



British Herald®

WHERE BRITAIN MEETS THE WORLD™

ISSN 2632-8836



VOL 5 —
ISSUE 2
MAR-APR 2023

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HUMANITY IN CRISIS

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A Glimmer of Hope: Resilience in the Face of Uncertainty

On the other side of the perilous journey that each migrant takes, is not a lucrative career and a luxurious life but a grinding existence with one's family in exile, and that too at the whim of that country's foreign policy. Even today, across the EU, people are waking up to the tragedy unfolding on their shores. Some are responding with compassion, but far too many with Xenophobia.

Humanity is in crisis, as is the environment in which they live. There are no complaints here. You reap what you sow.

Our Survival

A series of severe and mutually reinforcing shocks — the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and resulting food and energy crises, surging inflation, debt tightening, as well as the climate emergency - battered the world economy in 2022. Against this backdrop, world output growth is projected to decelerate from an estimated 3.0 per cent in 2022 to 1.9 per cent in 2023, marking one of the lowest growth rates in recent decades, according to the United Nations World Economic Situation and Prospects (WESP) 2023.

The Global Risks Report 2023 presents the results of the latest Global Risks Perception Survey (GRPS). According to the report, the "Cost-of-living crisis" is ranked as the most severe global risk over the next two years, peaking in the short term. "Biodiversity loss and ecosystem collapse" is viewed as one of the fastest deteriorating global risks over the next decade, and all six environmental risks feature in the top 10 risks over the next 10 years.

As one economic era comes to a close, the next will likely bring more risks of distress, divergence, and stagnation. Continued supply-driven inflation could

lead to stagflation, the socioeconomic consequences of which could be severe, given an unprecedented interaction with historically high levels of public debt.

The danger of multi-domain conflicts will increase as a result of geopolitical fragmentation. A longer-term increase in inefficient production and rising prices are more probable as geopolitics takes precedence over economics. Geographic hotspots that are crucial to the efficient operation of the international financial and economic system, especially in the Asia-Pacific, also present a rising threat.

Over the next ten years, research and development into emerging technologies will proceed at a rapid clip, fueled by state funding, military spending, and private investment, leading to breakthroughs in, among other things, AI, quantum computing, and biotechnology. For countries that can afford it, these technologies will provide partial solutions to a range of emerging crises, from addressing new health threats and a crunch in a healthcare capacity to scaling food security and climate mitigation. For those that cannot, inequality and divergence will grow. In all economies, these technologies also bring risks, from widening misinformation and disinformation to unmanageably rapid churn in both blue- and white-collar jobs.

Without significant policy change or investment, the interplay between climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, food security and natural resource consumption will accelerate ecosystem collapse, threaten food supplies and livelihoods in climate-vulnerable economies, amplify the impacts of natural disasters, and limit further progress on climate mitigation.

As volatility in multiple domains grows in parallel, the risk of polycrises accelerates. Eroding geopolitical cooperation will

have ripple effects across the global risks landscape over the medium term, including contributing to a potential polycrisis of interrelated environmental, geopolitical and socioeconomic risks relating to the supply of and demand for natural resources. The report outlines four possible futures that revolve around food, water, metals, and mineral shortages. Each of these scenarios has the potential to cause both an ecological and a humanitarian crisis, ranging from famines and water wars to continued overexploitation of natural resources and a sluggish pace of climate mitigation and adaptation.

In fact, there is still time to use better preparation to create a more secure future. In order to improve our ability to prevent and react to developing transnational crises and to strengthen the barriers we have in place to address known risks, we must address the deterioration of confidence in multilateral processes. Enhancing resilience in one area can have a multiplier effect on overall preparation for other related risks, which is another benefit of leveraging the interconnectedness of global risks. As a deteriorating economic outlook brings tougher trade-offs for governments facing competing social, environmental and security concerns, investment in resilience must focus on solutions that address multiple risks, such as funding of adaptation measures that come with climate mitigation co-benefits, or investment in areas that strengthen human capital and development.

This is the moment to act collectively, decisively and with a long-term lens to shape a pathway to a more positive, inclusive and stable world.

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Survival Sorrow Humanity

What's left after an earthquake? ...

It is a crisis within a crisis for Syria. An earthquake collapsed the country that already bears the scars of a nearly 12-year-long war, resulting in food shortages, economic collapse, a humanitarian crisis, and a recent cholera outbreak. ...

While Turkey's grief is turning into anger, much of it is directed against Mr. Erdogan's government, which has spent years consolidating control over Turkey's institutions, including the country's disaster-relief organisations.

As of Feb. 23, the death toll in Syria and Turkey had surpassed 49,000. In Turkey, the authorities said that more than 43,000 people had died; in Syria, the death toll crossed 5,500, according to figures from the United Nations and many still missing in the country's worst modern disaster. The WHO describes the earthquakes in Turkey as the worst natural disaster in a century in what it

characterises as its European region.

Rescuers pulled earthquake survivors from the shattered remnants of buildings, including some who endured more than 100 hours trapped under crushed concrete after the disaster slammed Turkey and Syria.

On 6 February 2023 at 4.17 am local time, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake occurred near the city of Gaziantep in southern Turkey. Its tremors were felt in the provinces of Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus and Iraq.

Thousands of buildings were destroyed or rendered unstable, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without in the rain, snow, and temperatures that frequently fell below freezing. Millions are in need of aid, according to relief agencies; in Syria alone. According to UN, many as 5.3 million might have lost their homes.

In the bitter cold, rescue workers pulled thousands of survivors from the rubble, but experts say that the chances of rescuing more decline sharply a few days after a quake. Even after that period, there have been some miraculous rescues. In recent days, desperation has increasingly set in as the rescue missions have turned to recovery.

The situation for survivors in both Syria and Turkey is dire, with people reluctant to return to their homes and using bonfires of wreckage to stay warm, huddling in cars and suffering frequent power outages and shortages of fuel. They are also short on food and medical supplies.

The Aid and Politics

Turkey has imposed a three-month state of emergency in 10 provinces, and the national emergency agency has distributed a huge quantity of tents and



mobilised more than 12,000 vehicles, including excavators, cranes and tow trucks with the help of more than 230,000 relief workers. Dozens of countries have sent teams and supplies, and in some places the local authorities have contributed to rescue and relief efforts. A makeshift health care system has sprung up amid the devastation.

The quake zone in Turkey stretches across more than 200 miles, from the Mediterranean in the south across mountains and to the east-central highlands and into northwestern Syria. Snow-covered mountain passes, buckled highways and buildings that collapsed over roads have all delayed the arrival of rescue teams and aid.

Getting help to Syria has been complicated by the country's civil war, the division of territory in its northwest, and the acrimonious relations between President Bashar al-Assad and many Western nations.

In the immediate aftermath of the earthquake, the only United Nations-approved crossing for transporting international aid into northwestern Syria was, for a time, not functioning because of damage in the area, according to U.N. officials.

Some food, clothes, blankets and other supplies have arrived — received by exhausted and frustrated rescuers and doctors who say it is still not nearly enough, especially in a region

where many people were displaced by war and struggling to survive before the earthquake.

On February 12, the UN's top humanitarian official stated that aid efforts had “failed the people of northwestern Syria.” “They rightly feel abandoned,” the official, Martin Griffiths, tweeted from the Turkey-Syria border.

Rescue workers in northwestern Syria say that without more help from the outside world, there was little they could do. “We felt helpless, just helpless,” said Ali Obeid, 28, a member of the White Helmets.

Much of the international aid to Syria from the United Nations and other agencies flows through the



capital, Damascus, allowing the government of Mr. al-Assad to limit what goes to opposition-held areas. United Nations agencies must get permission to deliver some of the aid across front lines, to opposition-held areas, requests that are often denied.

On Feb. 13, Mr. Al-Asaad agreed to the opening of two additional border crossings from Turkey into opposition-held territory in northwest Syria to allow the United Nations to deliver humanitarian relief to millions of earthquake victims, U.N. and Syrian officials.

The decision, which would allow aid to flow for three months, marked the first time since Syria's civil war began in 2011 that Mr. al-

Assad had cooperated in opening opposition-held territory to such assistance.

The Syrian government has blamed U.S. sanctions for deepening the humanitarian disaster the country has suffered since the earthquake. Those sanctions do not target humanitarian aid, and the State Department has rejected calls to lift them, saying that aid efforts were not impeded by the policy.

Baby born in rubble of Syria earthquake

A Syrian baby girl whose mother passed away while giving birth to her beneath the debris of their house during the earthquake now

has a name: Aya, Arabic for "a sign from God".

With her parents and all her siblings killed, her great-uncle, Salah al-Badran, will take her in once she is released from the hospital. However, his own house in the north-west Syrian town of Jenderis was destroyed, too. He and his family managed to escape the one-storey building, and now he and his household of 11 people are living in a tent.





“After the earthquake, there’s no one able to live in his house or building. Only 10% of the buildings here are safe to live in and the rest are unliveable,” he said, communicating via voice messages.

Rescue workers in Jenderis discovered Aya, more than 10 hours after the quake hit, as they were digging through the wreckage of the five-storey apartment building where her parents lived. Buried under the concrete, the baby still was connected by umbilical cord to her mother, Afraa Abu Hadiya, who was dead along with her husband and four other children. The baby was rushed to a hospital in the nearby town of Afrin.

Abu Hadiya probably gave birth to the girl and then died a few hours before they were discovered, said Dr Hani Maarouf at Cihan hospital in Afrin. “We named her Aya, so we could stop calling her a new-born baby,” said Maarouf. Her condition is improving by the day and there was no damage to her spine, as initially feared, he said.

Aya is one of untold numbers of orphans left by 7.8-magnitude quake, which killed more than 21,000 people in northern Syria and south-eastern Turkey. The pre-dawn quake brought apartment buildings in their thousands down as residents were roused from sleep.

But despite days passing since tens of thousands of people, or

more, were trapped in rubble, rescues are still being made. In Turkey, over 80 hours after the quake hit, 16-year-old Melda Adtas was pulled out alive, leaving her overjoyed father in tears and the grieving nation cheering a rare piece of good news after Feb 6 7.8-magnitude tremor...

'Miracle Rescues' that keep hope alive amid destruction

A week after the twin quakes jolted Türkiye and Syria, several newborns and toddlers were pulled out alive from complicated and extremely exhausting digging.

Visuals of rescue workers pulling



out infants, toddlers and children from the deepest parts of the concrete rubble go viral on social media, with people from all across the world describing such stories of survival as "miracles".

Here are some of the miraculous rescues of children that surprised netizens in the past few days.

1. Hamza, a seven-month-old baby, was rescued in Hatay province, one of the most affected regions in Türkiye, after being stuck under the rubble for more than 140 hours since the first quake hit the country.

2. Aliye Dagli, a two-year-old baby girl, was also pulled out alive from the rubble in Hatay thanks to the search-and-rescue team and

AFAD volunteers' efforts almost 133 hours after the devastating earthquakes. The baby, who was taken to the ambulance in the arms of the medical staff, was treated.

3. A baby estimated to be about two months old was found alive 128 hours after the quake in Hatay. The baby's survival for nearly five days without any injuries was a powerful visual that moved people to tears and warmed many hearts. Efforts to identify the baby are underway since the infant's parents are still missing.

4. A 15-month-old Yusuf Huseyin was taken out after the 105th hour of the earthquake. About 20 minutes later, his 7-year-old brother Mohammed Huseyin was

pulled out from the same pile of concrete slabs of what used to be a three-floored building in Hatay.

5. Just 10 days old Yagız Ulas may be the youngest earthquake survivor, who was freed from the wreckage in Hatay with his mother. The duo spent 101 hours in the rubble, braving the freezing winter chill.

6. In Kahramanmaras, the epicentre of the devastating earthquake, one-year-old Raha and her mother Ela Hamoko of Syrian origin were rescued after being trapped in the debris for 81 hours.

7. Five-year-old Hazal Guner was rescued in Hatay after being trapped in the debris for 72 hours.



When asked if she wanted to drink water when she was pulled out of the wreckage, she replied, “No, I haven't been examined yet”. She was taken with her mother to the hospital for a medical examination.

Unaccompanied infants

The Ministry of Family and Social Services of Türkiye stated that they have put all the unaccompanied children in state-run shelters.

It said proper procedures will be initiated to match the unaccompanied minors and children with suitable foster homes to provide a stable and secure environment for them to grow and thrive.

So far 263 children have been saved from the rubble, according to the Ministry of Family and Social Services. Among them, 162 children are receiving medical treatment in various hospitals and 101 are being sent to shelters run by the ministry.

World sent help to Turkey, Syria after quake

Structural engineers, soldiers, paramedics and handlers with trained search dogs were sent to Turkey and Syria to help locate and rescue survivors of the earthquake. Here's a glance at the assistance that's being provided:

The European Union has mobilised

search and rescue teams to help Turkey, while the bloc's Copernicus satellite system has been activated to provide emergency mapping services. At least 13 member countries have offered assistance.

— The United States coordinated immediate assistance to Turkey, including teams to support search and rescue efforts. In California, nearly 100 Los Angeles County firefighters and structural engineers, along with six specially trained dogs, were sent to Turkey.

— Russian rescue teams from the Emergencies Ministry were sent to Syria, where the Russian military deployed in that country already has sent 10 units comprising 300 people to help clear debris



and search for survivors. The Russian military has set up points to distribute humanitarian assistance. Russia also has offered help to Turkey, which has been accepted.

— Pakistan has sent one flight of relief supplies and another carrying a 50-member search and rescue team.

— Britain sent 76 search-and-rescue specialists with equipment and dogs, as well as an emergency medical team, to Turkey. The U.K. also says it's in contact with the U.N. about getting support to victims in Syria.

— India has sent 100 search and rescue personnel from its Natural

Disaster Response Force to Turkey, as well as specially trained dog squads and equipment for relief efforts. Medical teams with trained doctors, paramedics and essential medicines are also ready, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

— Taiwan sent 130 rescue squad members, five search dogs and 13 tons of equipment to Turkey. Taiwan earlier said it would donate \$200,000 to Turkey.

Swiss rescue dog service REDOG has sent 22 rescuers with 14 dogs to Turkey. The government said it would also send 80 search and rescue specialists to the country, including army disaster experts.

— The Czech Republic sent Turkey a team of 68 rescuers, including firefighters, doctors, structural engineers and also experts with sniffer dogs.

— Japan sent a group of about 75 rescue workers to Turkey.

— Lebanon's cash-strapped government is sending soldiers, Red Cross and Civil Defense first responders, and firefighters to Turkey to help with its rescue efforts.

— Germany delivered emergency generators, tents, blankets and water treatment equipment. It also has offered to send teams from the THW civil protection agency to Turkey. The group



International Search and Rescue Germany flew dozens of doctors and rescue experts to Turkey.

— Austria sent 84 soldiers from a military disaster relief unit to Turkey.

— Spain sent two Urban Search and Rescue teams to Turkey with 85 personnel, and a contingent of volunteer firefighters.

— Poland sent 76 firefighters and eight trained dogs, with equipment.

— Romania sent specialised personnel and material to Turkey on two military aircraft.

— Croatia has sent 40 personnel and 10 dogs, rescue equipment and vans to Turkey.

