From the Editor’s Desk

Dear FDI supporters,

Welcome to this week’s edition of the Strategic Weekly Analysis. In the SWA this week, we begin with a look at the reaction from India to the decision, taken at the recent Australian Labor Party National Conference, to overturn the Australian ban on uranium exports to India. Still on the subject of resources, the Northern Australia Research Programme reports on the rare earth elements mining boom underway in north-western Australia and its implications for the monopoly that China currently enjoys over that market.

Moving to the Indian Ocean region, we look first to Burma, following the visit of US Secretary of State, Hilary Clinton. We then head to Africa, where Ethiopia is reportedly battling al-Qaeda linked al-Shabaab rebels in Somalia. Also considered are the deepening relations between the Seychelles and the United Arab Emirates, and then Iran’s expanding blue-water naval capabilities.

Still in Africa, we analyse developments from the United Nations Climate Change Conference, currently taking place in Durban, and the findings of the World Agricultural Forum and the Ibrahim Forum, both held recently.

Upcoming Strategic Analysis Papers include an analysis of China-Nepal relations from the Indian Ocean Research Programme; a profile of the Lord’s Resistance Army, which is still active in East Africa; and examinations of the national involvement in the Indian Ocean region of Indonesia and South Korea. Also in South Korea, the Global Food and Water Crises Research Programme will investigate the future water situation in that country.

I trust that you will enjoy this edition of the Strategic Weekly Analysis.

Major General John Hartley AO (Retd)
Institute Director and CEO
Future Directions International

*****
India Welcomes Lifting of Uranium Ban

Background

The decision taken on 4 December 2011 at the Australian Labor Party’s National Conference, to overturn the Australian ban on uranium exports to India, has, given the strain on bilateral relations caused by the ban, naturally evoked a positive reaction from New Delhi. Although Canberra’s recognition of India’s nuclear energy needs, despite its refusal to sign the nuclear weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), is of symbolic importance to the relationship between the two countries, the practical impact of the decision may not be as significant as is commonly thought.

Comment

India, the world’s second most populous country, is struggling to meet its growing energy demands. Energy consumption has nearly doubled in the past decade, and India’s current economic growth rate of around seven per cent is likely to cause energy needs to double again, or even triple, over the next 20 years. Coal accounts for around half of Indian energy production, followed by hydro-electric power with one quarter. Nuclear energy only accounts for three per cent. Due to uncertainties over the price and supply of fossil fuels, as well as environmental concerns, the Indian Government has recently moved to double its nuclear generating capacity. It has commissioned five new nuclear reactors, all of which are currently under construction.

India has domestic reserves of uranium, but the lack of both quantity and quality has actually resulted in a reduction in nuclear power generation in recent years. Consequently, the country must rely on more expensive foreign imports to supply its nuclear power plants. The discovery of a large reserve in the state of Andhra Pradesh raised hopes of increased energy independence but, at least for now, India still needs to buy uranium from countries such as Russia and Kazakhstan. Access to uranium exports from Australia – which holds the world’s largest proven uranium reserves; 23 per cent of the global total – is likely to ease concerns about price and supply, but the impact of Australia’s entry into the Indian market should not be overstated, given the preponderance of imports from Russia, Kazakhstan and French company, Areva. Similarly, the government’s recent policy shift will have a minimal economic impact for Australia; the vast majority of this country’s uranium exports will continue to go to other markets, such as the United States, European Union countries and Japan. The introduction of uranium exports to India is most significant in its diplomatic consequences, as the uranium issue has strained relations between the two countries for some time.

Until last weekend’s decision, the Australian Government maintained a policy of banning uranium exports to countries that are not signatories of the NPT (currently India, Pakistan, Israel and North Korea). The rationale for the policy has been based on the assertion that Australia should not contribute to the production of nuclear weapons by non-NPT signatories by supplying uranium, which can be enriched into weapons-grade nuclear material. In reality, however, India has maintained a disciplined separation between its nuclear energy and weapons programmes. There is a perception in Australia that the lifting of the export ban will harm relations with Pakistan, given that uranium sales to Islamabad continue to be blocked, but the reaction in Pakistan has been relatively minimal. Pakistan’s High Commissioner to

---

Australia has stated that a refusal to sell uranium to Pakistan would be discriminatory, but there has so far been no formal request for uranium from Islamabad, and Foreign Minister Hina Rabbani Kher is yet to comment on the issue.

