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Noted

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Zimbabwe Clamps down on Pollution

4min. 17sec.

“It is the most wonderful piece of news I have heard in years of campaigning,” Emmanuel Koro, a prominent environment consultant, said of the Zimbabwe government’s decision to penalise owners of polluting vehicles from January 2001. He is part of a small group of environmentalists who, after years of determined campaigning, have forced the government to pay more attention to a problem the authorities had always considered too foreign and remote to worry about.

Until a few years ago, Zimbabwe had no laws on environmental protection, and even now these are fragmented and scarcely enforceable because of the inherent contradictions in their provisions. But for the small army of environment campaigners, any step or move by the government in reducing environmental pollution and damage, such as the new tax on vehicles, is an achievement worth holding a big party for to celebrate. Finance Minister Simba Makoni introduced the tax in his November budget, a measure campaigners expect to help reduce pollution, but most importantly, raise public awareness of the need to keep the environment clean.

This is certainly a move in the right direction, although the penalties in themselves will not be enough to deter people from destroying the environment wantonly, Koro, who consults for Africa Resources Trust, said. “What we need is a broad-based approach that incorporates education and cultural perception of environment issues. We need to anchor the whole concept of protection of the environment in the everyday lives of the people,” he said.

A recent United Nations study found air in Zimbabwe’s capital, Harare, too unsafe for humans to breath, and mainly attributed this to the fumes the city’s estimated 400,000 cars emitted everyday. Environment campaigners cite cars as the country’s biggest pollutants, followed closely by industrial waste and emissions.

PanAfrican News Agency

Winners of EU Journalism Prize Announced

The International Federation of Journalists has announced the award winners of the European Commission’s Lorenzo Natali Prize for Journalism. The Natali Prize, named after the late Commissioner for development and campaigner of human rights causes, is awarded annually to journalists reporting on democracy and human rights as vital aspects of development.

This year the two 10,000 Euro first prizes - one for journalists from the European Union, the other for journalists from the South - are shared between four outstanding winners. The Developing World category winners are Atiya Achak Ulwisut of Thailand’s The Nation and Fariah Razak Haroon, freelancing for Pakistan’s Dawn Magazine. First prize in the European Union category goes to Marco Bello and Paolo Muiola writing for Italy’s Mondo e Missione and Astrid Prange, a freelance contributor to the Deutsches Allgemeines Sonntagsblatt.

“These pieces demonstrate that hard-edged and professional journalism plays a vital role in showing how the well-meaning aspirations of human rights declarations touch peoples’ lives,” said Aidan White, General Secretary of the IFJ, which organises the annual award. “The judges sifted through entries from human rights and development reporters in 44 countries. Their overall assessment is that media, particularly in northern developed countries, must give greater prominence to this area of reporting.”

International Federation of Journalists

World Loses Two Breeds of Domestic Animal Diversity Every Week

10mins.

The world loses two breeds of valuable domestic animal diversity every week, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation. “The trends for the African region are alarming: The number of mammalian

breeds at risk of extinction has increased from 8 to 19 percent since 1995,” it said in news release. “The situation with bird breeds is even more serious with the total percentage of breeds at risk of being lost increasing from 20 percent in 1995 to 34 percent in 1999,” it added.

These findings are contained in the 3rd edition of the “World Watch List for Domestic Animal Diversity,” which FAO co-published with the UN Environment Programme. Over the past decade, FAO has helped collect data from some 170 countries on almost 6,500 breeds of domesticated mammals and birds, including cattle, goats, sheep, buffalo, yaks, pigs, horses, rabbits, chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, pigeons, even ostriches. “In the past 100 years we have already lost about 1,000 breeds. Our new findings show that domestic animal breeds continue to be in danger, one third are currently at risk of being extinct,” Keith Hammond, Senior Officer of FAO’s Animal Genetic Resources Group, said.

The FAO Global Databank for Farm Animal Genetic Resources contains information on 6,379 breeds of 30 mammalian and bird species. Population size data is available for 4,183 breeds of which 740 breeds are already extinct and 1,335, or 32 percent, are classified at high risk of loss and are threatened by extinction. According to Hammond, since 1995, the number of mammalian breeds at risk of extinction has risen from 23 percent to 35 percent, as countries have extended their surveys and updated their animal genetic resources data. The situation with bird breeds is even more serious, with the total percentage of those at risk of being lost increasing from 51 percent in 1995 to 63 percent in 1999. “Alarmingly, without adequate action, a large number of domestic animal breeds at risk of extinction (2,255 breeds) could be lost within the next two decades,” Hammond said, adding that domestic animal diversity is unique and cannot be replaced. “As much as novel biotechnology may attempt to improve breeds, it is not possible to replace lost diversity. Loss of diversity is forever,” he added.