— Serbia has sent 21 rescuers and three liaison officers to Turkey.

— Montenegro has sent at least 24 firefighters to Turkey.

— Moldova's president said 55 rescue workers have been sent to Turkey.

— France dispatched rescue teams to Turkey.

— Jordan sent emergency aid to Syria and Turkey on the orders of King Abdullah II.

— Mexico's foreign affairs secretary said the country sent equipment and rescue specialists to Turkey.

— Egypt offered urgent humanitarian aid to Turkey.

— Italy's Civil Protection Agency

has offered assistance to Turkey. A firefighting team has left from Pisa, and the Italian military said transport flights will carry equipment as well as health and other personnel.

— New Zealand provided \$632,000 to the Turkish Red Crescent and \$316,000 to the Syrian Arab Red Crescent to deliver items such as food, tents and blankets, as well as provide medical assistance and psychological support.

— China's Red Cross Society Provided the Turkish Red Crescent and the Syrian Red Crescent with \$200,000 each in humanitarian assistance.



Father's Pain

"Take pictures of my child," the man called in a low trembling voice. For a brief second Mesut Hancer let go of his daughter's hand to show where she lay.



Young girl protecting her brother under the rubble.



Never leave You.





The Afghanistan Famine to strike 6M



The UN has warned all member states that six million people in Afghanistan face the risk of famine.

According to ITV, the intergovernmental organisation issued a global alert stating that two thirds of Afghans are suffering from extreme hunger and require relief immediately.

The necessity of humanitarian aid has been solidified throughout the course of four decades of conflict, natural calamities, and the coronavirus pandemic.

A national drought was announced in the summer of 2021; a year later, floods claimed at least 20 lives and an earthquake claimed more than 1,000.

In addition, the humanitarian situation in the nation deteriorated dramatically after the withdrawal of US and British forces in 2021.

An investigation by British MPs concluded that the UK's withdrawal was a fiasco and that the evacuation was poorly managed, allowing the Taliban to quickly seize control of the nation.



The worst winter the nation has had in 15 years, together with a shortage of food and fuel, have made this worse.

There is an increase of 800 patients every day in one hospital in Kabul, many of them are youngsters suffering from severe acute malnutrition because their families cannot afford to feed them.

90% of Afghans, according to the World Food Programme, consume insufficient amounts of food.

Taliban and Afghan Crisis

The Taliban have imposed a rigorous interpretation of Islamic law despite having pledged to protect the rights of women and communities of religious and racial minorities. As they transitioned from an

insurgent group to a functioning administration, the Taliban failed to give Afghans enough food supplies and economic opportunities.

The UN mission in Afghanistan has compiled a large number of examples of human rights abuses. More than 200 news organisations had to close because the Taliban intimidated reporters and restricted press freedom. Their administration has mercilessly put an end to protests while tracking down activists and protestors and making them disappear. They also enforced regulations against behaviour seen to be against Islam and restored the previously functioning Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice. In November 2022, they gave judges instructions on how to execute their interpretation of sharia; in the weeks that followed, they resumed public hangings and floggings.

The rights of women have been compromised. Girls are not permitted to attend high school, and neither are women permitted to enrol in or teach at colleges due to Taliban prohibitions. In December 2022, the group outlawed women from working for local and international nonprofit organisations. The UN Development Program (UNDP) has calculated that restricting women's employment might cost Afghanistan's GDP up to 5%. According to Amnesty International, there has been a significant rise in the number of women who have been imprisoned for disobeying discriminatory laws, such as those mandating women to cover their whole bodies in public and to only appear with male chaperones. Moreover, the number of child marriages has increased.

According to the UNDP, the Taliban's reign has undone the



improvements in living standards Afghans achieved in the 20 years following the US invasion. According to a research dated October 2022, almost all Afghans were reportedly living in poverty. Since the takeover, the economy has shrunk by up to 30%, and 700,000 jobs are thought to have been lost. More than 90% of people experience food insecurity. Because some nations and international organisations have ceased providing aid, which is essential for the economy and public health, the issue is getting worse.

Nonetheless, international observers are concerned that the Taliban, through their support of terrorist organisations, particularly Al-Qaeda, constitute a threat to both national and international security. Notwithstanding Taliban promises that the nation's territory wouldn't be used against the security of any

other country, Taliban leadership may turn Afghanistan into a refuge for terrorists who may launch strikes on the US and its allies. At Pakistan's border with Afghanistan, which has historically supported the Taliban, violence has also increased. The Taliban's rise to power has given Tehrik-e-Taliban, a terrorist group also known as the Pakistani Taliban, more power. In 2022, the organisation and the Pakistani government breached their cease-fire, and attacks spread across the country. Officials from Pakistan have charged the Afghan Taliban with giving the extremists a safe harbour in their country.

The Afghan government has relied on assistance from a number of nations for a long time; according to 2019 World Bank research, foreign partners' contributions covered 75% of the government's public expenditures. After the Taliban seized over, many of these

nations cut off help, which fueled worries about potential future economic unrest. Nonetheless, aid increased in 2022 as more than \$2.6 billion was donated by donors. After the coup, the US has contributed more than \$1.1 billion in aid. But, the pledges, according to UN officials, fell short of the country's humanitarian needs.

As the Taliban came to power, many Western nations, most notably the US, closed their diplomatic missions there. The Taliban regime, which refers to Afghanistan as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, has been denied diplomatic connections and recognition. A decision by the UN General Assembly over who will permanently represent Afghanistan at the UN has also been postponed. The International Criminal Court is currently looking into the Taliban for alleged atrocities, including crimes against humanity, committed against Afghans.

Peru's Political Unrest persists



In recent years, the national governments of Peru have lurched from crisis to crisis. Political unrest is frequently sparked by corruption claims, which pit presidents who won by a slim margin against bitterly divided legislatures. The four presidents before that served out their mandates only to face criminal charges or investigations after leaving office. The following four presidents were all either impeached or forced to leave.

However, the general populace appeared to be mostly unaffected by the political squabbles in Lima. No, not now. Widespread protests

were ignited this December by President Pedro Castillo's impeachment and subsequent arrest (after his attempt to dissolve Congress and govern by decree). These protests were particularly intense in the nation's poor, predominantly indigenous south.

Protesters have blocked roads, shut airports, and set fire to police stations over the past two months, disrupting economic activity in vital industries including mining, agriculture, and tourism. Authorities have retaliated with lethal force, opening fire on some demonstrators. Early in February, there were 58 fatalities

associated with the disturbance, the most from altercations with police, however at least seven are attributed to car accidents and medical delays brought on by barricades.

Peru's protests are among the most violent in recent Latin American history, but they are far from unique. Colombians took to the streets in 2021 to protest an unpopular tax reform; Chilean student protests in 2019 over a subway fare hike grew into mass demonstrations over inequality. In both cases some of the protests devolved into looting and violence. And in both, police



responded with deadly, often disproportionate, force.

In response to ongoing unrest, Peru has extended the state of emergency in Lima Department and the Constitutional Province of Callao as well as on the Pan-American Highway, the Central Highway, the South Apurimac-Cusco-Arequipa Highway Corridor, and the South Interoceanic Highway Corridor through at least March 15. Under the measure, some constitutional rights are suspended, and the armed forces are permitted to carry out law-enforcement tasks, such as policing protests. The states of emergency in the departments of Amazonas and La Libertad were not renewed and are set to expire at the end of Feb. 14.

Context

The unrest began shortly after the Dec. 7 arrest and removal from office of then-President Pedro Castillo, who was ousted just hours after he announced that he would illegally dissolve Congress, establish a new emergency government, and implement a nationwide curfew. Following the president's arrest, Vice President Dina Boluarte was sworn in as the new president, nullifying Castillo's earlier announcement.

While Boluarte is permitted to remain in office until 2026, when Castillo's term was set to end, she has called for elections to be held in 2023 as a means of appeasing demonstrators. However, Congress has repeatedly rejected proposals

to hold early elections this year, further angering protesters.

Castillo, meanwhile, has released statements in which he refuses to recognize Boluarte's presidency, insisting that he is still legally president. In response, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Honduras, and Mexico have issued communiques recognizing Castillo as the legitimate president of Peru, causing Peru to expel the Mexican ambassador. A judge has ordered Castillo to be held in jail for up to 18 months as prosecutors build a case against him.

Protests have been particularly violent in Apurimac, Arequipa, Ayacucho, Cusco, and Puno departments. At least 60 people have died in the unrest.

Ukraine War : Repercussions even a year later



The humanitarian fallout of the war in Ukraine continues to take a heavy toll globally, as the echoes of the conflict are heard far beyond its borders. One year on, its ripple effects are sounding in every corner of the planet, dramatically accelerating other crises around the world.

As the war in Ukraine has no end in sight and is likely to continue well into 2023, millions of lives are

facing ever-increasing risk, with the ripple effects of the conflict manifesting globally through food supply chain disruptions, skyrocketing energy prices, and soaring inflation. From the people on the frontlines of the war, to remote communities dependent on Ukrainian wheat exports, the humanitarian needs driven by the conflict have not gone away, but continue to multiply.

94 percent of low income

countries, including Syria which has just been hit by the deadly quake, are now battling skyrocketing inflation, fueled in part by the impact of the war on food and fuel prices. The top 20 countries at greatest risk of new humanitarian emergencies identified in the IRC's 2023 Watchlist are seeing food price inflation at almost 40 percent, making it even harder for people to afford to feed their families, even if food is available



in markets. IRC teams report that communities which have welcomed most Ukrainian refugees also increasingly require support amid spiking housing and food prices.

The shock waves in global energy markets are dramatically felt in the lower and middle income economies which have largely not yet recovered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The estimates show that 70 million people who recently gained access to electricity can no longer afford it. In countries like Moldova, the environmental impacts go hand in hand with the socio-economic echoes of the war, as people are returning to coal and firewood as a heating source.

The impact of the war on commodity and fuel prices has also contributed to the global food security crisis. A record 349 million people across 79 countries are estimated to experience acute food insecurity in 2023.

Critically, as communities in East Africa continue to grapple with extreme hunger, the Black Sea Grain Initiative is set to expire in March, right after one year of the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine. The renewed blockade could impede the import of 80 percent of grain coming from the region to the African continent, with countries like Somalia tethering on the brink of famine.

David Miliband, President and CEO of the International Rescue Committee (IRC), said:

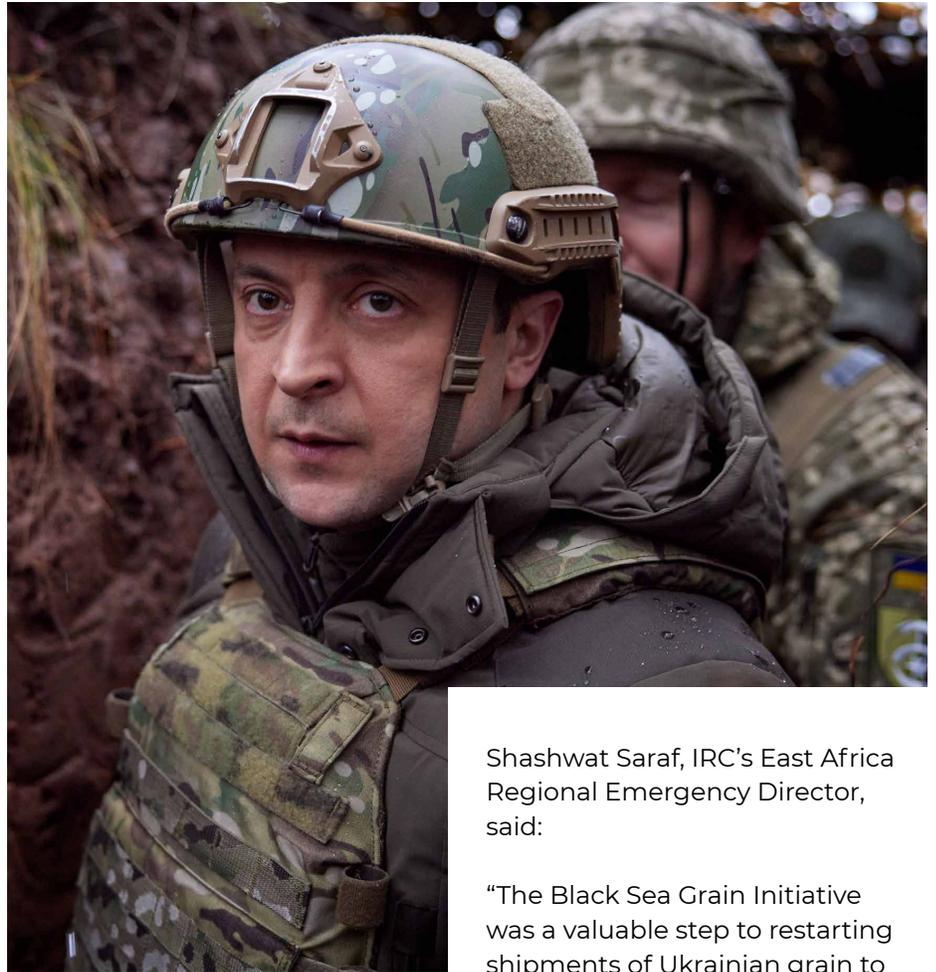
“The compounding humanitarian needs in Ukraine are only half of the story. The other half is how the ripple effects of the war are fueling humanitarian needs worldwide, as the global impacts of this war call for a truly global course of action.

“The international response to the war in Ukraine is a testament to the power of political will to serve a crisis-affected population, both in terms of funding and extended protection mechanisms. It is a proof of what can be achieved for the 100 million people displaced worldwide if the responsibility for managing global displacement is shared.

“The 2020s will come to be known as the decade of war in Ukraine and its consequences,

and teach us some major lessons: about the power of political mobilisation and solidarity in the face of humanitarian need, the inextricably connected nature and ripple effects of global crises, and the grim outcomes of impunity without accountability. The way we respond to these lessons will set the standard for responding to all humanitarian crises for the next decade.

“Firstly, we need to break the vicious cycle of global crisis by fixing the international response to the hunger crisis. Secondly, the international community needs to scale up its commitments to protect civilians in conflict and combat impunity for mass atrocities. Thirdly, humanitarian aid needs to be channelled through a people-first strategy that works with NGOs and local civil society groups to deliver aid directly to the frontlines of the conflict.”



Shashwat Saraf, IRC's East Africa Regional Emergency Director, said:

“The Black Sea Grain Initiative was a valuable step to restarting shipments of Ukrainian grain to hunger affected countries. But a closer analysis shows that so far just 10 percent of grain exported through the initiative has gone to five low income countries - Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen most in need of it, whereas Spain has received double the amount.

“It is critical to maintain the Black Sea Grain Initiative and continuously renew shipments, but it is essential the grain goes to where it is needed most - to go to the six countries most at risk of famine. Maintaining the initiative and renewing the agreement this coming March, but prioritising the export destinations will help limit the ripple effects of the war on other humanitarian crises around the world.”



The perilous journey kills 100



There are fears more than 100 people, including children, have died after their boat sank off southern Italy.

At least 63 migrants are confirmed to have died, with 12 children, including a baby, said to be among the victims.