Chris Doyle  
FDI Research Intern  
Indian Ocean Research Programme  

*****

Halls Creek Boom Could Break China’s Rare Earth Monopoly

Background

The Shire of Halls Creek, in north-west Australia, is experiencing a rare earth mining boom. In the most recent example, George Bauk, Managing Director of Northern Minerals, announced in late November that the company hopes to start mining Rare Earth Elements (REE) in Browns Range by 2015. Australia’s expanded role in REE extraction comes at an opportune time, as China attempts to exploit its current monopoly over the market. To ensure industry viability, however, issues within the supply chain must be resolved.

Comment

The REEs are 15 metallic elements that are essential inputs to the production of green energy technologies, sophisticated consumer goods and sensitive military hardware. Found in a mineral “cocktail”, rather than as free metals, the commercialisation of deposits requires separation of the REEs into individual, high-purity metals, a complex and, accordingly, expensive operation.

Production expenditure, coupled with a perceived lack of commercially viable reserves, has acted as an impediment to increasing REE extraction, allowing China to capitalise on low production costs and abundant supplies. Although possessing only slightly more than thirty-six per cent of world REE reserves, China is responsible for over 97 per cent of global production. Understandably, China also leads REE demand, consuming over fifty per cent of total production. Japan consumes an additional twenty-four per cent, with the remainder destined for manufacturing markets in Europe and South-East Asia.

Despite China’s impressive REE export ratio, significant challenges in its local sector remain, creating concern over a shortfall in demand. REE projects are plagued by poor management practices and unregulated development. In response to environmental degradation and illegal mining activities, China has recently announced export quotas and tariffs, consolidation schemes for existing projects and strict environmental regulations. Critics contend that these latest developments are just as much about controlling supply of the commodity, effectively allowing China to become the “sole OPEC” (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) equivalent of REEs. As China attempts to reorganise the industry, potentially decreasing supply, continued urbanisation and industrialisation will drive up demand for

---

2 Thompson, J., 5 December 2011, ‘Pakistan wants equal access to Australian Uranium’, ABC News Online.  
consumer goods requiring REEs. Within this context, Australia could capitalise on continued demand for REEs, with relative industry efficiency and greater market transparency.

Were Australia to expand its strategic share in REE exports, investment should be spread across the sector to ensure increased opportunities are realised. REE production consists of mining, separation, refining, alloying and manufacturing. Northern Minerals, and other REE companies, may experience significant issues in refining, alloying and fabrication, due to cost and expertise deficiencies, forcing operations off-shore. Such a development would represent a missed opportunity. For Australia to fully realise its REE potential, and challenge China’s commodity monopoly, the industry must be supported by government policy and initiatives to maximise employment, material and investment prospects.

Paradoxically, for Australia to mitigate projected challenges and provide impetus to the nascent REE sector, off-shore support is essential. Australia should leverage Japan’s concerns over Chinese REE policy to promote joint venture and investment opportunities, a relationship within which Japan and Vietnam have invested in the development of REE deposits.

Similarly, synergies could be created with the United States, which is equally concerned over the future prospects of REE resources. In September 2011, a Congressional Research Service report titled “Rare Earth Elements: The Global Supply Chain”, raised the prospect of establishing a government-run stockpile. Given the strong state of bilateral relations, Australia should seek to become a major partner if such a prospect becomes reality.

Finally, scope even exists to develop a *quid pro quo* REE relationship with China, as Australia has successfully managed to do with other resources. To ensure China does not depart from its current policy, and flood the market with cheap REEs, Australia should seek to engage China in areas of mutual benefit. Australia could promote best practice sharing, particularly in the fields of sustainability, recycling and efficiency. Such developments will smooth Australia’s entry into the REE market, ensuring short-term viability and long-term security for the emerging industry.

