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NEWS from AEFJN

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Faster, cheaper test boosts TB diagnosis

Munyaradzi Makoni, Cape Town

<http://www.scidev.net>

The World Health Organization's 2009 Global TB Report says South Africa had nearly 460,000 new TB cases in 2007, with an estimated 948 cases per 100,000 of the population infected. The HIV/AIDS epidemic in the past decade has seen a resurgence of TB sub-Saharan Africa. The diagnosis of this disease has been slow, but researchers seem to have come up with a cheaper and faster system. M. Makoni

<http://www.scidev.net/en/news/tb-diagnosis-boosted-by-faster-cheaper-test.html>

A method for diagnosing tuberculosis (TB) that harnesses technology used in airport security could lead to more reliable screening. The South Africa-developed system, TBDx, takes digital 'pictures' of patients' sputum samples and looks for TB's structural 'fingerprint' — in the same way that airport scanners can identify types of explosives. The TBDx system can diagnose TB within 24 hours. It requires little manual microscopy work, so special skills are not required to operate it. TBDx can operate 24 hours a day. It can take conventional TB microscopy — of fresh sputum from the lungs, or of samples cultured in the laboratory — days or weeks to make a diagnosis.

New animation on extractive industries revenue transparency

Oxfam America has just launched a new animated video which, we hope, is a creative way to educate US public audiences about how so little of the profits from extractive industries reach local communities. The video "*Follow the Money*" is featured on *Oxfam America's* homepage [www.oxfamamerica.org] this week and can also be found at this link on an ongoing basis: <http://www.oxfamamerica.org/campaigns/extractive-industries/animated-short>. It takes a short trip from a US filling station to an African village – let us know what you think!
<http://www.youtube.com/user/oxfamamerica#p/u/0/W-HMxFrpzu4>

Publish What You Pay – Tanzania Coalition: A resource transparency campaign advancing to 2010

Resource transparency campaign advancing to 2010 Press Release

www.fordia.org

During 2010 PWYP in Tanzania plans to conduct research, reinforce advocacy, and undertake the capacity building ability of its members and the general public. The goal is to hold the government accountable. Civil society organisations in September 2009 declared their intension to establish a National Coalition of Publish What You Pay to lead and guide the campaign on extractive industry transparency. Oil, gas, minerals, forestry (including wildlife), and fisheries are the PWYP campaign focus. DN

Like many resource-rich African countries, Tanzania has, since the recent past, been invaded by *Foreign Direct Investors* (FDIs) and Multi-national Corporations with stake interest in natural resources, particularly Minerals, Oil, Gas, Forestry and Fishery resources, collectively known as Extractive Industries (EIs). Contract secrecy, opaque, bad governance and sheer plunder of African EIs characterizes prevailing business and investment relationship between EIs investment Companies and Governments in Africa, where Tanzania is not exception.

South Africa: The South Africa-Congo concession - exploitation or salvation?

African Business/Pambazuka, by Khadija Sharife - January 11, 2010. from AfricaBusiness Magazine

The much-discussed Congo-Brazzaville land-lease has been called the 'new Great Trek' by South Africans who remember their history.

Presently, over 30 million hectares in almost 30 African countries have been auctioned to a host of corporations and governments, from China - housing one fifth of the world's population on 8 per cent of the world's arable land - to oil-rich, water-poor Gulf nations. The deals involving these concessions are often cloaked in secrecy but African Business has learnt that they are usually characterised by allowing free access to water, repatriation of profits, tax exemptions and the ability for investors to acquire land at no cost whatsoever, with little or no restriction on the volume of food exported or its intended use, in return for a loose promise to develop infrastructure and markets. However, the terms of the concessions vary from country to country and deal from deal. In some instances, the host country drives a hard bargain and in other cases, the investors call the shots.

As the debate over the whole question continues to rage on, the much-discussed Congo land-lease, granting 200,000 hectares to South African farmers with a further 10 million hectares in the balance, appears to mark a departure from the usual terms underpinning foreign acquisition of fertile land by multinationals. Not only has commercial agriculture on these concessions chiefly been earmarked for domestic use, thus generating food security, but good crop yields possess the potential to reduce outstanding debt in the Republic of the Congo from 70 per cent to 40 per cent of GDP within a year. Describing the South African farmers, an official from ABSA AgriBusiness, a leader in the financing of the agricultural sector, stated, 'They are capable of farming without government support, can compete against the best in the world and even with our scarce resources, they produce profitably.'

Three approved GMOs linked to organ damage

Rady Ananda

www.countercurrents.org

Researchers at the Universities of Caen and Rouen made a comprehensive study of the effects of genetically modified foods on mammalian health and have linked organ damage and consumption of three approved varieties of Monsanto's GM maize: Mon 810, Mon 863, and NK 603 that were approved for consumption by US, European, and other national food safety authorities. The data "clearly underlines adverse impacts on kidneys and liver, the dietary detoxifying organs, as well as different levels of damages to heart, adrenal glands, spleen, and haematopoietic system," a molecular biologist at the University of Caen reported. DN

DRC: Use of child soldiers « particularly abusive » UN Expert testifies

<http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/rwb.nsf/db900SID/EGUA-7ZGUCL?OpenDocument>

Children cannot consent to their own exploitation, making the use of children in warfare "particularly abusive," a top United Nations official has said at the trial of a Congolese warlord accused of enlisting child soldiers.

Arms

The Walloon regional government in Belgium ignored federal government fears about human rights violations before exporting arms to Libya, according to a report. In October the highest Belgian court suspended the arms license issued by the Walloon government, citing Libya's human rights record and its alleged role as a hub of arms trafficking. The court decision came too late to stop the export of much of the weaponry. But reports now suggest the Walloon government issued a new licence to export weapons to Libya despite the federal government's human rights concerns. <http://levif.mews.be/actualite/belgique/72-56-43860/fn-herstal-le-contrat-avec-la-libye-encore-malmene.html>

A report published by the Geneva Declaration Secretariat aims to help developing countries develop a public health approach to injury prevention, particularly in Africa. Understanding Violence: The Role of Injury Surveillance Systems in Africa, highlights lessons learned from pilot projects run in DR Congo, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, and Zambia.

www.genevadeclaration.org/fileadmin/docs/Geneva-Declaration-Injury-Surveillance-Systems-in-Africa.pdf