At least 80 people were found alive, including some who reached the shore after the shipwreck just off Calabria's coastline along the Ionian Sea, the Italian Coast Guard said. One of the agency's motorboats rescued two men suffering from hypothermia and recovered the body of a boy.

The vessel, thought to have carried some 200 people, broke apart while trying to land near Crotona.

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has urged EU institutions to take action to stop clandestine migrant boat journeys.

On board, the boat, which had set out from Turkey a few days earlier, were said to be people from Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Syria, Iraq and Iran.

Bodies were recovered from the beach at a nearby seaside resort in the Calabria region.

The coastguard said 80 people had been found alive, "including some who managed to reach the shore after the sinking", meaning many more remained unaccounted for.

One survivor was arrested on migrant trafficking charges, customs police said.

Many of those on board were thought to be from Pakistan. Its Prime Minister, Shehbaz Sharif, said more than two dozen Pakistanis were believed to have been among the dead.

As assistance and relocation



operations continue, a group of survivors of the deadly shipwreck struggle to deal with losing their loved ones.

At a temporary reception centre in Isola di Capo Rizzuto, some cried without speaking, and some stared into the void, wrapped in blankets.

"They are heavily traumatised," said Sergio Di Dato, from the charity Médecins Sans Frontières. "Some children have lost their whole family. We are offering them all the support we can."

A 16-year-old boy from Afghanistan lost his 28-year-old sister, who died on the beach beside him. He could not find the strength to tell his parents.

A 43-year-old man from Afghanistan survived with his 14-year-old son, but his wife and three other children, who were 13, nine, and five, did not make it. Another Afghan woman in tears would not move from the beach after losing her husband.

"This is yet another tragedy happening near our shores.

It reminds us all that the Mediterranean is a giant mass grave, with tens of thousands of souls in it, and it continues to widen," said Francesco Creazzo from SOS Méditerranée, a non-governmental organisation engaged in rescue operations in the central Mediterranean.

"There is no end in sight; in 2013, people said 'never again' to the little white coffins of Lampedusa; in 2015, they said 'never again' in front of the lifeless body of a two-year-old Syrian child on a beach.

"Now the words 'never again' are not even pronounced anymore. We only hear 'no more departures', but unfortunately, people keep venturing on this journey and dying," he added.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres called on countries to do more to help refugees and migrants and called for safer travel routes and strengthened rescue operations.

Prime Minister Meloni - elected last year partly on a pledge to stem the flow of migrants into Italy - said the only way to tackle

the issue of migrant departures "seriously" and "with humanity" was to stop migrant boat journeys.

Speaking to Italian public broadcaster Rai 1, she said she had written to the European Council and European Commission calling for immediate action to stop migrant boat departures to prevent more deaths.

"The more people depart, the more risk dying," she said.

She expressed "deep sorrow" after the incident and blamed the deaths on people smugglers.

"It is inhumane to exchange the lives of men, women and children for the price of the 'ticket' they paid in the false perspective of a safe journey," she said.

"The government is committed to preventing departures, and with them, the unfolding of these tragedies, and will continue to do so."

Ms Meloni's right-wing government has vowed to stop migrants from reaching Italy's shores and, in the last few days, pushed through a tough new law tightening the rules on rescues.

The vessel reportedly sunk after it crashed against rocks during rough weather.

Video footage shows timber from the wreckage washing up on the beach and parts of the hull.

According to monitoring groups, more than 20,000 people have died or gone missing at sea in the central Mediterranean since 2014.

Myanmar military violence continues creating chaos



Myanmar's military has created a perpetual human rights crisis through the continuous use of violence, including the killing, arbitrary arrest, torture and enforced disappearance of anti-coup opponents, a report published by the UN Human Rights Office said.

"Two years after the military launched a coup, the generals have embarked on a scorched earth policy in an attempt to stamp out opposition," the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, said.

"Tragically, regional and global efforts for peace and restraint have largely fallen on deaf ears. The military, emboldened by continuous and absolute impunity, has consistently shown disregard

for international obligations and principles. Urgent, concrete action is needed to end this festering catastrophe."

The report echoed calls by the Security Council and ASEAN for, among other things, an immediate halt to the violence, the release of all those arbitrarily detained, accountability, and unhindered humanitarian access.

The report documents a litany of human rights abuses from 1 February 2022 to 31 January 2023, accompanied by a sharp rise in violence especially in the north-western and south-eastern parts of Myanmar.

It cites credible sources as having verified the deaths of at least 2,940, and 17,572 arrests by the military and its affiliates since

the coup. Nearly 80 per cent of the country's 330 townships have been impacted by armed clashes.

The military employs its so-called four-cuts approach - including through indiscriminate airstrikes and artillery shelling, razing villages to displace civilian populations, and denial of humanitarian access - to cut off non-State organised armed groups and other anti-military armed elements from access to food, finances, intelligence and recruits.

Among the numerous incidents of airstrikes, on 16 September - in Let Yet Kone village, Tabayin Township, Sagaing - four helicopters opened fire on a school killing at least six children and injuring nine others. After some 60 soldiers deployed from helicopters to the ground,

they reportedly raided the village, executing a school technician and five villagers before arresting wounded children and teachers.

In another incident, on 20 October, an airstrike against a newly opened hospital in Man Yu Gyi village, Banmauk Township, Sagaing, killed one woman and injured five others. A source reported that the hospital had been inaugurated a day earlier and victims were all volunteers at the facility.

One of the most frequently used tactics by the military is the systematic and widespread burning of villages and dwellings. Consistent with their modus operandi documented over decades, including in Kachin in 2011 and Rakhine in 2017, UN reports indicated that nearly 39,000 houses nationwide have been burnt or destroyed in military operations since February 2022, representing a more than 1,000-fold increase compared to 2021.

Sagaing was the most affected region, accounting for over 25,500 homes. In an incident on 1 May 2022 in Ah Shey See, Kale Township, Sagaing, satellite images suggest the burning of almost the entire village with 621 structures destroyed. Satellite imagery coupled with interview reports suggest that between 16 and 28 September in Taze Township, Sagaing, the military destroyed 458 houses and damaged another 319 across eight villages during a series of raids and attacks.

The military's mismanagement of the economy has provoked an economic crisis for much

of the population, resulting in the doubling of poverty rates compared to March 2020. Nearly half of the population now lives in poverty, and rural populations are reported to be at risk of starvation as the military imposes further restrictions on access to areas affected by violence and conflict. Compounding the situation, main supply routes and waterways across the country have been blocked, preventing humanitarian actors from reaching 17.6 million people in need.

"The military has also adopted rules, including martial law, intended to target anti-coup opposition and severely restrict the civic space that had significantly contributed to Myanmar's democratic transition," Türk said.

"Across Myanmar, people are continuously exposed to violations and crimes, including killings, enforced disappearances, displacement, torture, arbitrary arrests, and sexual violence. There are reasonable grounds to believe that the military and its affiliated militias continue to be responsible for most violations, some of which may constitute crimes against humanity and war crimes," the UN Human Rights Chief said.

Myanmar army killed 17 people in 2 villages, residents say

Soldiers in Myanmar rampaged through several villages, raping, beheading and killing at least 17 people, residents said, in the latest of what critics of the ruling military say are a series of war crimes since the army seized power two years ago.

The bodies of 17 people were recovered last week in the villages of Nyaung Yin and Tar Taing — also called Tatai — in Sagaing region in central Myanmar, according to members of the anti-government resistance and a resident who lost his wife. They said the victims had been detained by the military and in some cases appeared to have been tortured before being killed.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military's February 2021 seizure of power from the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi prompted nationwide peaceful protests that security forces suppressed with deadly force. The violence triggered widespread armed resistance, which has since turned into what some U.N. experts have characterised as a civil war.

The army has been conducting major offensives in the countryside, including burning villages and driving hundreds of thousands of people from their homes. It has faced some of its toughest resistance in Sagaing, in Myanmar's historic heartland.

The soldiers involved in attacks were in a group of more than 90 who were brought to the area by five helicopters on Feb. 23, said local leaders of the pro-democracy People's Defense Forces and independent Myanmar media.

They said the bodies of 14 people, including three women, were found on a small island in a river in Nyaung Yin. Three more male victims were found in Tar Taing, including two members of the local resistance. One of the two was dismembered, with his head cut off, they said.



The neighbouring villages are about 45 kilometres (28 miles) west of the major city of Mandalay.

Tar Taing resident Moe Kyaw, 42, survived the attack but said his 39-year-old wife, Pan Thwal, and 18-year-old nephew were among those killed. Contacted by phone, he said they were among 70 villagers detained in the middle of the night by soldiers who shot into the air as they herded their captives from their homes to the local Buddhist monastery.

Moe Kyaw said the soldiers stole beer and other items from his aunt's small shop, and as they beat her, he fled for his life, escaping two soldiers who shot at him.

He said his wife and other villagers were tortured at the monastery and then taken away from the village, apparently as hostages against any attack. He said his wife and two other women were beaten, raped and shot dead by the soldiers, who also took his spouse's earrings. His two sons, 9 and 11 years old, were released

when the soldiers departed, he said.

Moe Kyaw did not explain how he knew the details about his wife's treatment. Myanmar's underground National Unity Government — the main organisation opposed to military rule that describes itself as the country's legitimate government — said in an online news conference that the soldiers were from the 99th Light Infantry Division based in Mandalay Region.

A leader of a Sagaing resistance group called the Demon King Defense Force said his group attacked the better-armed government troops in a failed effort to rescue the detained villagers.

When they went to the small island where the soldiers had taken about 20 villagers they found 14 bodies in three spots, said the resistance leader, who asked not to be identified because of fear of reprisals by

the military. Acknowledging that he had not seen the killings, he said he also believed the women had been raped. In an earlier incident apparently involving the same army unit, two boys aged 12 and 13 assisting the People's Defense Force were captured by government troops on Feb. 26 and beheaded after being forced to show the locations of their camps, according to independent Myanmar media. Photos said to be of their bodies, found at Kan Daw village, about 12 kilometres (7 miles) northwest of Tar Taing, were circulated on social media.

A separate group, the Sadaung Lighting People's Defense Force, has said that two of its older teenage members were also killed and beheaded in fighting at Kan Daw on the same day.

The military government has not responded to the allegations. In the past, it has denied documented abuses and said that casualties occurred in the course of fighting against armed anti-government guerrillas. Online media supportive of the military government have made the same claim about the recent incidents in Sagaing or suggested that they were the result of factional fighting within the resistance.

Myanmar's military has long been accused of serious human rights violations, most notably in the western state of Rakhine. International courts are considering whether it committed genocide there in a brutal 2017 counterinsurgency campaign that caused more than 700,000 members of the Muslim Rohingya minority to flee to neighboring Bangladesh for safety.

IEA Ministerial Communiqué calls for clean Energy transition



In February 15, 2023, Ministers responsible for energy from around 40 countries took part in an IEA Ministerial meeting on Gas Markets and Supply Security. Ministers expressed their sincere condolences to Türkiye following the tragic loss of life caused by the devastating earthquakes this month and pledged their continued support for disaster relief and recovery efforts in the country. The Ministers discussed additional ways to work together in solidarity to limit the impacts of the unjustified invasion of Ukraine by Russia, particularly the energy crisis in Europe, and proposed measures to address the global impacts of the energy crisis in

support of countries affected worldwide and maintaining momentum on a clean and sustainable energy transition to keep the 1.5°C limit within reach.

The meeting was chaired by Canadian Minister Jonathan Wilkinson, and co-chaired by Irish Minister Eamon Ryan and United States Secretary of Energy, Jennifer M. Granholm, and organised with the support of the IEA's Task Force on Gas Market Monitoring and Supply Security (TFG), under the leadership of the IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol. It brought together ministers from IEA member countries, as well as from Bulgaria, Croatia, Georgia, Latvia, Moldova, Romania,

Slovenia and Ukraine, and the European Union represented by the European Commission.

Minister Wilkinson said: "Russia's invasion of Ukraine – almost a year ago – has ushered in what the IEA has described 'the First Global Energy Crisis', and today we met in solidarity to send a clear message to the world: we remain dedicated to concrete, collaborative action in order to enhance energy security and achieve our climate commitments."

Minister Ryan said: "Europe has taken united, swift and decisive action to seek to ensure the security of our energy supplies this winter. As we look ahead to



next winter, Ministers are working closely together within the EU and together with the International Energy Agency to address the impacts of the energy crisis and maintain our energy security. The good news is that many of the measures we are taking will put us firmly on the right track of the clean energy transition”.

Secretary Granholm said: “The international community was able to act quickly to prevent worst case scenarios amid the global gas crisis – but the manipulation by malign actors will persist beyond this winter, and we cannot simply hope for the relief of more mild seasons. We have a window of opportunity to prepare options for coordinated response, using the best analysis we can muster, and we are committed to making use of it.”

Participating ministers considered the IEA’s analysis of natural gas

supply and demand dynamics, and concurred with the need to coordinate plans to mitigate the risks associated with the unpredictability of Russia’s use of energy as a weapon of political coercion, which has resulted in unprecedented price rises and volatility. Such risks need to be assessed in a context of the short-term limited global liquefied natural gas (LNG) supply capacity additions and uncertainty related to the rebound of China’s economy and its potential impacts on global gas demand.

IEA Executive Director Fatih Birol said: “While natural gas markets have suffered some bruises, they are today in a better shape than many expected one year ago. But the reality is that winter 2023-2024 is likely to be the real test. The concrete steps we agreed on today, as well as the solidarity we demonstrated, gives me growing confidence that we will be ready

to face the next wave of the crisis. There will be difficult days ahead, but the dividends in terms of energy security, affordability and climate neutrality will be long-lasting.”

Ministers were encouraged by the recent stabilisation of the European energy market based inter alia on the actions taken by the EU and European countries to enhance their energy security throughout the 2022-2023 winter months and of the impacts actions have had on global supply and demand dynamics. They noted the actions identified by the IEA Secretariat and TFG and agreed to consider using all the options at their disposal to maintain domestic and regional energy security, that complements the full implementation of their climate commitments. Ministers recommend the TFG develop updated roadmaps on how the options identified in the report



could be implemented in the light of the evolution of the global gas crisis and Member countries' existing or planned implementation of response actions. Ministers noted the importance of continued detailed modelling and analysis, supported by secure data sharing, to inform and support actions to effectively manage serious risks to the resiliency of the global energy systems.

Ministers agreed that energy savings and improved energy efficiency are the first fuel and accelerating the clean energy transition is vital. They welcomed the successful response by the EU and others to the energy crisis in key areas of energy policy, from security of supply and gas storage to gas demand reduction and improved price transparency, faster deployment of renewables, and by targeted upgrades of energy infrastructure. Further more coordinated actions are being prepared to support an

orderly storage filling season in the northern hemisphere to enhance European and global energy security, improve global energy affordability, minimise supply disruptions, and leverage transparent and competitive energy markets to minimise the negative impacts of price volatility on consumers, while recognizing the specific needs of price-sensitive purchasers. The IEA will monitor the advancement of countries implementing options available and the ongoing situation of the gas crisis, and the Ministers agreed to reconvene in case of need.