Liam McHugh  
*Manager*  
*Northern Australia & Energy Security Research Programmes*  
*lmchugh@futuredirections.org.au*

*****

**Optimism for Uncertain Reform Process as Clinton Visits Burma**

**Background**

Hillary Clinton became the first US Secretary of State to visit Burma in more than half a century, when she arrived on 1 December 2011 to discuss the transformation of the impoverished country.

**Comment**

The visit may mark the beginning of the end of decades of isolation and Western-imposed sanctions against the rigid South-East Asian country. The visit is, perhaps most importantly, an endorsement of a reform process that began over a year ago, leading up to last month’s amendment of the constitution by
Burmese President Thein Sein, which removed a number of legal and ideological barriers constraining the country’s political parties.

‘We want to seize what could be a historic opportunity for progress, making it clear that if Burma continues to travel down the road of democratic reform it can forge a new relationship with the US,’ President Obama said when he announced the visit in November at the East Asia Summit.

‘We and many other nations are quite hopeful that these flickers of progress ... will be ignited into a movement for change,’ Clinton told reporters shortly before her anticipated arrival. ‘I am obviously looking to determine for myself and on behalf of our government what is the intention of the current government with respect to continuing reforms both political and economic.’

A senior Burmese Foreign Ministry official travelling with Clinton, who could not be named, said his government is ‘deeply realistic for what can be expected. There have been a number of failed attempts at reform, over decades. We are mindful of the risks and we will be very careful as we go forward.’

Clinton has been described as ‘very encouraging of the visit’ and despite a second wind of optimism after decades of oppression, a great deal of uncertainty still exists. ‘There are 60 decision-makers in this country, one reform-minded minister cautioned, ‘20 have seen the light, 20 are asleep, and 20 are waiting to see which way to jump.’

President Sein’s motives for the reforms remain unknown, although they may be influenced by a desire to avoid an overreliance on China, Burma’s strongest ally. With no Western competition, China has had largely unrestricted access to Burma’s natural resources. Even as China keeps a watchful eye over Burma, the country’s leadership awaits a green light from the US.

Ashley Woermann  
FDI Research Intern  
Indian Ocean Research Programme

*****

Ethiopia Reportedly Joins the War against al-Shabaab

Background

Ethiopia has reportedly decided to support Kenyan, African Union and Somali troops battling al-Qaida linked al-Shabaab rebels in worn-torn Somalia. Ethiopia has denied the move, although media reports and witnesses have claimed that more than 20 Ethiopian military vehicles have crossed over into central Somalia in response to East African leaders urging it to join the multilateral military effort against al-Shabaab forces.

Comment

Although Addis Ababa has publicly denied that Ethiopian troops have entered Somalia, media and witness accounts have reported that Ethiopian soldiers have now reached Balanbal, north of Galgaduud, to help fight insurgents. Should such reports turn out to be true, al-Shabaab forces may well face another front as regional armies try to encircle them. With Ugandan and Burundian forces occupying the capital Mogadishu, and Kenyan forces pushing from the south, the move to send Ethiopian troops from the west could heap added pressure on the Shabaab. The rebels continue to control much of southern Somalia but were forced to withdraw from Mogadishu in August 2011. Al-Shabaab is estimated to have around 14,000 troops, and continues to fight Somali and East African forces in a bid to impose its strict interpretation of Sharia law. Factions within al-Shabaab are reputed to have rebranded the group as the “Somali Islamic Emirate” on 5 December, following a five-day conference in the town of Baidoa.

An Ethiopian spokesman, Abdirahman Omar Osman, said, however, that Ethiopian troops would only be deployed if backed by an international mandate or bilateral agreement with the Somali Government. There is apparently no such agreement, and some observers have declared that Ethiopia’s supposed involvement in Somalia could be a propaganda victory for al-Shabaab. With no such mandate or official report, it is possible that al-Shabaab itself has generated the claims, to help gain support while facing the prospect of military defeat. The group has used propaganda before, including during the 2011 East African drought.

