking has so far focused on News of the World, which was shut on July 7 after it emerged that the Sunday tabloid had hacked the messages of Milly Dowler, a murdered British schoolgirl.

US panel rejects bid to end all Pakistan aid

AFP, Washington

A US Congress panel yesterday rejected a proposal to cut off all aid to Pakistan due to concerns over the country's relationship with Islamic militants after the raid that killed Osama bin Laden.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee easily rejected the measure, with five lawmakers voting yes and 39 voting no. But the bill in its current form would still impose tighter controls over aid, making it contingent on measurable progress by Pakistan.

Representative Dana Rohrabacher, a Republican from California, had offered the amendment to a spending bill for the year starting in October that would have barred any US funds to provide assistance to Pakistan.

President Barack Obama's administration recently suspended about one-third of its \$2.7 billion annual defence aid to Pakistan. But it has assured Islamabad it is committed to a five-year, \$7.5 billion civilian package approved in 2009 that aims to build schools, infrastructure and democratic institutions.

The rival Republican Party controls the House and has drafted a measure, which

remains in the spending bill, that would also cut off civilian aid unless Pakistan is certified to be fighting Islamic militants.

But even if the full passes through the committee, the measure's prospects are uncertain. Obama's Democratic Party controls the Senate, where Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman John Kerry is a staunch advocate of civilian support to Pakistan.

Democratic lawmakers argue that civilian aid is crucial in the long-run to strengthen democratic institutions and raise educational levels in Pakistan in hopes of reducing the appeal of Islamic extremists.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee is pursuing a range of Republican priorities through its spending package, in which it aims to cut \$6.4 billion from Obama's budget requests.

Several Democrats denounced the measure, saying that the US government already banned funding to perform abortions and that the measure amounted to a "gag rule" against any group that mentioned abortion.

The Republican-led committee defeated an attempt to remove the measure on a 25-17 vote.



Internally displaced people from southern Somalia receive rations from aid-agencies at Howlawad district in Mogadishu yesterday. Relief groups and donors said they would help relieve famine in parts of Somalia held by al-Qaeda-inspired Shebab rebels, provided they could be sure their aid would reach those most in need. Tens of thousands have already died in Somalia in recent months, according to the UN's Food and Agricultural Organisation.

EAST AFRICA FAMINE UN calls emergency meeting

REUTERS, Rome

The United Nations has called an emergency meeting on July 25 to discuss mobilising aid for drought-stricken east Africa.

A wide swathe of east Africa, including Kenya and Ethiopia, has been hit by years of severe drought and the United Nations says two regions of southern Somalia are suffering the worst famine for 20 years, with 3.7 million people facing starvation.

The United Nations Food and Agricultural Organisation announced an emergency meeting at its Rome headquarters on Monday to be attended by ministers and senior representatives from its 191 member countries, other UN bodies, NGOs and regional development banks.

NEWS IN brief

Remains of Hitler's deputy exhumed

AFP, Wunsiedel

The remains of Adolf Hitler's one-time deputy Rudolf Hess have been exhumed with permission of his remaining family members in Germany and his grave destroyed after it became a shrine for neo-Nazis, authorities said yesterday.

Because of neo-Nazis paying homage, including performing Hitler salutes in the churchyard, the Lutheran church's council refused a request by Hess's descendants to extend a lease on the plot, council member Peter Seisser said.

Hess parachuted into Scotland in an apparent peace mission in 1941 without Hitler's approval. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at the Nuremberg trials in 1946 and was held in a prison in Berlin where he was found hanged in 1987.

Israel rules out flotilla apology to Turkey

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel will not "take responsibility" for the deaths of nine Turkish nationals by apologising to Ankara over its botched 2010 raid on a ferry heading for Gaza, a senior cabinet minister said yesterday.

"There is no room in my mind for any kind of apology that means taking responsibility," Strategic Affairs Minister Moshe Yaalon said of the pre-dawn raid on a six-vessel flotilla that attempted to sail to Gaza in May 2010 in a bid to break Israel's naval embargo.

Yaalon's comments come after several failed attempts by Israel and Turkey to patch up ties. Media reports suggest there is increasing pressure on both sides for a final agreement that would restore once-

Egypt court says Mubarak name can stay on buildings

AFP, Cairo

A Cairo appeals court overturned yesterday a ruling removing ex-president Hosni Mubarak's name from government buildings, leading to scuffles outside the court house, judicial sources said.

The Cairo Appeals Court for Urgent Matters said the lower court that had issued the ruling in April acted beyond its jurisdiction and sent the case to the

Mau Mau activists allowed to sue UK Kenyans win court approval

AFP, London

Four elderly Kenyans won court approval yesterday to sue the British government over the brutality they claim they suffered at the hands of the British army during the 1950s Mau Mau uprising.

The Foreign Office contends Britain is not legally liable for the alleged abuses, which include castration and torture, saying responsibility was transferred to the Kenyan government upon independence in 1963.