Ministers note that this gas crisis has made it clear that clean energy transition and increasing stability in the global LNG market, specifically security of supply and price stability, is a common task for all gas producing and consuming countries in the world. Moving forward from this meeting, Ministers will continue the discussion concerning additional

countries impacted by the global energy crisis. Future discussions will take into account longer-term perspectives and opportunities for dialogues between gas producing and consuming countries, with the objective to avoid repeating the current crisis.

Ministers further decided to expand their dialogue with the broader global community, including through existing multilateral mechanisms such as G7, G20, and PTECC, recognising the need to ensure that short-term actions are taken to address the immediate global energy crisis, while still meeting the Paris agreement targets including pursuing efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. Ministers agreed on the importance of fostering a common vision on accelerating clean and sustainable energy transitions in order to achieve global energy security and climate goals.

Major step downs : Jacinda Arden and Nicola Sturgeon



Nicola Sturgeon

Scottish leader Nicola Sturgeon plans to step down after more than eight years in office amid criticism of her drive to expand transgender rights and her strategy for achieving independence from the United Kingdom.

During a news conference at her official residence in Edinburgh, Bute House, Sturgeon announced the surprise, saying the decision wasn't a response to the "latest period of pressure." But she added that serving well was knowing when to make way for someone else.

"In my head and heart, I know

that time is now," she said. "That it's right for me, my party and my country."

Sturgeon, 52, has led Scotland since 2014 when Scots narrowly voted to remain part of the United Kingdom. While the referendum was billed as a once-in-a-generation decision on independence, Sturgeon and her Scottish National Party have pushed for a new vote, arguing that Britain's departure from the European Union had changed the ground rules.

The U.K. government has refused to allow a second referendum.

Sturgeon, the first female leader of Scotland's devolved government,

won praise for her calm, measured public communications during the pandemic — a contrast to the erratic messaging of then-U.K. Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

She led her party to dominance in Scottish politics but left office with the goal of her political life — independence — unfulfilled.

Sturgeon said she planned to remain in office until the SNP elects a new leader. Scotland is part of the U.K. but, like Wales and Northern Ireland, has its semi-autonomous government with broad powers over areas including health care.

Sturgeon's announcement caught political observers by surprise



amid her staunch support for both independence and legislation that would make it easier for people in Scotland to change genders legally. Two weeks ago, she scoffed at resignation rumours, saying she still had “plenty in the tank.”

“This is as sudden as Jacinda Ardern ... Geez,” tweeted SNP lawmaker Angus MacNeil, referring to the resignation of New Zealand’s prime minister last month.

Sturgeon came under pressure in recent weeks after she pushed the gender recognition bill through the Scottish parliament over the objections of some party members. That raised concerns that Sturgeon’s position on transgender rights could undermine support for independence, the SNP’s overarching goal.

Joanna Cherry, an SNP member of Parliament who opposes the new gender law, said the resignation provided an opportunity for the party.

“We must restore the SNP’s tradition of internal party democracy, open respectful debate and intellectual rigour, and we must also put the welfare of everyone living in Scotland back at the heart of our endeavours,” Cherry said on Twitter.

Sturgeon said she had been “wrestling” with whether it was time to step down for weeks. She said she wasn’t resigning because of recent criticism, though she acknowledged that the “physical and mental impact” of the job had taken its toll.

Sturgeon led Scotland through the coronavirus pandemic and guided her party during three U.K.-wide elections and two Scottish elections.

“If the question is, can I battle on for another few months, then the answer is yes, of course, I can,” she said. “But if the question is, can I give this job everything it demands and deserves for another year, let alone for the remainder of this parliamentary

term, give it every ounce of energy that it needs in the way that I have strived to do every day for the last eight years, the answer honestly is different.”

Sturgeon weathered a scandal after her predecessor and former mentor, Alex Salmond, was tried and acquitted in 2020 on charges of sexual assault and attempted rape. A parliamentary investigation found Sturgeon had misled lawmakers about what she knew, though she was cleared of significant wrongdoing. In 2021 Salmond opened a rift in the independence movement by quitting the SNP to form a rival party, Alba.

For the past few months, much of Sturgeon’s energy has been focused on a renewed drive for independence and the gender recognition bill, which would allow people aged 16 or older in Scotland to change the gender designations on identity

Jacinda Arden

New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, whose empathetic handling of the nation’s worst mass-shooting and health-driven response to the coronavirus pandemic led her to become an international icon but who faced mounting criticism at home, left office unexpectedly.

Fighting back tears, Ardern told reporters in Napier that Feb. 7 was her last day as prime minister.

“I am entering now my sixth year in office, and for each of those years, I have given my absolute all,” she said.



She also announced that New Zealand's 2023 general elections would be held on Oct. 14 and that she would remain a lawmaker until then.

Her announcement came as a shock to people throughout the nation of 5 million people. Although there had been some chatter in political circles that Ardern might resign before the next election, she'd always maintained she planned to run again.

It's unclear who will take over as prime minister until the election. Deputy Prime Minister Grant Robertson announced that he wouldn't contest the leadership of the Labour Party, throwing the competition open.

Ardern became an inspiration to women around the world after winning the top job in 2017 at the relatively young age of 37. The following year, she became the second world leader to give birth while holding office. When she brought her infant daughter to the

floor of the U.N. General Assembly in New York in 2018, it brought smiles to people everywhere.

In March 2019, Ardern faced one of the darkest days in New Zealand's history when a white supremacist gunman stormed two mosques in Christchurch and slaughtered 51 people. In the aftermath, she was widely praised for embracing the survivors and New Zealand's Muslim community.

She was lauded globally for her country's initial handling of the coronavirus pandemic after New Zealand managed to stop the virus at its borders for months. But she was forced to abandon that zero-tolerance strategy as more contagious variants spread, and vaccines became widely available.

Ardern faced growing anger at home from those who opposed coronavirus mandates and rules. A protest last year that began on Parliament's grounds lasted for more than three weeks and ended with protesters hurling rocks at police and setting fires to

tents and mattresses as they were forced to leave.

The heated emotions around the coronavirus debate led to a level of vitriol directed at Ardern that other New Zealand leaders had rarely seen. This year, Ardern was forced to cancel an annual barbecue she hosts due to security fears.

Ardern had been facing tough reelection prospects. Her liberal Labour Party won reelection two years ago in a landslide of historic proportions, but recent polls have put her party behind its conservative rivals.

She said her time in the office had been fulfilling but challenging.

"I know what this job takes, and I no longer have enough in the tank to do it justice. It is that simple," she said.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, whose Labor Party is aligned with New Zealand's ruling party, said Ardern "has shown the world how to lead with intellect and strength."

"She has demonstrated that empathy and insight are powerful leadership qualities," Albanese tweeted.

"Jacinda has been a fierce advocate for New Zealand, an inspiration to so many and a great friend to me," he added.

With China becoming more assertive in the Pacific, Ardern had tried to take a more diplomatic approach than neighbouring Australia, which had ended up feuding with China.

Japan, other G-7 leaders step up Russia sanctions



Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida and other Group of Seven leaders adopted a set of additional sanctions against Russia over its war on Ukraine at an online G-7 summit to mark the one-year anniversary of the start of the invasion.

The leaders renewed their commitment to “intensifying our diplomatic, financial and military support for Ukraine, to increasing the costs to Russia and those supporting its war effort,” and countering the negative impact on the rest of the world, especially the most vulnerable people, they

said in a statement, according to the Japanese Foreign Ministry.

The G-7 countries also affirmed their coordinated action to “further counter Russia’s capacity to wage its illegal aggression” and pledged to prevent Russia from obtaining military equipment and technology. They also called on other countries to stop providing military support to Russia.

Kishida, as this year’s G-7 president, also announced Japan will impose additional sanctions on Russia, including freezing the assets of some 120 individuals and organizations and banning

the export of drones and other materials that can be used for military purposes.

“In order to absolutely not allow one-sided changes to the status quo, we must firmly carry out support for Ukraine and sanctions against Russia to regain peace and international order based on the rule of law,” Kishida told a news conference before hosting a teleconference with other G-7 leaders and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy.

“G-7 serves the core of the international commitment to do so,” he said.

At the summit, Kishida planned to discuss the latest developments in the Russian war on Ukraine and how to support Ukraine's recovery and affirm G-7 solidarity for the war-torn country.

Kishida noted growing concern about China's potential transfer of lethal weapons to Russia, and said that Japan will cooperate with G-7 and other countries to send a "clear message" to third countries to stop supplying weapons to Russia.

Kishida also expressed "strong concern" about Russian President Vladimir Putin's announcement that he was suspending Moscow's participation in an arms control treaty between Russia and the United States.

"Russia's nuclear threat is unacceptable, and use of nuclear weapons should never happen," Kishida, whose electoral constituency is Hiroshima, said at the news conference. "As the world's only country to have suffered nuclear attacks, the 77-year history of non-nuclear weapons use should not be tarnished by Russia."

As the world observed the one-year anniversary of Russia's war on Ukraine, about 1,000 people protested in Tokyo's Hibiya Park, holding banners saying: "Russia, stop invading Ukraine." Outside of the United Nations' University in Tokyo, demonstrators held a candlelight vigil. And at Zenkoji temple in Nagano in central Japan, about 30 monks prayed for the lives lost in the war.

Top diplomats from Ukraine, the United States, Britain, Sweden,



the EU, Lithuania and Sweden at a joint news conference in Tokyo called for solidarity for Ukraine and condemned Russia. U.S. Ambassador to Japan Rahm Emanuel said Putin is wrong to accuse NATO of expanding eastward. He said the newest NATO members expanded west by their free will because the West has "a pull" of freedom, liberty and respect for individuals.

Nuclear and security experts on a panel at the non-profit Sasakawa Peace Foundation released recommendations for the Kishida government to initiate discussions at the G-7 Hiroshima summit toward establishing a framework to protect nuclear facilities in conflict areas, in response to Russia's repeated attacks on the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant in Ukraine.

Due to its pacifist principles, Japan's support for Ukraine has been limited to non-combative military equipment such as helmets, bulletproof vests and drones, and humanitarian supplies including generators.

Kishida is the only G-7 leader who has not visited Ukraine. Pressure is mounting at home for Kishida to visit Kyiv before he hosts the G-7 summit in Hiroshima. Asked about a possible visit, Kishida said he is "considering" a visit, taking into consideration ways to ensure safety and secrecy, but nothing official has been decided.

Japan has joined the United States and European nations in sanctioning Russia over its invasion and providing humanitarian and economic support for Ukraine. Japan was quick to react because it fears the possible impact of a war in East Asia, where China's military has grown increasingly assertive and has escalated tensions around self-ruled Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its territory.

Kishida at the online G-7 also explained Japan's support for Ukraine. That includes a new \$5.5 billion in financial aid, which Kishida unveiled, bringing total Japanese support for Ukraine to more than \$7 billion.

Japan has also accepted more than 2,000 displaced Ukrainians and helped them with housing assistance and support for jobs and education — a rare move for a country that is known for its strict immigration policy.

Health catastrophe throws the Yanomami to the street



From a distance, the small group lying on the sidewalk outside the city market could be confused with hundreds of homeless people spread through Boa Vista. But they are Yanomami, an Indigenous people from the Amazon rainforest who traditionally live in relative isolation.

Years of neglect during the previous government of far-right President Jair Bolsonaro led to a health crisis that got worse while illegal gold miners swarmed into their territory. Dozens of Yanomami ended up roaming in the region's largest city.

The eldest ones in a group living in Boa Vista's food market are a couple — Oma Yanomami, 46, and Bonita Yanomami, 35. Both are from the Koroasipiitheri community, only accessible by air. In September, they were medivaced to Boa Vista to accompany their 3-year-old son, who was ill with malaria.

Initially, they stayed in the Indigenous Health House known as Casai, a federal facility on the outskirts of Boa Vista, a sprawling city of 440,000 people and capital of Roraima state. But in the first few days, the family left the facility and began living on the streets.

"It was too crowded," Oma Yanomami told The Associated Press in broken Portuguese while sitting on the dirty sidewalk. Beside him, his wife was asleep despite the heavy car traffic nearby. Both had sustained bruises and appeared in poor health.

A report published this week by the Ministry of Health paints a grim picture of Casai, which was built to host Yanomami under treatment and their relatives. Its capacity is 200 people, but it harbours as many as 700, representing 2% of the Yanomami population. The figure doesn't



include those hospitalised, including several children with severe malnutrition.

“The bathrooms are unhealthy, and the dining areas are insufficient and unpleasant. In addition, the food was insufficient until a few months ago,” the report says. “The Yanomami lack space to prepare their food and other activities, so at night, there are several drunken people and reports of violence and car hit-and-runs.”

According to the report, 150 Yanomami are eligible to return to their villages, but the wait for a place on a return flight can be very long — 10 years in one extreme case.

An estimated 30,000 Yanomami people live in Brazil's largest Indigenous territory, which covers an area roughly the size of Portugal and stretches across Roraima and Amazonas states in the northwest corner of Brazil's Amazon.

Life in the streets took its toll on Oma and Bonita Yanomami. Their son soon contracted pneumonia, while his parents fell into drinking sprees. Health workers found out about the situation and took the baby to a local hospital. There, he was admitted as “indigent,” which put him on the adoption path without the parents' consent.

For four months, the couple did not see their child. Then social workers affiliated with the Indigenous movement intervened to get them inside to visit. The future of the child now hinges on a judicial order.

It is not uncommon to meet Yanomami in the streets of Boa Vista, most with drinking problems. Some go back to Casai during the night, while others end up under viaducts.

Their life is rough. Two weeks ago, a Yanomami woman gave birth on a sidewalk. A Yanomami man died several days after being injured in a fight inside a prison, according to the State Secretary of Justice.

There are 269 Indigenous inmates in Roraima of various peoples.

In January, the federal government, led by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, declared a public health emergency for the Yanomami people. Since then, military doctors treated over 1,000 people in a field hospital in Boa Vista, and 4,000 food baskets were distributed in the vast territory.

In parallel, security forces started to destroy equipment and control entry of illegal gold miners, estimated at 20,000 people. As a result, dozens have decided to leave the Indigenous territory, while many others keep mining gold.

The Indigenous organisations now want the Yanomami child, now four years old, to be returned to his parents so they can board a plane and go back to Koroasipiitheri, where six siblings are waiting for them.

Pak Economy on a precipitous downward trajectory



Since losing a war with India and being divided from Bangladesh in 1971, Pakistan has been experiencing a severe economic downturn. Many signs indicate that the nation is currently facing its greatest nightmare.

In the midst of mounting worries about the state of the economy, prices for necessities are rising.

For example, milk now costs 250 rupees a litre, and chicken is now 780 rupees per kilogramme, and defence minister Khawaja Asif claims that the nation has already declared bankruptcy.

The South Asia Press reported that the country's planning commission, agriculture, food, livestock, and fisheries sectors lost USD 3.7 billion in the floods, with

long-term losses estimated to be USD 9.24 billion. The report added that the cash-strapped nation was already struggling with a high debt load.

According to the South Asia Press, Pakistan is currently in its most challenging scenario in the last 20 years. The country's resources have been depleted as a result of the economic crisis, political unrest,



and increasing number of terrorist strikes in the northwest.

Furthermore, the survey claims that the public is directly impacted by the nation's declining economy.