Ethiopia’s previous military involvement, a two-year occupation that ended in 2009, defeated the Islamic Courts Union movement but angered many Somalis, giving rise to the Shabaab militia. Analysts have warned that any involvement by Ethiopia, a Christian-led country, could allow al-Shabaab to tap into the animosity that many Somalis feel towards Ethiopia, and regain some of the popular support it lost with its hard-line policies. Unsurprisingly, al-Shabaab has welcomed the claims; this has raised concerns about their legitimacy. It is possible, however, that with Kenya heavily leaning on Addis Ababa to open another front, Ethiopia might have been dragged back into the conflict.

The recent move by Kenya to push troops into Somalia, the country’s first cross-border military operation since independence in 1963, met with initial success after the 16 October incursion in response to alleged kidnappings by al-Shabaab near the Kenyan border. Reports indicate that the Kenyans have recently become bogged down, a situation that may have prompted an Ethiopian incursion into Somalia.

It is widely believed that the Kenyan forces, who have been publicly backed by the European Union and the United States, are trying to take back Kismayo, which fell to al-Shabaab in 2009. While Kenya and Ethiopia may be seeking a “buffer zone” from future attacks in the near-term, any long-term strategy is relatively unknown, although some believe Kenya will try to establish an autonomous region in the southern district of Jubaland. Kenya has stressed it will leave Somalia once it dismantles the al-Shabaab networks, but few know what might happen next, especially if Kenya is unsuccessful.

Similar operations by the US and Ethiopia have failed in the past. Even were the operation to be successful, given the potential unpopularity of any occupation, Kenya may have to rely on the weak Transitional Federal Government that has so far failed to exert control outside Mogadishu. If the government remains unable to assert itself, the absence of al-Shabaab may leave a void for former warlords or other radical groups to step into, destabilising the region once again.

Andrew Manners
FDI Research Intern
Indian Ocean Research Programme

*****
Seychelles: United Arab Emirates Moves into Indian Ocean

Background

In the Indian Ocean, the archipelago state of the Republic of the Seychelles is embracing relations with the United Arab Emirates as never before. The UAE has funded the construction of a new Coast Guard headquarters and vessels to aid the Seychelles in its fight against Somali piracy. On land, the Seychelles is looking to wind power to boost its energy security and has enlisted the Abu Dhabi Government-owned Masdar Power to construct a wind farm. The Seychelles’ interest in maritime security and renewable energy are just the latest in a growing number of links with the United Arab Emirates.

Comment

Having its fishing and tourism industries negatively affected by the expanding reach of Somali pirates and their presence in Seychellois waters, the assistance of the UAE in combating piracy has been welcomed by the Seychelles Government. The UAE has recently donated the construction and fitting out of a new US$15 million Coast Guard headquarters, complete with a state-of-the-art radar system. Also donated were five gunboats to boost Seychellois patrol and surveillance capabilities.

In the energy sector, the Seychelles is focusing on wind to reduce its reliance on imported diesel and heavy oil for electricity generation. In another example of deepening intra-regional links, the Seychellois Government has partnered with the emirate of Abu Dhabi to bring clean energy technology to the country.

Masdar is the developer of the environmentally friendly Masdar City complex near Abu Dhabi is a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Future Energy Company – itself a subsidiary of the Abu Dhabi Government-owned Mubadala Development Company. The company is nearing completion of the initial six megawatt (MW) phase of a series of wind farms in the Indian Ocean archipelago. Located on the main island of Mahé, adjacent to the capital, Victoria, the first stage will later be expanded to 18MW, at which point it will be capable of generating 10-15 per cent of Mahé’s electricity needs. The wind farm was described by Seychelles President, James Michel, as being ‘the most effective renewable energy solution ... with the least environmental and visual impact.’

