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AFRICA

Churches called to be peacemakers in Africa

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has celebrated a consultation in Kigali, Rwanda called "Peace and Security in Africa: an ecumenical answer". The church leaders presented case studies from Africa demonstrating the increase in conflicts and human rights violations in countries like Nigeria, Sudan, Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo and Zimbabwe. Amid increasing security issues in several African countries plagued by violence, political turmoil, religious intolerance and lack of democratic governance, churches are called to engage in peace-building. The participants stressed the need for a stronger peace and reconciliation engagement by the ecumenical family.

<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/news/news-management/eng/a/article/1634/security-and-internationa.html> (english)

Bringing the billions back – How Africa and Europe can end illicit capital flight

Every year between US\$ 850-1000 billion disappears without a trace from developing countries, ending up in tax havens or rich countries. The main part of this is driven by multinational companies seeking to evade tax where they operate. The sum that leaves developing countries each year as unreported financial outflows, referred to as illicit capital flight, amounts to ten times the annual global aid flows and twice the debt service paid by developing countries each year. For each US dollar that goes to the developing world in aid, almost ten come back to developed countries through illicit means. Forum Syd has released a new report on the issue suggesting solutions to put an end to capital flight.

Read the report at <http://www.forumsyd.org/upload/Bringing%20the%20billions%20back.pdf>

EUROPEAN UNION

Europe's business take on development

The European Commission's latest statement on development policy reveals its continued emphasis on serving corporate interests ahead of combating poverty. On 27 January the European commission released a statement entitled *Trade, Growth and Development – Tailoring Trade and Investment Policy for Those Countries Most in Need*. The policy reduces development goals to a narrow set of statistics, ignoring the needs of millions of poor people. Worse than that, and despite the failure of the banking system and the global corporate tax heist, the policy continues to put corporate interests before development.

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/global-development/poverty-matters/2012/feb/03/europe-business-take-on-development>

FOOD SOVEREIGNTY

International investments in agriculture: Do the negative impacts outweigh the benefits?

International investment in agriculture in developing countries which prompts large-scale land appropriation is not a new trend but it has new connotations. Two-thirds of such land acquisitions is in sub-Saharan Africa. Multiple interests are involved in making these deals possible – from corporate firms at the international level, to local authorities, entrepreneurs and government officials at the local level. The direct and indirect negative impacts on local populations and environment are relatively severe. Among possible actions, a multitude of small-scale resource management systems can reconcile social, economic and environmental goals.

<http://www.cifor.org/online-library/polex-cifors-blog-for-and-by-forest-policy-experts/french/details/article/1222/international-investments-in-agriculture-do-the-negative-impacts-outweigh-the-benefits.html>

CLIMATE CHANGE

Christian groups address agriculture in the UNFCCC negotiations

The EAA (Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance) is joining other faith-based organisations to submit recommendations to the workshop of June 2012 that is preparing for the next international climate conference COP18 scheduled for the end of 2012. The aim is to promote smallholder-based agriculture and the protection of farmers' rights and of the biodiversity of the land within the UNFCCC negotiations. These organisations are facing negotiators who see agriculture as merely a context for carbon credits and offsets. They will also lobby their government to ensure that policies are designed and implemented to reduce emissions from the agricultural sector and to support small-scale food producers.

<http://www.e-alliance.ch/en/s/news/single/article/2012/01/25/addressing-agriculture-in-the-unfccc-negotiations/>

SMALL ARMS

Establishing an Arms Trade Treaty

As the fourth and final ATT Prep Com is about to take place from 13 February to 17 February 2012 in New-York, this report from Amnesty International reminds us what is at stake concerning the current negotiation process and what are the minimum requirements to make this treaty a strong and effective legally-binding document.

<http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/ACT30/003/2012/en/424ff58b-63c5-4237-8777-903d7efe2f7f/act300032012en.pdf>

Take action as an individual on SPEAK OUT! Control arms now!!

Each year, hundreds of thousands of people are killed, injured, raped, and forced to flee from their homes as a result of the poorly controlled global arms trade. In July 2012, governments will come together to

negotiate a global treaty to better regulate this deadly trade – and they must do so in order to save lives and livelihoods.

By adding your voice in support of a bulletproof Arms Trade Treaty, you demonstrate that there is widespread support for a strong and effective treaty. That's why we are asking you to join us and SPEAK OUT to urge governments to CONTROL ARMS NOW.

<http://speakout.controlarms.org/speakout/index.php> (english)

Take action as AEFJN member, or as a Christian group or congregation

AEFJN as a member of the Ecumenical Campaign for a strong Arms Trade Treaty (ATT), has sent letters to different governments to ask them to support a strong Treaty at the UN that will set high and binding standards to regulate the international arms trade. If you belong to a Christian group or congregation you can send a letter to YOUR GOVERNMENT (Ministers of Foreign affairs and of Defence). Find the model letter at <http://www.aefjn.org/index.php/365.html> (english)

MEDICINES AND HEALTH

An Open Letter from South Africa to the Citizens of Europe

In an open letter to the citizens of Europe, the Chairperson of South Africa's world famous Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) appeals for collective action to stop European leaders pursuing harmful intellectual property provisions in the EU-India free trade agreement. India supplies 80% of the HIV medicines used in developing countries. The free trade agreement threatens this life-saving supply. TAC is one of the better-known patients' groups in Africa that promotes access to medicines of quality.

<http://www.tac.org.za/community/node/3249> (english)

Malaria deaths may be almost twice as high as previously estimated,

Research published in the British medical journal the Lancet suggests that 1.24 million people died from the mosquito-borne disease in 2010. The conclusion of the research is that worldwide deaths had risen from 995,000 in 1980 to a peak of 1.82 million in 2004, before falling to 1.24 million in 2010. While most deaths were among young children and in Africa, the researchers noted a higher proportion of deaths among older children and adults than previously estimated. The researchers also concluded malaria eradication was not a possibility in the short-term.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-16854026> (english)

RAW MATERIALS

Gold mining beats school any day

At a waterlogged gold mine in western Kenya's Migori District, 14-year-old Jacob, one of 15,000 children toiling in the region's pits, scours the water for glistening flakes, a job, he says, that beats going to school on an empty stomach. Jacob's employer for the day - one of many people who rent a section of the mine on a daily basis - will pay him 100 shillings (US\$1.20) for his labour. A gram of gold sells for around \$55 on the world market. Children under 18 constitute 30-50 percent of the total workforce in small-scale gold mines across Africa, according to the UN International Labour Organization.

<http://www.irinnews.org/report.aspx?reportID=94822>