The South Asia Press stated that the country's planning commission, agricultural, food, livestock, and fisheries sectors lost USD 3.7 billion in the floods, with long-term losses predicted to be USD 9.24 billion. The cash-strapped government was already struggling with a huge debt load.

The study reported that the country's inflation rate in December 2022 was 24.5%, nearly double the 12.3% rate from the previous year. It also stated that the common people were most

impacted by the high flour costs during the worst-ever food crisis the nation has ever experienced.

Balochistan, Sindh, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa provinces have all experienced widespread grain and flour stampedes. Experts worry that the crisis would soon include basic necessities like fuel products.

South Asia Press reports that other experts also allude to the possibility of restricting gasoline and diesel in the ensuing two to three months, which would ultimately affect trade, business, and even agriculture, which depends on diesel during the harvesting season.

The report also noted that in the past, the twin deficits of

the Budget and balance of payments were managed by contacting bilateral donors and multilateral organisations and that approximately half of the USD seven billion loan, extended by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2019, has already been disbursed.

International organisations reported, the difficulties in the nation are a result of governments consistently living beyond their means without increasing domestic resources. According to the report, the country's troubles are getting worse as a result of the delay in the release of the IMF's next tranche.

The foreign exchange reserves held by the nation's central bank



fell to USD 4.34 billion in the week ending January 6, the lowest level since February 2014, due to no inflows from the IMF or friendly nations.

Analysts claim that the stockpiles aren't even sufficient to cover one month's worth of imports.

According to a recent analysis by Islam Khobar, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project appears to have been affected by both China's economic slowdown and Pakistan's current financial crisis.

The CPEC project that commenced a decade ago was seen as a harbinger of prosperity for Pakistan, the report said, adding that seven years later, many projects under the CPEC still remain non-starters while some of those being operational have become liabilities and are incurring losses.

Financial meltdown grips the US and Japan



The year ahead looks better than initially feared for the global economy but remains fraught with risks, including the potential escalation of the war in Ukraine and the emergence of a transatlantic trade war as the final panel at the World Economic Forum's Annual Meeting in Davos concluded.

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva told Davos that what had improved was the potential for China to boost growth, but she warned: "We have to be cautious". Global growth is still expected to slow to one of its lowest rates in recent decades, senior UN economists say. They

expect growth to drop to 1.9% this year from 3% in 2022 because of intersecting crises such as the Ukraine war, surging inflation, debt tightening and the climate emergency. The World Bank sees growth sliding to 1.7%.

A global recession is seen as likely by two-thirds of respondents to the World Economic Forum's Chief Economists Outlook: January 2023, of which 18% consider it extremely likely – more than twice as many as in the previous survey in September 2022. However, the report also points to tentative grounds for optimism, including a possible easing of the cost-of-living and energy crises.

US and Japan facing debt difficulties

The world's biggest and third-biggest economies are both facing up to problems around debt. The US could face a fiscal crisis in the next few months after the government hit its \$31.4 trillion debt ceiling. At the same time, the Bank of Japan has downgraded its economic outlook, shortly after Finance Minister Shunichi Suzuki warned that the country's finances are becoming increasingly precarious.

The US Treasury has begun using "extraordinary measures" on cash management to try and hold off a debt default until 5



increases to the debt limit should be tied to “structural spending reform.”

Most analysts believe a deal will be reached and a default will not happen, Bloomberg reports, pointing out that the debt ceiling has been raised 45 times in the past 40 years. But in the meantime, there is likely to be stock market volatility. If a default does happen, the US credit rating would decrease, leading to higher interest rates. That would put a strain on households and businesses, as it would translate into higher borrowing costs for cars, homes and all other loans. The repercussions for the economy could lead to companies cutting jobs in huge numbers.

Japan's government debt will exceed JPY 1,100 trillion (\$8.47 trillion) for the first time at the end of the fiscal year that runs to March 2027, a draft estimate seen by Reuters shows, as the country remains heavily dependent on borrowing.

Japan's inflation rate has recently hit a 41-year high. This has kept alive expectations that the Bank of Japan could phase out its ultra-low interest rates – it opted to keep rates unchanged on 18 January to enable it to continue servicing its debt repayments – although some analysts do not expect this any time soon, because of uncertainty over whether wages will increase enough to offset rising living costs.

Prime Minister Fumio Kishida says wage hikes will be key to starting a positive cycle of growth. Japan raised its minimum wage by a record rate of 3.3% last year, but it is failing to keep pace with inflation.

June. The country's debt ceiling is a legal limit on how much the federal government can borrow. It is set by Congress and was extended to its current level in December 2021 following demands from the Democratic Party. That limit has now been hit following a standoff between the Republican-controlled House of Representatives and President Joe Biden's Democrats on lifting the debt ceiling again.

US hits debt ceiling, Economists warn of disastrous economic consequences

The United States borrows huge sums of money by selling Treasury bonds to investors across the globe and uses those funds to pay existing financial obligations, including military salaries, safety net benefits and interest on the national debt. Once the United States hits the cap, the Treasury begins using “extraordinary measures” — suspending some

investments and exchanging different types of debt — to try to stay beneath the cap for as long as possible. But eventually, the United States will need to either borrow more money to pay its bills or stop making good on its financial obligations, including possibly defaulting on its debt.

Responsibility for lifting or suspending the borrowing cap falls to Congress, which must get a simple majority in both the House and Senate to vote for any change to the debt limit. Raising the debt limit has become a perennial fight, with Republican lawmakers using it as leverage to try to force spending cuts.

This year is shaping up to be the messiest fight in at least a decade. Republicans now control the House and they have adopted new rules governing legislation that make it more difficult to raise the debt limit and strengthen Republicans' ability to demand that any increase be accompanied by spending cuts. Senate Republicans have also insisted that

The Downfall of India's Mogul Gautham Adani



We have witnessed a lot of big businesses fall off in the blink of time...It was really quick; Asia's richest Adani group faced a sudden decline in their shares and is now on its way to collapsing. Even the whole country could feel it. Adani, started this year as being world's third richest person with a personal fortune estimated at \$120 billion, the self-made Indian industrialist was wealthier than either Bill Gates or Warren Buffett.

He has now slipped to the 22nd spot according to the Forbes billionaire list in the wake of

Hindenburg Research's report.

Farsightedness and the ability to seize opportunity are the qualities that differentiate a successful person from the mass. Adani was living proof of that. But he failed to see that Hindenburg Research, an American short seller with bets against Adani's companies, accused him of pulling off "the largest con in corporate history."

It was an irony Adani faced accusations of fraud and manipulation while his ideal of doing business is to grow with goodness.

Who is Adani?

In a single statement, one can say that he is India's fastest grown Business Tycoon

Mr Gautam Adani is the Founder and Chairman of the Adani Group, which ranks among India's top 3 industrial conglomerates. A college dropout, Adani spurned his father's textile shop to start his own commodities trading firm.

Mr Adani is a first-generation entrepreneur. The Adani Group, which began in 1988 as a commodities trading firm,



expanded through acquisitions and with the support of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Adani is India's biggest airport operator and also controls Mundra Port, India's largest, in his home state of Gujarat. Adani became India's second-largest cement producer in 2022, after acquiring Swiss firm Holcim's Indian assets for \$10.5 billion.

Adani owns Abbot Point, a controversial coal mining project in Australia, whose Carmichael coal mine is billed as one of the world's largest. He wants to be the world's largest producer of green energy and will invest up

to \$70 billion in renewable energy projects.

The Hindenburg Research; which caused Adani's loss

Hindenburg research report alleging Adani group of stock manipulation and multiple financial frauds has caused the conglomerate to lose \$120 billion as all its stocks have fallen, wiping out more than half of their combined value. According to the real-time Forbes list, Adani's wealth has plummeted by around \$40 billion since January 25,

pushing him out of the top 10 world's richest.

In the wake of the report, Adani's market losses have swelled to over USD 100 billion. According to a report in Reuters, the listed Adani firms now have a combined market value of USD 108 billion, versus USD 218 billion before Hindenburg's report.

Earlier this week, the Adani Group announced that it had decided to call off the Rs 20,000 crore FPO of Adani Enterprises Ltd (AEL) and said that it would refund the money to the investors.

S&P Dow Jones Indices said it would remove Adani Enterprises Ltd from widely used sustainability indices on February 7, making the shares less appealing to environment-conscious investors.

So, what did the report say?

Hindenburg Research said that the seven listed companies of the Adani group have an 85% downside on a fundamental basis due to sky-high valuations, Hindenburg said in the report.

The report pointed out that "Key listed Adani companies have also taken on substantial debt, including pledging shares of their inflated stock for loans, putting the entire group on precarious financial footing. 5 of 7 key listed companies have reported 'current ratios' below 1, indicating near-term liquidity pressure."

The report said that 8 of 22 key roles are held by the family members of Gautam Adani,



Founder and Chairman of the Adani Group.

The Response

In a 413-page rebuttal filed, the Adani group labelled the US short seller as the “Madoffs of Manhattan.”

The Adani group called the report baseless and called the allegations “unsubstantiated speculations”.

“All transactions entered into by us with entities who qualify as ‘related parties’ under Indian laws and accounting standards have been duly disclosed by us,” Adani said in the 413-page response.

Despite of Indian government's Efforts to Calm Investors Shares of Adani Group Firms Continue to Fall. Standard Chartered has stopped accepting Adani Group

bonds as collateral for giving loans to their private banking clients, after Credit Suisse and Citigroup. Credit Suisse assigned ‘zero lending value’ to bonds issued by Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone, Adani Green Energy and Adani Electricity Mumbai on February 1 – the day Adani Group called off its share sale. It earlier offered a lending value of about 75% for the bonds issued by Adani Ports.

This means that the client who held Adani bonds as collateral could borrow up to 75% of the bonds’ value.

When a private bank cuts its lending value to zero, clients need to offer more cash or another form of collateral, and if they fail to do so, their securities can be liquidated.

These decisions were taken amid

volatility in the prices of Adani bonds.

Adani Group’s bonds were trading at distressed levels in the US markets. The report said that the yields on some bonds of Adani Ports & Special Economic Zone and Adani Green Energy skyrocketed past average levels for global junk bonds.

“Some bonds of Adani Ports & Special Economic zone and Adani Green Energy yield more than 30% in global secondary markets, which is much higher than the average investment grade yield of 4.96% and junk bond yield of 8.14%,” mint reported.

When bond yields go up, it is a signal that corporations will have to pay a higher interest cost on debt, increasing the risk of default.

Sealed the Deal between UK and EU



The United Kingdom and the European Union reached an agreement to resolve their complex post-Brexit trade dispute over Northern Ireland, heralding the beginning of a “new chapter” in their often fractious relationship.

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced the “Windsor Framework” after finalizing the details in Windsor, near London.

Von der Leyen told a news conference it was “historic what we have achieved today.” Sunak said there had been a “decisive breakthrough.”

The agreement, which will allow goods to flow freely to Northern Ireland from the rest of the U.K., ends a dispute that has soured U.K.-EU relations, sparked the collapse of the Belfast-based regional government and shaken Northern Ireland’s decades-old peace process.

Fixing it ends a long-running irritant for von der Leyen and is a significant victory for Sunak — but not the end of his troubles. Selling the deal to his own Conservative Party and its Northern Irish allies may be a tougher struggle. Now Sunak awaits the judgment of Northern Ireland’s Democratic Unionist Party, which is boycotting the region’s power-sharing

government until the trade arrangements are changed to its satisfaction.

Sunak is due to make a statement to the House of Commons later setting out details of the deal.

Northern Ireland is the only part of the U.K. that shares a border with an EU member, the Republic of Ireland. When the U.K. left the bloc in 2020, the two sides agreed to keep the Irish border free of customs posts and other checks because an open border is a key pillar of Northern Ireland’s peace process.

Instead, checks are on some goods entering Northern Ireland from

the rest of the U.K. That angered British unionist politicians in Belfast, who say the new trade border in the Irish Sea undermines Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom.

The Democratic Unionist Party collapsed Northern Ireland's Protestant-Catholic power-sharing government a year ago in protest and has refused to return until the rules are scrapped or substantially rewritten.

The party's leader, Jeffrey Donaldson, said there had been "significant progress", but "key issues of concern" remained. He said the party would study the details before responding.

The devil, as ever, will be in those details, and the two sides emphasized different elements of the deal.

Sunak said the new rules "removed any sense of a border in the Irish Sea" by eliminating checks and paperwork for most goods entering Northern Ireland. Only those destined to travel onward to EU member Ireland will be checked.

He said Northern Ireland's lawmakers could block any changes to EU goods laws that applied to them by using an emergency mechanism labelled the "Stormont Brake" after the home of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

"Today's agreement delivers smooth-flowing trade within the whole United Kingdom, protects Northern Ireland's place in our union and safeguards sovereignty for the people of Northern Ireland,"

Sunak said. Von der Leyen stressed that the EU's borderless single market would be protected by safeguards including "IT access, labels and enforcement procedures" and said the European Court of Justice would remain "the sole and ultimate arbiter of EU law."

The role of the European court in resolving any disputes over the rules has been the thorniest issue in the talks. In their Brexit divorce deal, the U.K. and the EU agreed to give the European court that authority. But the DUP and Conservative Party eurosceptics insist the court must have no jurisdiction in U.K. matters.

After the deal was announced, the British pound rose against the dollar, and business groups welcomed the agreement. Tony Danker headed the Confederation of British Industry and said it would "allow businesses and politicians to turn their attention to economic growth and delivering greater prosperity."

Sunak will have to face down his Conservative critics — including former Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who, as a leader at the time, signed off on the trade rules that he now derides. Johnson was ousted by the Conservatives last year over ethics scandals but is widely believed to hope for a comeback.

To boost Sunak's chances of winning Conservative support, lawmaker Steve Baker — a self-styled "Brexit hardman" who helped topple Prime Minister Theresa May by opposing her Brexit deal in 2019 — said he was "delighted" with the agreement.

Sunak said lawmakers in Parliament would get a vote on the deal "at the appropriate time" but not immediately.

Even if Sunak faces a rocky road at home, the deal likely marks a dramatic improvement in relations with the EU. They were severely tested during the long Brexit divorce and chilled further amid disputes over the Northern Ireland Protocol. Under Johnson, the U.K. government introduced a bill that would let it unilaterally rip up parts of the Brexit agreement, a move the EU called illegal. Sunak's government said the bill would now be dropped.

Von der Leyen said the deal was "good news for scientists and researchers" because it would allow the U.K. to be readmitted to the bloc's Horizon science program. The EU had been blocking that until the trade dispute was fixed, to the chagrin of British scientists.

After sealing the deal, Von der Leyen had tea with King Charles III at Windsor Castle, 20 miles (32 kilometres) west of London. Buckingham Palace said the meeting was taking place on the government's advice, leading critics to accuse Sunak of dragging the monarch, who is supposed to remain neutral, into a political row.

Sunak's spokesman, Max Blain, said the government "would never" embroil the king in politics.

"His Majesty has met with several foreign leaders recently," he said, including Polish President Andrzej Duda and Ukraine's Volodymyr Zelenskyy. "This is no different."

The African Adversities



Countries across Africa continue to struggle with decades-long conflicts, economic turmoil, and the devastating effects of climate change. Including peace treaties, humanitarian aid, and accountability for violations of international law—have been weakened or dismantled.