Seychelles-Abu Dhabi links are not confined to piracy and the Mahé wind farm, however, and have been growing steadily in other fields. In an effort to solve the capital’s problems of traffic, housing standards, clean water, electricity and reliability of public services, the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development and the Abu Dhabi Urban Planning Council have been charged with redesigning and, eventually, possibly rebuilding Victoria.

In other recent developments, the Seychelles opened its first embassy in the Middle East, in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, on 25 November 2011. Visa-free access to the UAE for Seychelles nationals is currently
being negotiated and the Abu Dhabi-based airline Etihad Airways began flights to the Seychelles on 2 November, citing its appeal to investment and tourism interests.

For the UAE, and Abu Dhabi in particular, the Seychelles offers a combination of high-technology soft power initiatives and business investment. The Seychelles sees the UAE links in light of a foreign policy that, according to Seychellois Foreign Minister Jean-Paul Adam, ‘... has grown and evolved into an active economic diplomacy that recognises that we cannot just wait for the world to come to us. We must reach out to the world.... And we believe there is no better place to start than in Abu Dhabi.’ Given the seemingly mutually beneficial nature of the relationship, the UAE’s deep pockets and access to technology, and the marine resources of the Seychelles, such links can be expected to continue. The UAE is indeed moving into the Indian Ocean.

Leighton G. Luke  
Manager  
Indian Ocean Research Programme  
lluke@futuredirections.org.au

*****

‘Greater Deterrence Power’: Iran’s Evolving Blue-water Naval Ambitions

Background

The fallout over Iran’s uranium enrichment programme, and the threat of war with the US and its allies, continues to give impetus to the expansion and modernisation of Iran’s military, particularly the Islamic Republic of Iran Navy. Today, the Navy forms an essential part of Iran’s foreign policy. It is considered by some to be perhaps Iran’s best-equipped, trained and organised armed forces institution, which seeks to diffuse Iranian influence in seas far outside the Persian Gulf.

Comment

Iran has two dedicated naval forces, the first being the older 18,000-strong Islamic Republic of Iran Navy and the second the 20,000-strong and much-vaunted Iran Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy, formed in 1985. Subjected to a strategic review in 2007, followed by a major reorganisation, both naval forces have since developed clearly defined roles. The Iranian Navy has developed blue-water capabilities, to operate in the Indian Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea, while the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy specialises in asymmetrical warfare and operating in the Persian Gulf.

On the basis of what Iran claims is defensive and deterrent naval power, the Iranian Navy has witnessed unprecedented activity in the spheres of indigenous production and modernisation. Since 2000, Iran’s domestic defence industry production has increased markedly, and so has its technological sophistication. The most significant and recent examples are: in 2008, Iran announced its intention to produce the new

---

1,000 ton *Qa’em*-class submarine; in 2010, it launched its first locally-built *Mowj*-class frigate; similarly, in mid-August 2010, 12 new locally-built *Peykraap/Tir*-class missile boats were delivered to the Iranian Navy. Again, in late November 2011, the Iranian Navy added to its fleet three more locally-manufactured *Ghadir*-class submarines.

At a gathering at Tehran University on 2 December, the Iranian Navy’s growing confidence was amply demonstrated by its chief, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, who confirmed: ‘All activities of our enemies are within our reach. Our naval forces are fully prepared to defend the country’s interests even in international waters.’ The comments were made in the wake of the naval chief’s previous announcement on 27 November, where he affirmed Iran’s future intention to conduct naval exercises in international waters.

Although Iranian military exercises are nothing new, what is increasingly noticeable is Iran’s ability and intention to project its Navy farther from its shores than ever before. In recent years, the Iranian Navy has been deployed in the Arabian Sea, Red Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. For instance, in the Gulf of Aden, the Iranian Navy has engaged in over a dozen anti-piracy patrols since November 2008. Its contribution to anti-piracy efforts was even acknowledged by the International Maritime Organisation. Indeed, more recently, in November 2011, the *Tehran Times* claimed that the Iranian Navy had escorted 1,300 merchant ships and tankers in the north of the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden and clashed with, or fended off, Somali pirates in at least 100 incidents since 2008.