More than 10,000 people were killed during the 1952-1960 Mau Mau uprising, with some figures going much higher. Tens of thousands were detained, including US President Barack Obama's grandfather.

But at the High Court, Judge Richard McCombe rejected their request to throw out the claims, saying: "I have not found that there was systematic torture nor, if there was, the UK government is liable."

"I have simply decided that these claimants have arguable cases in law." The test case could open the door for claims from around 1,000 others still alive who survived the detention camps during the bloody Mau Mau rebellion against British colonial rule.

The test case claimants, Ndiku Mutwiwa Mutua, Paulo Muoka Nzili, Wambugu Wa Nyinyi and Jane Muthoni Mara, who are in their 70s and 80s, flew into London for the beginning of the court proceedings in April.

They didn't appear in yesterday's hearing.

Hadzic's may be extradited to Hague today

AFP, Belgrade

War crimes suspect Goran Hadzic, the former Croatian Serb rebel leader, could be on his way to the UN war crimes court in The Hague as early as today, his lawyer said yesterday.

Hadzic, arrested Wednesday in Serbia, waived his right to appeal after a Serbian war crimes court ordered his transfer to The Hague where he is wanted on 14 counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes perpetrated during the 1991-95 Croatian war.

"Conditions for his transfer have been met. It is realistic (to assume) that he could be transferred from Friday afternoon," his lawyer Toma Fila told journalists.

Serbia's deputy war crimes prosecutor Bruno Vekaric said the exact time of the transfer would depend on "security evaluations."

'Al-Qaeda jihadist animation targets children'

BBC ONLINE

An animated children's film aimed at inspiring them to take up armed struggle with the militant group is on the making, said a group of al-Qaeda supporters yesterday.

Stills were published on the Arabic-language al-Shamouk jihadist website, reported Quilliam, a London-based "counter extremism" think tank.

It said the movie would show "heroic acts" including "armed engagements". But a US government adviser on counter-terrorism expressed doubt that such a cartoon was really being made.

The post on the al-Shamouk website was authored by someone calling himself Abu al-Laith al-Yemeni, Quilliam said.

It quoted him as saying: "The cartoon movie al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is a very exciting story that tells the facts about who let down the Islamic religion and the Prophet..."

"It aims to catalyse the youth and the children to follow the steps of Islamic jihadist figures. These incidents include raids, armed engagements and assassinations."

The film was an "alternative to the

poison that is broadcast by other TV channels to our children and youth", he added.

"Whether or not this movie actually appears, this shows a significant development in al-Qaeda's attitude to the media and recruitment," said Noman Benotman, a former jihadist and Quilliam analyst.

"They are trying out new methods to make terrorism exciting to young people and even to children."

But the plan "may backfire", Benotman added.

"Many Muslim parents will see this as a direct attempt by al-Qaeda to create divisions within families and to undermine the authority of parents."

He said the purported movie could also be evidence that a discredited al-Qaeda was having to resort to "gimmicks".

Will McCants, a scholar of militant Islamism and US government counter-terrorism adviser, told readers of his Jihadica website he was "very sceptical" it was a real product.

"But if it's legit and anywhere near like the purported screen shots and promotional banner below, it would indicate that [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula] is becoming even more sophisticated in its efforts to reach out to youth."

Seven killed in Malawi protests

AFP, Blantyre

Malawi President Bingu wa Mutharika refused to step down yesterday amid deadly riots in which a local rights group said twelve anti-government protesters had been shot dead by police.

The violence triggered international condemnation ranging from Amnesty International to American pop idol Madonna.

Soldiers fanned out across Lilongwe in the second consecutive day of protests in the capital, according to radio reports, while riot police confronted demonstrations in the commercial hub Blantyre that degenerated into violence and looting.



A woman waves a Tunisian flag during a demonstration yesterday in Tunisia against violence and religious extremism, and calling to uphold the elections planned for next October 23. Violence has once again flared in Tunisia over the last few days with a number of demonstrations and attacks on police stations in several towns.

SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW China tries to ease tensions

AFP, Nusa Dua

China yesterday sought to reassure Southeast Asian countries that it was a friendly neighbour, as all sides worked to ease tensions that spiked over a maritime territorial dispute.

Chinese diplomats told their counterparts from the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) at a summit in Bali that China was intent on improving ties that had soured recently over the South China Sea row.

"We are determined to increase our co-operation with Asean countries. We're looking to the future, we have a broad, bright future," Chinese vice foreign minister Liu Zhenmin told reporters on the sidelines of the talks.

"We want to be a good friend, good partner, good neighbour with Asean countries."

Liu made his comments shortly after Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi and his 10 Asean counterparts formally endorsed a set of guidelines to lay the framework for a potential code of conduct in the South China Sea.

Asean members Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia, along with China and Taiwan, have overlapping claims to parts of the South China Sea, an area believed to hold vast oil and gas resources.