Haiti: Gang violence and climate change combine for chaos

Armed gangs regularly take control of distribution routes,

causing shortages of basic goods and fuel. Rising prices make it increasingly difficult for people to afford to buy the food they can access

Extreme violence and gross human rights abuses, including mass incidents of murder, gang rape and sniper attacks, have sharply increased in Cité Soleil on the outskirts of the Haitian capital, creating “a living nightmare” for thousands.

It paints a picture of how people are being harassed and terrorised by criminal gangs for months without the State being able to

stop it. It can only be described as a living nightmare,” Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, said.

The G-9 gang has spread terror by using snipers, who indiscriminately kill anyone who enters their field of vision, the UN report said, adding that on average six people are killed each week by snipers.

The gang blocked access to the neighbourhood, thus controlling the entry of basic necessities such as food and health services. Unsanitary conditions have been exacerbated, leading to the spread



South Sudan: Climate change compounds the legacy of civil war

South Sudan's civil conflict finished in 2018, but the country is still recuperating. Localised combat has diminished, yet it is still common. One of the world's most fragile nations is this one.

People find it more and more difficult to get food and basic supplies as a result of climate disasters such as catastrophic floods and droughts.

More South Sudanese people than ever before—7.8 million—will face crisis levels of food insecurity in 2023. Despite severe flooding, destroyed crops and disease outbreaks, funding shortages forced the World Food Program to suspend part of its food aid in 2022.

Conflict across the country also threatens civilians and humanitarian supporters. South Sudan consistently has the world's highest level of violence against aid workers, hindering their ability to reach people in need.

of infectious diseases such as cholera.

Meanwhile climate shocks and the first cholera outbreak in three years strain critical health and sanitation systems. Haiti is particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters as a result of ecocidal policies, a lack of sufficient disaster preparedness, and geographic location. Haiti's political system has been equally susceptible to shocks, suffering from corruption, foreign exploitation, and political interference constantly throughout its long history.

vigilante groups has added to the violence. Further expansion among these groups could increase political instability.

As much as 40% of the nation is currently under the control of armed organisations.

Humanitarian help is constrained despite the urgent requirements due to violence and a lack of finance. In the north of Burkina Faso, some settlements are almost shut off. One of the greatest food inflation rates in the world, the price of food has jumped by 30%.

Burkina Faso: Armed group activity invites instability

The situation in Burkina Faso grows increasingly dire as armed groups intensify their attacks and seize land. Tensions among the country's political factions have contributed to the instability. Members of the armed forces seized power twice in 2022 alone.

A growth in the number of





Democratic Republic of Congo: Decades-long conflicts escalate

Over 100 armed groups fight for control in eastern Congo, fueling a crisis that has lasted for decades. Citizens are often targeted. After nearly 10 years of dormancy, the M23 armed group launched a new offensive in 2022, forcing families to flee their homes and disrupting humanitarian aid.

Major disease outbreaks—including measles, malaria and Ebola—continue to threaten an already weak health care system, putting many lives at risk.





Conflict remains the key concern in Congo, especially as tensions escalate and M23 takes control of more land.

Political unrest is rising as the country prepares for elections. Leaders have been accused of inciting and supporting conflict to win over constituents. Despite peacekeeping efforts, violence against aid organisations may increase before the vote.

Ethiopia: Drought and conflict torments tens of millions

Ethiopia is heading toward its sixth consecutive failed rainy season, which could prolong a drought already affecting 24 million people. At the same time, various conflicts across the country are disrupting lives and preventing humanitarian organisations from delivering aid.

While a November 2022 peace deal may hold and offers hope for an end to the conflict in Tigray, northern Ethiopia, 28.6 million

remain in need of humanitarian aid. The humanitarian response to the drought in Ethiopia is insufficiently funded, even more so than in East African countries facing a similar crisis. If humanitarian groups can't deliver resources in a country that is badly affected by aid funding shortfalls, Ethiopians will starve as they are hit by drought and rising food prices.

If the peace deal unravels, humanitarian needs will increase even more.

Somalia: A catastrophic hunger crisis

Somalia is facing an unprecedented drought and hunger crisis. People have already lost their lives to starvation, and the country is on the brink of famine.

This is no "natural disaster." Human-caused climate change has increased the frequency and severity of droughts. Decades of conflict have eroded Somalia's

ability to respond to shocks of any kind, destroying systems and infrastructure that would have provided a guardrail against the current crisis.

For instance, with its food production decimated by climate change and conflict, Somalia's dependence on imports has proven disastrous—over 90% of its wheat comes from Russia and Ukraine.

Somalia, like Ethiopia, experiences its sixth consecutive failed rainy season in 2023. High global food prices driven by the war in Ukraine make it even harder for families to eat.

Humanitarian organisations have limited ability to reach people in areas controlled by non-state armed groups. There are even reports of one group destroying food deliveries and poisoning water sources.

Meanwhile, the humanitarian response in Somalia remains severely underfunded.

Correct agricultural policy to transform North Korea



There's little doubt that North Korea's chronic food shortages worsened due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and speculation about the country's chronic food insecurity has flared as its top leaders prepare to discuss the "very important and urgent task" of formulating a correct agricultural policy.

Unconfirmed reports say an unspecified number of North Koreans have been dying of hunger. But experts say there is no sign of mass deaths or famine.

They say the upcoming ruling Workers' Party meeting is likely intended to shore up support for North Korean leader Kim Jong Un as he pushes ahead with his nuclear weapons program in defiance of intense U.S.-led pressure and sanctions.

"Kim Jong Un can't advance his nuclear program stably if he fails to resolve the food problem fundamentally because public support would be shaken," said Lim Eul-chul, a professor at Kyungnam University's Institute

for Far Eastern Studies in Seoul. "The meeting is being convened to solidify internal unity while pulling together ideas to address the food shortage."

An enlarged plenary meeting of the Central Committee of the Workers' Party is slated for late February. Its specific agenda is unknown, but the party's powerful Politburo earlier said that a "a turning point is needed to dynamically promote radical change in agricultural development."



The meeting will be the party's first plenary session convened just to discuss agricultural issues, though they often are a key topic at broader conferences in North Korea. Raising grain output was one of 12 economic priorities the party adopted during a plenary meeting in December.

It is difficult to know the exact situation in the North, which kept its borders virtually closed during the pandemic. Food shortages and economic hardships have persisted since a famine killed an estimated hundreds of thousands of people in the mid-1990s.

In his first public speech after taking over from his father as leader in late 2011, Kim vowed that North Koreans would "never have to tighten their belts again."

During the first several years of his rule, the economy achieved

modest growth as Kim tolerated some market-oriented activities and increased exports of coal and other minerals to China, the North's main ally and biggest trading partner. More recently, however, tougher international sanctions over Kim's nuclear program, draconian pandemic-related restrictions and outright mismanagement have taken a severe economic toll.

South Korean estimates put North Korea's grain production last year at about 4.5 million tons, a 3.8% decrease from a year earlier. Annual grain output has plateaued at about 4.4 million tons to 4.8 million tons in the past decade.

North Korea needs about 5.5 million tons of grain to feed its 25 million people, so it's usually short about 1 million tons each year. About half of the gap is

typically offset by unofficial grain purchases from China. The rest is an unresolved shortfall, said Kwon Tae-jin, a senior economist at the private GS&J Institute in South Korea.

Kwon says curbs on cross-border trade due to the pandemic have likely hindered unofficial rice purchases from China. Efforts by North Korean authorities to tighten controls and restrict market activities have also worsened the situation, he said.

"I believe this year North Korea is facing its worst food situation since Kim Jong Un took power," Kwon said.

Koo Byongsam, a spokesperson at the South Korean Unification Ministry, said that an unknown number of North Koreans have died of hunger, but said the problem is not as serious as



the mid-1990s famine, which stemmed from natural disasters, the loss of Soviet assistance and mismanagement.

The current food problem is more an issue of distribution than of an absolute shortage of grain since much of the grain harvested last year has not yet been eaten, ministry officials said. Food insecurity has worsened as authorities tightened controls over private grain sales in markets, instead trying to confine the grain trade to state-run facilities.

Severe steps taken by the Kim government to contain the pandemic provided effective tools for imposing a tighter grip on the kinds of market activity that earlier helped foster stronger economic growth but might eventually erode the government's authoritarian rule, analysts say.

Kwon said current food shortages are unlikely to cause mass deaths because food is still available in markets, though at high prices. During the famine in the mid-

1990s, grain was hard to come by, he said. North Korea monitoring groups have reported increases in the prices of rice and corn — the two most important staples — though the price of corn has stabilized recently in some regions.

"If North Korea indeed sees people dying of hunger and faces a chaos, it won't publicly say things like 'a very important and urgent task' for an agricultural policy," said Ahn Kyung-su, head of DPRKHEALTH.ORG, a website focusing on health issues in North Korea.

The North's plenary meeting is "typical propaganda" meant to show Kim is working to improve living conditions and comes at a time when the leadership needs new fodder to burnish his image, on top of the nuclear program and assertions of a victory over the pandemic, Ahn said. During the plenary meeting, Kwon said that leaders will likely pressure local farm officials to raise grain output without presenting any effective solutions for the food crisis. Targets will be set and officials may be

punished for failing to meet them if food shortages worsen, Ahn said.

Yi Jisun, an analyst at the state-run Institute for National Security Strategy in Seoul, said in a report in January that North Korea recently imported large amounts of rice and flour from China, though it is unlikely to accept food assistance from the United States, South Korea and Japan.

While declaring that food problems must be improved at any cost, the state-run media in the North have continued to tout its longstanding policy of "self-reliance," a strategy that shuns Western help.

"The assistance by imperialists is a trap for plundering and subjugation meant to wrest 100 things after giving one," the North's main Rodong Sinmun newspaper said in a commentary. "Building up the economy by receiving this 'poisoned candy' would be a mistake."

Mass protests in Israel as controversial overhauls advanced



Tens of thousands of Israelis protested their far-right government's plans to overhaul the legal system three days after parliament advanced a bill enabling lawmakers to overturn a Supreme Court decision with a simple majority.

The "Supreme Court override" bill's approval in a preliminary vote in the Knesset was the latest step by Benjamin Netanyahu's ruling coalition toward realising the judicial overhaul that is steaming ahead despite calls for dialogue and consensus from American Jews and Israel's president, and

the weekly mass protests.

In addition to weakening the country's highest court, the protesters say the proposed changes threaten Israel's democratic values and concentrate power with the ruling coalition in parliament. Netanyahu and his ruling coalition believe the court has had unchecked power for years.

The weekly protests have gained momentum for eight weeks, with large sectors of Israeli society and businesses joining them. The main protest took place in the

central city of Tel Aviv, along with numerous smaller demonstrations across the country.

The protesters held Israeli flags, flares, and posters with different messages against the judicial overhauls. "No Constitution, No Democracy," said one placard. Some demonstrators stood behind a banner reading "They Shall Not Pass" and "We Shall Override," referring to the vote.

The package of legislation would give Israel's parliament, the Knesset, the power to overrule Supreme Court decisions with a



simple majority. It would also give the government the power to nominate judges, which currently rests with a committee composed of judges, legal experts and politicians.

It would remove power and independence from government ministries' legal advisers and remove the courts' power to invalidate "unreasonable" government appointments, as the High Court did in January, forcing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to fire Interior and Health Minister Aryeh Deri.

Four legislative clauses that are part of the overhaul took steps forward this week. The bills allowing Knesset to override Supreme Court decisions and removing the court's power to rule government appointments unreasonably passed early stages of the process and now go to the committee stage. Two other

clauses passed the first readings and required two more readings to become law.

Critics accuse Netanyahu of pushing the legislation to get out of corruption trials he is currently facing. Netanyahu denies that, saying the trials are collapsing on their own and that the changes are necessary after judicial overreach by unelected judges.

About two out of three (66%) Israelis believe the Supreme Court should have the power to strike down laws incompatible with Israel's Basic Laws, and about the same proportion (63%) say they support the current system of nominating judges, a poll for the Israel Democracy Institute found last week.

People who say they voted for opposition parties were far more likely than voters for the parties in the coalition to oppose the

changes. Nearly nine out of 10 (87%) people who voted for the opposition said the Supreme Court should have the power to strike down laws incompatible with Basic Laws, while only 44% of coalition voters said it should. The percentage was slightly higher among people who voted for Netanyahu's Likud party, with nearly half (47%) saying the Supreme Court should have that power.

Israel does not have a written constitution but a set of basic laws.

The survey, released February 21, found that about half (53%) of Israelis believed that removing the political independence of the judiciary would harm Israel's economy – as Israeli economists and businesspeople have been warning. About a third (35%) do not believe the changes would harm the economy.

Israeli settlers rampage after Palestinian gunman kills 2



Scores of Israeli settlers went on a violent rampage in the northern West Bank, setting dozens of cars and homes on fire after a Palestinian gunman killed two settlers. Palestinian medics said one man was killed, and four others were badly wounded in what appeared to be the worst outburst of settler violence in decades.

The deadly shooting, followed by the late-night rampage, immediately raised doubts about Jordan's declaration that Israeli and Palestinian officials had pledged to calm a year-long wave of violence.

Palestinian media said some 30 homes and cars were torched. Photos and video on social media showed large fires burning throughout the town of Hawara — the scene of the deadly shooting

earlier in the day — lighting up the sky. In one video, a crowd of Jewish settlers stood in prayer as they stared at a building in flames. And earlier, a prominent Israeli Cabinet minister and settler leader had called for Israel to strike “without mercy.”

The Palestinian Health Ministry said a 37-year-old man was shot and killed by Israeli fire. The Palestinian Red Crescent medical service said two other people were shot and wounded, a third person was stabbed, and a fourth was beaten with an iron bar. Some 95 others were being treated for tear gas inhalation.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas condemned “the terrorist acts carried out by settlers under the protection of the occupation forces tonight.”

“We hold the Israeli government fully responsible,” he added.

The European Union said it was “alarmed by” the violence in Hawara and that “authorities on all sides must intervene now to stop this endless cycle of violence.” The U.K.'s ambassador to Israel, Neil Wigan, said, “Israel should tackle settler violence, with those responsible brought to justice.”

As videos of the violence appeared on evening news shows, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appealed for calm and urged against vigilante violence. “I ask that when blood is boiling, and the spirit is hot, don't take the law into your hands,” Netanyahu said in a video statement.

The Israeli military said its chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi, rushed to the scene. It said troops were



being reinforced in the area as they worked to restore order and search for the shooter. Ghassan Douglas, a Palestinian official who monitors Israeli settlements in the Nablus region, said that settlers burned at least six houses and dozens of cars in Hawara and reported attacks on neighbouring Palestinian villages. He estimated around 400 Jewish settlers took part in the attack.

“I have never seen such an attack,” he said.

The rampage occurred shortly after the Jordanian government, which hosted Sunday’s talks at the Red Sea resort of Aqaba, said the sides had agreed to take steps to de-escalate tensions and would meet again next month ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

“They reaffirmed the necessity of committing to de-escalation on the ground and to prevent further violence,” the Jordanian Foreign Ministry announced. After nearly a year of fighting that has killed over 200 Palestinians and more

than 40 Israelis in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, the Jordanian announcement marked a small sign of progress. But the situation on the ground immediately cast those commitments into doubt.