The growing incidence of Iranian naval activity outside the Persian Gulf was eventually put into a broader strategic context, when in March 2010, the Iranian Navy’s deputy head of operations, Rear Admiral Rostamabadi, was quoted as saying: ‘We plan on having a presence off the coasts of India and inside the Malacca Strait. The strait forms a point of a triangle in which a high percentage of the world’s energy is exchanged and transferred,’ he said. ‘Ships within the Persian Gulf which set sail towards the Suez Canal and enter the Mediterranean Sea and those ships that set sail eastward, all pass through this triangle’. He added: ‘By expanding our presence within this triangle, we will be able to completely oversee the transit of the world’s energy and at the same time protect our interests. At the same time, we will have greater deterrence power within this region when facing enemies and rivals of the Islamic Republic of Iran’.

Consistent with Iranian rhetoric, there has been growing evidence of Iranian military interest and activity outside the Persian Gulf area. For instance, in December 2010, an Iranian naval delegation led by the Navy chief, visited the Red Sea state of Djibouti to bolster military-to-military ties. This developed into an agreement to provide Iranian warships with access to Djibouti’s ship repair and maintenance facilities. Similarly, in February 2011, two Iranian warships passed through the Suez Canal for the first time since 1979, and called in to the Syrian port of Latakia, at the eastern end of the Mediterranean. Subsequently, in mid-2011, Iran deployed one *Kilo*-class submarine to the Red Sea to participate in anti-piracy operations. Finally, in September this year, in an unprecedented announcement, Iran declared its intention to deploy naval forces in the Western Atlantic, near the US, in the near future.

Iran’s increasing forays into the eastern Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean are being taken seriously by its adversaries throughout the region, particularly the US, Israel and Saudi Arabia. They view its presence as a veritable threat to their security and interests. Nonetheless, Iran’s shrewd use of trade, energy and naval diplomacy, has given it considerable strategic leverage. This has enabled it to expand its influence in many regions throughout the world, and has set the stage for what may become a strong, visible and permanent presence outside the Persian Gulf.
Climate Fund Delay Threatens to Undermine Durban Conference

Background

The United Nations Climate Change Conference, held in Durban, South Africa, from 28 November to 9 December 2011, cements a change of stance that was signalled at the Cancun 2010 Conference. Rather than risking the diminished expectations of a globally binding climate treaty, which were thwarted at the 2009 Copenhagen Conference, the agenda coming into this year’s conference was to work toward pragmatic and attainable solutions that could be built upon in the future. Finalising the Green Climate Fund, a promised transfer of funds from industrialised countries to developing nations to help them protect forests, adapt to climate impacts, and develop green technologies, is seen as the first step in this effort by negotiators in Durban.

Comment

The conference’s stated aim was to build momentum toward a fair agreement on cutting global emissions and provide an effective tool for mitigating the damage done to those communities most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. Already agreed upon at Copenhagen and Cancun, the Green Climate Fund is a US$100 billion commitment. Echoed by many other negotiators in Durban, South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane declared that the success of the talks would depend on financing the Green Fund.

Dissent has come from the United States and Saudi Arabia, who have refused to accept the working draft presented in late October 2011, which outlined an initial design for the fund. The grounds include a desire to see the fund retain more autonomy from the UN and a greater role for the private sector. Alternative proposals for funding set out by the International Monetary Fund and World Bank, or through international shipping and aviation carbon taxes, were rejected by the US negotiating team.

There are understandable motivations behind these proposed preconditions. The United States does not want major developing countries, such as China or India, to escape emissions reduction commitments – even though recent research by the Stockholm Environment Institute demonstrates that 60 per cent of emission reductions by 2020 are likely to be made by developing countries. It is, however, a source of frustration to developing countries that the United States is already arguing over details; the perception being that the US position is blocking a painless agreement to a Green Climate Fund pact by 2015. Delaying the Green Climate Fund pact, initially assumed to be agreed upon, has already minimised the time available to discuss the future of the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. It stymies any hopes for a new consensus in Durban for a beginning to talks on a global treaty to reduce carbon emissions.

In a broader context, this serves as a reminder that domestic pressure is the most effective tool for action on climate change. One can argue that the primary aim of these conferences is the building of confidence and trust. For instance, the co-operative system of transparency constructed in Cancun, which allows all
major economies to observe how well each is meeting its unilateral commitments, was a laudable achievement.

But the political will for change is found at home. Only then can it be translated into action at UN conferences. In this case, Australia is a fair example, as it attempted to leverage the recently passed Clean Energy Future legislation to build consensus for action in the negotiations, perhaps ineffectually. In any case, generating political will on this issue would be difficult elsewhere in the developed world, particularly in those countries facing serious economic concerns.

Tim Thomas  
FDI Research Intern  
Global Food and Water Crises Research Programme

*****

Talks Highlight Agricultural Shortfalls

Background

The World Agricultural Forum was held from 28 November to 1 December 2011 in Brussels, Belgium, bringing together experts in agriculture, economics, technology and trade, as well as senior politicians.

Comment

The conference focussed on a number of key topics, including: links between political unrest and hunger; the role of south-south partnerships; global trading systems; agricultural supply chains; market based solutions; improved sustainability; and the use of natural resources.

The Chairman of the World Agricultural Forum, former New Zealand Prime Minister Rt Hon James Bolger, said the aim of the conference was to determine whether there were sufficient international mechanisms to ensure fairness in agricultural commodity markets. Challenging times for the agricultural sector can mean big profits for private companies and commodity traders.

The forum follows the release of a report in mid-November at the Ibrahim Forum, held in Tunis, which showed that Africa will not be able to feed its citizens for the foreseeable future. The only way this will change is if farmers change food production practices. The report said the food crises on the African continent were largely attributable to climate change, traditional unproductive ways of farming, poor storage and lack of government support.

The two forums, while useful, are unlikely to achieve lasting changes unless there are adequate reforms, peace and stability throughout Africa, something which has proved elusive over the past 50 years.

Gary Kleyn  
Manager  
FDI Global Food and Water Crises Research Programme  
gkleyn@futuredirections.org.au

*****
What’s Next?

- The 12th round of Sino-US defence consultations is taking place today in Beijing, where it is being co-chaired by the deputy chief of general staff of China’s People’s Liberation Army, General Ma Xiaotian and US Undersecretary of Defence for Policy, Michele Flournoy.

- General Ma will travel to New Delhi on 9 December to co-chair the fourth round of Sino-Indian defence and security talks with Indian Defence Secretary Pradeep Kumar.

- The 17th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Seventh Conference of the Parties serving as the meeting of the Parties to the Kyoto Protocol (COP17/CMP7,) concludes in Durban on 9 December. The implementation of the Kyoto Protocol, the Bali Action Plan and the Cancun Agreements are to be discussed.

- A workshop on climate change and its impact on agriculture will be held in Seoul, South Korea from 13-16 December. Participating will be about 50 senior officials from agricultural ministries. It is being promoted by the Asian Development Bank, along with the Asian Productivity Organization and the Korea Productivity Centre. For more: http://www.adbi.org/event/4794.climate.change.impact.agriculture/

- The Asian Development Bank is organising a workshop on Urbanisation in Asia to be held in Honolulu, Hawaii on 14 December. For more: http://beta.adb.org/news/events/workshop-urbanization-asia

- On 14 December, the Asian Development Bank is organising the “ASEAN 2030: Report Finalisation Workshop” at the EDSA Shangri-la Hotel in Manila, Philippines. It will provide a forum for the chapter authors to report on their current achievements and receive feedback. For more information, visit: http://www.adbi.org/event/4813.asean.2030.report.finalization.workshop/

Any opinions or views expressed in this paper are those of the individual author, unless stated to be those of Future Directions International.