The Palestinians claim the West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza Strip – areas captured by Israel in the 1967 Mideast war – for a future state. Some 700,000 Israeli settlers live in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. The international community overwhelmingly considers the settlements as illegal and obstacles to peace.

The West Bank is home to several hard-line settlements whose residents frequently vandalize Palestinians’ land and property. But rarely is the violence so widespread.

Prominent members of Israel’s far-right government called for tough action against the Palestinians.

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, a settler leader who lives in the area and has been put in charge of much of Israel’s West

Bank policy, called for “striking the cities of terror and its instigators without mercy, with tanks and helicopters.”

Using a phrase that calls for a more heavy-handed response, he said Israel should act “in a way that conveys that the master of the house has gone crazy.”

However, Smotrich appealed to his fellow settlers to let the army and government do their jobs. “It is forbidden to take the law into your hands and create dangerous anarchy that could spin out of control and cost lives,” he said.

Earlier, the Israeli ministerial committee gave initial approval to a bill imposing the death penalty on Palestinians convicted in deadly attacks. The measure was sent to lawmakers for further debate.

There were also different interpretations of what was agreed to in Aqaba between the Palestinians and Israelis. Jordan’s Foreign Ministry said the representatives agreed to work



toward a “just and lasting peace” and had committed to preserving the status quo at Jerusalem’s contested holy site.

Tensions at the site reverberated by Jews as the Temple Mount and Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif have often spilled over into violence. Two years ago sparked an 11-day war between Israel and the Hamas militant group during Ramadan.

Officials with Israel’s government, the most right-wing in Israeli history, played down Sunday’s meeting.

A senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity under government guidelines, said only that the sides in Jordan agreed to set up a committee to work at renewing security ties with the Palestinians. The Palestinians cut off ties last month after a deadly Israeli military raid in the West Bank.

Netanyahu’s national security adviser, Tzachi Hanegbi, who led the Israeli delegation, said there were “no changes” in Israeli policies and that plans to build thousands of new settlement homes approved last week would not be affected.

He said, “there is no settlement freeze” and “no restriction on army activity.”

The Jordanian announcement had said Israel pledged not to legalize any more outposts for six months or to approve any new construction in existing settlements for four months.

The Palestinians, meanwhile, said they had presented a long list of grievances, including an end to Israeli settlement construction on occupied lands and a halt to Israeli military raids on Palestinian towns.

The shooting in Hawara came days after an Israeli military raid killed 10 Palestinians in the nearby city

of Nablus. The shooting occurred on a major highway serving Palestinians and Israeli settlers. The two men killed were identified as brothers, ages 21 and 19, from the Jewish settlement of Har Bracha.

Hanegbi was joined by the head of Israel’s Shin Bet domestic security agency, who attended the talks in neighbouring Jordan. The head of the Palestinian intelligence services and advisers to President Mahmoud Abbas also joined.

Jordan’s King Abdullah II, who has close ties with the Palestinians, led the discussions, while Egypt, another mediator, and the United States also participated.

In Washington, the U.S. national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, welcomed the meeting. “We recognize that this meeting was a starting point,” he said, adding that implementation will be critical.”

It was a rare high-level meeting between the sides, illustrating the severity of the crisis and the concerns of increased violence as Ramadan approaches in late March.

In Gaza, Hamas, an Islamic militant group that seeks Israel’s destruction, criticized Sunday’s meeting and called the shooting a “natural reaction” to Israeli incursions in the West Bank.

Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005. The Hamas militant group subsequently took control of the territory, and Israel and Egypt maintained a blockade over the territory.

Cholera in Africa - No Signs of abating



Ten of the 18 nations reporting cholera outbreaks are in Africa. As of January 29, 2023, more than 26 000 cases and 660 fatalities had been documented, and the average case fatality ratio was significantly higher than the permissible level of less than 1%. That is almost at 3% right now.

"Starting in 2021, there were several epidemics in the area, but nations were able to quickly respond to them and contain them. In 2022, fewer nations were afflicted, and there were fewer cases altogether. The number of

instances in 2023 has significantly increased. In the first month of 2023, there were 26 000 recorded cases, which is 30% more cases than there were in 2022 as a whole.

According to Patrick Otim Ramadan, WHO Africa's Incident Manager for Regional Cholera Response, "We are concerned that if this trend that we have seen in January continues, we will far exceed the number of cases that we have seen in 2022 and... put significant strain on the health systems in the countries that are affected as well as significant

demand on the medical counter majors that we need to respond to this."

With more than 1,200 fatalities and more than 40 000 cases reported from all 29 districts since March 2022, Malawi is the most severely impacted country in Africa. After tropical storm Ana and cyclone Gombe, which both made landfall in Southern African nations in January 2022 and March 2022, respectively, the outbreak began in the Machinga district. Destruction from the cyclones resulted in floods, which forced communities to relocate and left



the country of Southern Africa dealing with its worst cholera outbreak in two decades due to a lack of access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene.

According to Malawi's Secretary for Health, Charles Mwansambo, there are 500 cases reported each day.

"We have recognised that there are certain things we need to take to stop cholera from spreading. By incorporating political, religious, and community leaders, we are now enhancing our communication and community participation. In all the districts, we want to apply minimal control measures at once. Based on the most recent data, we have now updated the cost response, which now comes to about US\$59 million. We have only been able to secure US\$18.6 million so far, leaving us with a shortfall of roughly US\$40 million. We are requesting assistance from all allies both inside and outside the nation in order to put an end to

this outbreak "Mwansambo added.

The epidemics that are currently occurring in Somalia, Kenya, Mozambique, Zambia, Cameroon, Nigeria, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Ethiopia, and Malawi are said to be influenced by climate change and a few humanitarian crises.

"In a dangerous scenario, which we are currently witnessing, cholera triggers are getting stronger and its death toll is rising due to conflict and extreme climatic occurrences. African nations must increase their readiness to swiftly identify cases and mount thorough, prompt responses. We're helping governments strengthen crucial control measures to put an end to these epidemics as soon as possible," the WHO's regional director for Africa, Matshidiso Moeti, stated.

WHO sent 65 experts, the majority of whom were headed for Malawi, to five African nations. "Ethiopia,

Somalia, and Kenya are all being impacted by the droughts in the broader Horn of Africa. The cholera outbreak in Somalia is also occurring in drought-affected areas, as it is in one of the Garissa drought-affected areas in Kenya. The supply of clean drinking water for residents in such places is substantially impacted by the drought "Ramadan declared.

A further US\$ 6 million was paid out by WHO to launch the emergency cholera responses in Kenya, Malawi, and Mozambique.

Another factor to take into account is the cross-border transmission between Somalia and Kenya, said Ramadan. WHO encourages countries to work on cross-border collaborations, and joint surveillance interventions so that those outbreaks can be contained, he said.

"The solution requires a multi-sectoral response, and the solution is providing safe clean water. Community members need to



visit their health facility early so they can start treatment as soon as possible to prevent fatalities," Ramadan said.

According to WHO, the increase in global cholera outbreaks is putting a strain on the available doses of the oral cholera vaccine routinely used to interrupt transmission in places without safe drinking water.

One such area is the Democratic Republic of Congo, where fighting between the country's army and the armed groups resumed, leading to almost half a million people in North Kivu fleeing their villages. Since then, the region has seen an increase in cholera cases.

During the clashes, people have had to flee their homes and be without sufficient food, water, and access to sanitation facilities which are critical to prevent the further spread of cholera.

In response to the current outbreak, Save the Children, an organisation active in the DR Congo since 1994 is stepping up its health and hygiene promotion activities by providing water and sanitation inputs, and essential drugs to health facilities in Nyiragongo - hosting the largest number of displaced people. Four of five cholera cases in the region are children.

About 3.3 million cholera vaccine doses were delivered to the DR Congo, Kenya, and Mozambique through the International Coordinating Group on Vaccine Provision since the beginning of 2023. This initiative aims to manage emergency supplies of vaccines and is a partnership of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Médecins sans Frontières United Nations Children's Fund, and WHO.

The focus is on effective surveillance, rapid response, and immediate containment before the disease spreads.

ZAMBIA

Zambia offers unforgettable holidays exploring the real Africa.



Blessed with awe-inspiring natural wonders, an abundance of wildlife, huge water bodies and vast open spaces, Zambia offers unforgettable holidays exploring the real Africa.

The land of the legendary African walking safari, Victoria Falls, the wild Zambezi River, abundant wildlife, and raw wilderness, all in one friendly country. Acknowledged as one of the safest countries in the world to visit, Zambia's welcoming people live in peace and harmony.

Spectacular waterways provide adrenaline-thrills or a leisurely playground of activities for all ages. Seventeen magnificent waterfalls, apart from the spectacular Victoria Falls, provide 'cascade followers' an adventure into the remote undeveloped rural areas where a taste of village life can be experienced. Spectacular daily sunsets are almost guaranteed.



Zambia takes its name from the Zambezi River, which rises in the north-west corner of the country and forms its southern boundary. This landlocked country lies between the latitudes 10o and 18o South and longitudes 22o and 33o East.

The level of the land falls southward from the Congo DR / Zambezi divide in the north

towards the Zambezi depression in the South. The plateau is broken by the huge valleys of the Upper Zambezi and its major tributaries, of which the Kafue and Luangwa Rivers are the largest. One result of the plateau formation of Africa generally is the swift discharge of water towards the coast and the interruption of the rivers by waterfalls and rapids. This has made them of little value for

transport over their length, but very suitable for hydroelectric schemes and white-water rafting adventures.

Except for the Northern and Luapula Provinces which are part of the Congo DR basin, Zambia lies on the watershed between the Congo DR and Zambezi River systems. The three great natural lakes of the country, Bangweulu,

Mweru, and the southern end of Lake Tanganyika are all in the north and are part of the headwaters of the Zaire River. Lake Tanganyika is the second deepest natural lake in the world.

Lake Bangweulu, which with its swamps covers an area of about 3800 square miles, is drained by the Luapula River. This river starts flowing south, then turns west and northwards to pass through Lake Mweru on its way to Congo DR.

Along the southern border of the country stretches Lake Kariba, the largest man-made lake in Africa and the second largest in the world. It is about 280kms long and 40kms across at its widest point.

Zambia's contemporary culture is a blend of values, norms, material, and spiritual traditions of more than 70 ethnically diverse people. Most of the tribes of Zambia moved into the area in a series of migratory waves a few centuries ago. They grew in numbers, and many travelled in search of establishing new kingdoms, farming land and pastures.

Before the colonial period, the region now known as Zambia was the home of several free states. Each having comprehensive economic links with each other and the outside world along

trade routes to the east and west coast of Africa. The main exports were copper, ivory and slaves in exchange for textiles, jewellery, salt, and hardware.

ZAMBIAN FESTIVALS

There are more than 20 annual traditional ceremonies in Zambia, manifesting customs, social life, rituals, oral history, material, and spiritual culture. If you could attend one, it is well worthwhile to do so. They provide a valuable insight to a traditional culture that has been passed down from generation to generation.

The decline of traditional customs and culture has been brought about by the infiltration of the west and western ways and the melting pot of various tribes living in the same areas. There has recently been a realisation of the value of traditions and a conscious effort is being made to preserve them.

Most of the ceremonies have a deep meaning, in many cases designed to invoke memories of the transformation from childhood to adulthood. Most tribes in rural areas still practice harmless initiation ceremonies for girls which are generally conducted after puberty. They are

intended to help the girls make the transition from childhood to womanhood and prepare them for marriage. Only a few tribes still practice male circumcision initiation ceremonies and those that occur happen in total secrecy.

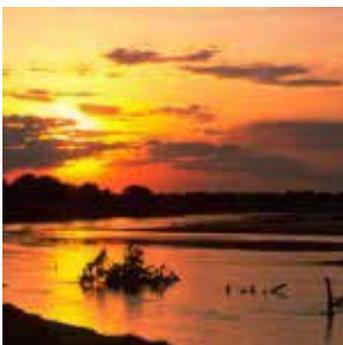
The open ceremonies that visitors can watch are those that signify ancient times, when new kingdoms were being founded by ancient chiefs and are usually splendid, colourful affairs with much symbolism in their dancing and drumming.

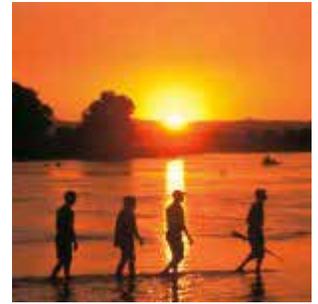
TRIBES IN ZAMBIA

With over 70 different tribes in Zambia, there is wide cultural diversity. However, it is one of the few countries in Africa with very little tribal animosity, and the existence of so many tribes has proved less of a political problem than in many other African states. The main tribes are the Lozi, the Bemba, the Ngoni, Tonga, the Luvale, the Chewa and the Kaonde.

What to see in zambia

Zambia is commonly regarded as one of the most beautiful, friendly, diverse, and unspoilt countries on the entire African





continent. Aside from the majestic Victoria Falls, Zambia has more natural water resources than any other southern African country, including a myriad of other falls dotted across the country, not to mention the famous Zambezi River. The many National Parks offer great opportunities for observing Africa's plains game and their attendant predators, whilst bustling urban areas offer a taste of eclectic Zambian culture.

KAFUE NATIONAL PARK

Found in the centre of western Zambia, Kafue National Park is the oldest and largest of Zambia's national parks. It covers a massive 22,400 km².

First established as a National Park in the 1950's by the legendary Norman Carr, Kafue is one of the largest national parks in the whole of Africa. Despite its size and prominent location only two hours drive from Livingstone, it remains little-known and largely unexplored with vast tracts of its

virgin bush still untouched. Thanks to its size and variety of habitat types the Kafue holds a fantastic diversity of wildlife .

KASANKA NATIONAL PARK

This peaceful sanctuary, situated on the southwestern edge of the Lake Bangweulu basin, is one of Zambia's smallest national parks. It's 450 km² however, are so well endowed with rivers, lakes, wetlands, forests, lagoons, meadows and dambos that it supports a uniquely wide range of animals and abundant birds and fish.

Do not expect to see large herds of animals round every corner, but it is surely one of the most picturesque parks in Zambia with superb birdlife.

LOWER ZAMBEZI NATIONAL PARK

This Park is still relatively undeveloped, its beauty lying in its

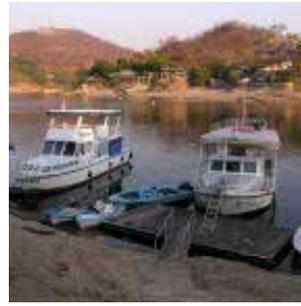
wilderness state. The diversity of animals is not as wide as the other big parks, but the opportunities to get close to game wandering in and out of the Zambezi channels are spectacular. The Park lies opposite the famous Mana Pools Reserve in Zimbabwe, so the whole area on both sides of the Zambezi River is a massive wildlife sanctuary.

The river's edge is overhung with a thick riverine fringe, including ebony and fig trees. Further inland is a floodplain fringed with mopane forest and interspersed with winter thorn trees and huge acacias. The hills which form the backdrop to the park are covered in broadleaf woodland.

SOUTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK

Experts have dubbed South Luangwa to be one of the greatest wildlife sanctuaries in the world, and not without reason. The concentration of animals around the Luangwa River, and its oxbow





lagoons, is among the most intense in Africa. The Luangwa River is the most intact major river system in Africa and is the lifeblood of this 9059 km² Park. The Park hosts a wide variety of wildlife, birds, and vegetation. The now famous 'walking safari' originated in this park and is still one of the finest ways to experience Africa's pristine wilderness first-hand.



The changing seasons add to the Park's richness, ranging from; dry, bare bushveld in the winter, to a lush, green wonderland in the summer months. There are 60 different animal species and over 400 different bird species in South Luangwa National Park. The only notable exception is the rhino, sadly poached to extinction.

NORTH LUANGWA NATIONAL PARK



This remote tract of land, covering 4636 square kilometres, offers one of the finest wilderness experiences in Zambia, if not Africa itself. It is not open to the public and there are no permanent lodges there. Access is with one of the few safari operators granted permission to conduct walking safaris.



Bitcoin is moving closer to reality in UK



Bitcoin is moving closer to reality. UK gets closer to launching a digital currency.

U.K. authorities on Monday said British businesses and consumers are likely to need a digital version of the pound, formally asking for public comment on the idea of introducing a central bank digital currency.

Britain, home to the world's second-biggest financial center, is trailing former colonies such as Nigeria, the Bahamas and Jamaica in rolling out a digital currency. More than 80% of the world's central banks are considering launching digital currencies or

have already done so, according to the consultant PwC.

"While cash is here to stay, a digital pound issued and backed by the Bank of England could be a new way to pay that's trusted, accessible and easy to use," Treasury chief Jeremy Hunt said in a statement. "That's why we want to investigate what is possible first, whilst always making sure we protect financial stability."

The call for public input comes almost two years after the Treasury and Bank of England said they were considering introducing a digital currency.

While Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

suggested naming the initiative "Bitcoin" when he was Treasury chief, the Bank of England has stressed that the potential currency shouldn't be confused with cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin.

Backed by the central bank, the new currency would be "reliable and retain its value over time," in contrast to cryptocurrencies that can fluctuate wildly and threaten the holdings of investors, the Bank of England says on its website.

That industry has been particularly unstable in recent months, escalating calls for greater regulation. Crypto crashes last year tanked assets, while crypto exchange FTX's multibillion-



dollar collapse and bankruptcy in November triggered fraud charges against founder Sam Bankman-Fried.

The proposed digital currency would be denominated in pounds, with 10 pounds of digital currency always equal to a 10-pound note, the bank said. Held in a digital wallet, the currency could be used to pay for goods and services electronically.

Supporters of central bank digital currencies say they make digital transactions easier and cheaper and expand access to the financial system because they can be used by people who don't have bank accounts. This is one of the

reasons the Bahamas became the first country to introduce a digital currency in 2020. Nigeria and Jamaica have since followed suit, with China and more than 20 other countries running trial projects.

The U.S. and European Union are considering introducing digital currencies.

But digital currencies also present risks, including cyberattacks, privacy concerns and the danger that they can be used by criminals.

Because money invested in central bank digital currencies is safer than a bank deposit, they also may draw savings away from

commercial banks and weaken the financial system, critics argue.

A digital pound would have "risks but no obvious benefits," former Bank of England Gov. Mervyn King, now a member of the House of Lords, said recently. While such digital currencies may be useful in countries that don't have effective banking systems, that's not the case in the Britain, he said.

"The government has said that it wants the U.K. to be at the forefront of innovation, crypto-assets and fintech, but we need to be selective and not driven by a misplaced enthusiasm for all things crypto," King said.

Youtube Accused of collecting children's data, breaches UK privacy code



In breach of a UK data privacy code designed to protect children, YouTube has been accused of collecting the viewing data of children under 13.

Campaigner Duncan McCann has lodged an official complaint with the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO).

He says the site is gathering data about the videos children watch, where they are watching and what device they are watching it on.

YouTube said it had invested in protecting families.

This included treating all children's content as though children were

viewing it, even on an adult's account, it said.

"We remain committed to continuing our engagement with the ICO on this priority work and with other key stakeholders, including children, parents and child-protection experts," a spokesperson said.

The US tech giant Alphabet owns the platform, also Google's parent company.

The firm has always said its service was not intended for children below the age of 13, and it offers a separate children's app called YouTube Kids and a "supervised experience" which requires

parental consent. Mr McCann says plenty of children watch YouTube content on family devices, where this data can be gathered by default because it is not registered as a children's account.

His complaint is believed to be the first test of the ICO children's code, introduced in 2020 when tech firms were given one year to comply.

Children's internet code: What is it, and how will it work?

Its terms include providing high privacy for children by default and not using design features that



encourage them to provide more data. YouTube said at the time it would turn off default auto-play on videos and block ad targeting and personalisation for all children.

According to the regulator Ofcom, 89% of children in the UK between three and 17 used the video platform in 2021.

Firms in breach of the children's internet code can face large fines, similar to the penalties for breaching data protection laws.

The ICO said it would consider the complaint carefully.

Mr McCann is acting personally but works for the campaign group 5Rights Foundation, which has championed the code.

"My preferred reform that YouTube should make is that actually when you enter YouTube, they don't collect any unnecessary and process any unnecessary information," he said.

"The best way to ensure that they are only collecting the data of adults who are properly consenting would be to have a process where adults can sign in to the tracking, recommendation systems, profiling, targeted ads."

He added that he believed it would be "a minority" of users who would choose to do so.

In 2019, YouTube was fined \$170m (£139m) by a US regulator for violating children's privacy laws.

This followed a similar accusation that it was collecting data on children under 13 without parental consent.

YouTube did not admit responsibility but did pay the fine and changed its business practices as a result, said Stephanie Hare, author of *Technology is Not Neutral*.

"It assumed that anyone watching children's content would be potentially under the age of 13. And so it now collects far fewer data on that type of content and doesn't send personalised ads to people watching it," she said.

"The solution exists; they just need to pull it out of the toolbox."

Ghana's very own Atsu leaves with the quake



Ghana winger Christian Atsu has been found dead under the building where he lived in southern Turkey after last week's massive earthquake, his Turkish agent said on Saturday.

Atsu, who was 31, had been missing since the Feb. 6 earthquake following the collapse of an apartment building in Hatay province.

"Atsu's lifeless body was found under the rubble," Murat Uzunmehmet told reporters in Hatay. "Currently, more items are still being taken out. His phone was also found."

Antakya, the city where Hatayspor

is based, is in the southern region of Turkey hardest hit by the earthquake.

Atsu had been scheduled to fly out of southern Turkey hours before the quake, but Hatayspor's manager said the Ghanaian player opted to stay with the club after scoring the winning goal in a Feb. 5 Super Lig match.

Atsu joined Hatayspor in September last year after spells with English Premier League clubs Everton, Chelsea and Newcastle United.

"We will not forget you, Atsu. Peace be upon you, beautiful person. There are no words to

describe our sadness," Hatayspor wrote on Twitter.

Newcastle also paid tribute on their official website: "A talented player and a special person, he will always be fondly remembered by our players, staff and supporters."

Atsu won 65 caps for Ghana and helped them reach the 2015 Africa Cup of Nations final, where they lost to Ivory Coast on penalties. He was last selected to play for Ghana in 2019.

He joined Chelsea from Porto in 2013 and had several loan spells at clubs including Vitesse and Bournemouth.



"Chelsea sends our heartfelt condolences to Christian's family and friends and to all those affected by the earthquake tragedy," the London club said on Saturday.

A day after the earthquake, reports circulated that Atsu had been rescued following information that Hatayspor had received; however they later said the reports were heartbreakingly mistaken and the player was still missing.

It had also said the club's sporting director, Taner Savut, was still missing. Savut has not been found.

The contractor of the 12-story Ronisans Rezidans building -- where Atsu and Savut lived -- was detained at Istanbul Airport a week ago, apparently trying

to leave the country. More than 47,000 people have been killed in the earthquake that struck Turkey and Syria, and the toll is expected to rise with some 264,000 apartments in Turkey destroyed and many still missing in the country's worst modern disaster.

Tributes have poured in for the late player.

His wife Marie-Claire Rupio and their three children joined fans marking a minute's silence in Newcastle, before the side's Premier League match against Liverpool. Atsu played for Newcastle from 2016 to 2021.

Atsu's face was shown on the big screen and away fans chanted "you'll never walk alone", before breaking into applause.

Ghana captain Mohammed Kudus paid tribute to his former teammate after scoring for Dutch side Ajax, removing his jersey to reveal a white shirt with "RIP Atsu" written on it.

Meanwhile, the charity Arms Around The Child hailed Atsu - who has been an ambassador for the organisation since 2016 - and said he had been the "main benefactor" of a school in Ghana that supports abandoned children, orphans, the chronically ill and those rescued from trafficking.

Atsu, they said, was "a young boy from poverty in Ghana who followed his dreams and used his talent and platform to help others".

Messi and Putellas Bagged FIFA awards for the Best



World Cup champion Lionel Messi edged Kylian Mbappé again to take FIFA's best men's player award on Monday.

The best women's player was Spain's Alexia Putellas for a second straight year.

After steering Argentina to World Cup glory in an epic final against Mbappé's France last year in Qatar, Messi won the best player vote against Mbappé and Karim Benzema and secured the FIFA prize for the seventh time in 14 years.

He won the World Cup on his record-equaling fifth attempt.

"It was a crazy year for me," Messi said. "I could fulfil my (World Cup) dream after fighting for it for so long. And in the end, it happened, and it was the most beautiful thing in my career. It's every player's dream, but very few can achieve it, so I'm thankful to God for being able to do it."

The three players made the final shortlist in voting by a global panel of national team captains and coaches, selected journalists in each of FIFA's 211 member countries, plus fans online.

The 35-year-old Messi also beat Mbappé — who was seeking his first best player award from FIFA — to the Golden Ball trophy

awarded by FIFA for the World Cup's best player. Mbappé earned the Golden Boot as the top scorer.

Earlier Monday, French prosecutors opened a preliminary investigation into a rape accusation against Hakimi, a defender at Paris Saint-Germain.

Messi voted for former Barcelona teammate Neymar as his choice for best player. Only Brazil captain Thiago Silva also voted on Neymar.

Russia's coach and captain were not banned from voting in the award.

Putellas won her award from Alex Morgan of the United States and



Beth Mead, who led England to the European Championship title in 2022.

Barcelona playmaker Putellas made the top three again despite being injured days before the Euro and missing the tournament. She scored 34 goals across all competitions last season.

Mead was the joint top scorer at the Euro and was named the tournament's best player. She sustained a serious knee injury in November while playing for Arsenal and could miss the Women's World Cup in July in Australia and New Zealand.

Morgan, who was second in the 2019 vote to teammate Megan Rapinoe, was player of the



tournament when the U.S. won the CONCACAF W Championship last year. She was also the joint top scorer.

Earlier, Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni was voted FIFA men's coach of the year after leading his team to the World Cup title in December.

The women's coach award went to Sarina Wiegman, who led England to the Women's European Championship title.

Scaloni took over Argentina at

the end of 2018 on an interim basis and was widely criticized for lacking experience as he had never coached a professional team. Earlier Monday, his contract as the national team coach was extended to the end of the 2026 World Cup.

The other short-listed coaches were Real Madrid's Carlo Ancelotti and Manchester City's Pep Guardiola.

The women's goalkeeper award was given to Euro winner Mary Earps of England, and the best

men's goalkeeper was Argentina's World Cup winner Emiliano Martínez. The event in Paris was marked by tributes to Pelé, who died late last year at age 82 following a battle with colon cancer. Pelé's wife, Marcia Aoki, received a trophy honouring the soccer great from the hands of former Brazil striker Ronaldo.

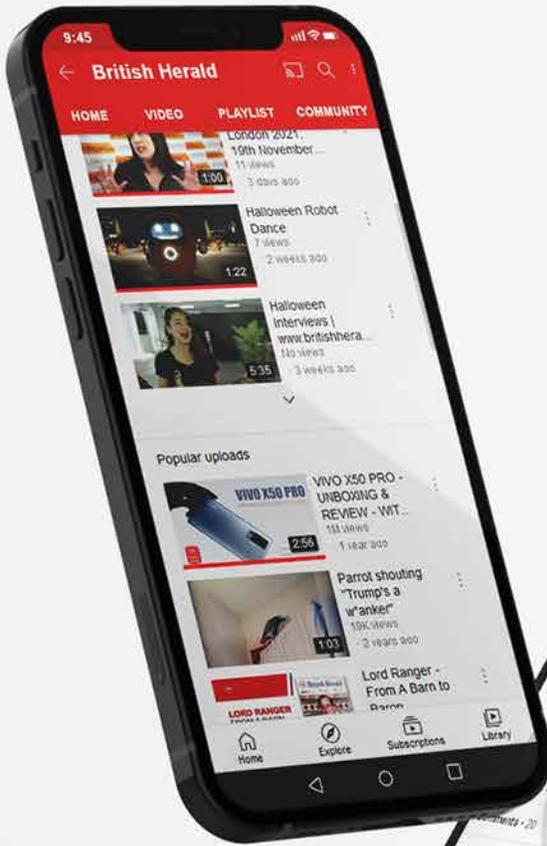
"I have three words to say to God, who gave us Edson; to Edson, who gave us Pelé; and to the world, who received them so well: Grateful, grateful and grateful," she said.



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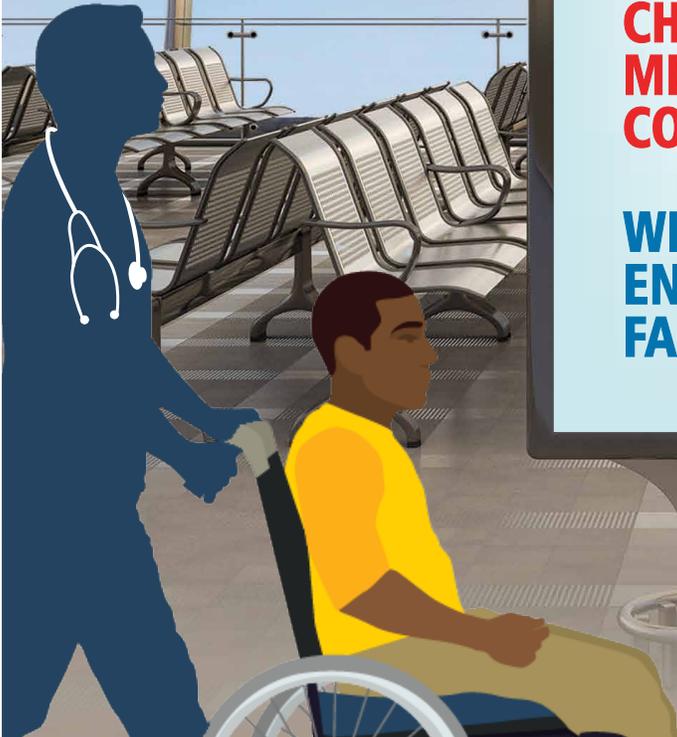
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