The greatest threat to domestic animal diversity is the export of animals from developed to developing countries, which leads to crossbreeding or even replacement of local breeds, he said. While people in developing countries still consider breeds from industrialised countries as being more productive, the release said, “the problem, however, is that these animals are mainly suited to the conditions of the country they come from and they have difficulty coping with the often harsh environment of developing countries. “We estimate that 4,000 of the world’s remaining breeds are still popular with farmers, but only about 400 are the subject of breeding programmes - almost all of them in developed countries,” Hammond said. “The often difficult environments in developing countries, with very hot, dry and humid climates, require particular types of animal genetic resources, that are adapted to them,” he added. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a total of 738 breeds have been recorded, around 15 percent of which are at risk.

Panfrican News Agency

Deadlock at Climate Change Conference

6mins. 30secs.

The Climatic Change Talks convened at The Hague collapsed, late November, after two weeks of intensive negotiations, because ministers and diplomats failed to agree on how to make the Kyoto Protocol operational. They also failed to agree on how to strengthen financial and technical cooperation between developed and developing countries on climate-friendly policies and technologies.

Describing his frustration, Jan Pronk, the Conference Chairman and Environment Minister of The Netherlands said “it is extremely disappointing that political leaders were unable to work it out here and finalize guidelines for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, especially when the public had such high expectations,” Pronk said “I believe that the political will to succeed is still alive, and I am confident that we can regroup in the very near future and complete a deal that leads to effective actions to control emissions and protect the most vulnerable countries from the impacts of global warming.”

The conference made progress towards outlining a package of financial support and technology transfer to help developing countries contribute to global action on climate change. But the key political issues - including an international emissions trading system, a "clean development mechanism", the rules for counting emissions reductions from carbon "sinks" such as forests, and a compliance regime - could not be resolved in the time available.

"This conference highlights both the importance and the difficulty of making the transition to low-carbon economies," said the Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme. "It is better to suspend the talks and resume later to ensure that we find the right path forward rather than take a hasty step that moves us in the wrong direction." A compromise text tabled by Mr. Pronk will be forwarded as an input to a resumed sixth session of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. These talks could be held in late May in Bonn, the home of the climate change secretariat.

This Day

Talks On Dangerous Chemicals Underway In South Africa

8mins.

The fifth UN treaty talks, which will provide an historic opportunity to ban or severely restrict the production and use of chemicals directly toxic to humans, held in Johannesburg in December. Experts say negotiators at the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) treaty session hope to reach a deal that aims to eliminate 12 of the most dangerous chemicals in the world. The meeting is also to set the criteria for eliminating additional ones, and provide technical and financial assistance to developing nations to help them move toward safer alternatives.

But the World Wide Fund for Nature said for the treaty to work, elimination, not management, of such chemicals and dioxins must be a central goal, combined with financial and technical help for developing nations. "This is a chance for negotiators to make a stand against toxic chemical contamination and complete the first major environmental treaty of the new millennium," said Clifton Curtis, Director of WWF's Global Toxic Chemicals Initiative.

POPs are chemicals that break down in the environment extremely slowly, travel thousands of miles in the air and water, and are extremely toxic to wildlife and humans. They are linked to birth defects, cancer and developmental problems. But a major problem is that the pollutants are detected in the bodies of every man, woman, child and animal on the planet.

South Africa has identified a number of POPs destined for elimination. These include pesticides and chemicals such as aldrin, dieldrin, endrin, chlordane, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, toxaphene and heptachlor, all of which have been de-registered. Besides, the adverse effects of POPs on health and the environment, they also impact on the economy and trade. The elimination of unintended by-products like dioxins, furans and PCBs, which are by-products released during many industrial processes, is high on the priority list.

The Global Alliance for Incineration Alternatives (GAIA) believes that incineration must be phased out in favour of a combination of alternatives including recycling, and the development of safer technologies to deal with hazardous and medical waste. A global alliance aimed at stopping the incineration of waste has been launched in South Africa to coincide with the final intergovernmental discussion. More than 70 grassroots environmental and public health activists from 23 countries have joined up to promote alternatives to incineration in an attempt to protect the environment and public health.

International environmental groups protested at the opening of the talks, calling for an effective international treaty to eliminate some of the most dangerous toxic chemicals known to man.

allAfrica.com

Global Protection Needed for Human Rights

13mins.

The scope of today's global human rights problems far exceeds the capacity of global institutions to address them, the Human Rights Watch has claimed. In its annual survey of human rights conditions around the world, the organization called for a "reinforced global architecture" to meet these challenges.

The Human Rights Watch World Report 2001, issued in advance of Human Rights Day on December 10, describes human rights developments over the past year in 70 countries. It also analyzes the international community's response to serious human rights abuse. Global trade and investment should provide for greater protection for human rights, the Human Rights Watch World Report says. The report further argues that the United Nations needs more resources to help end armed conflicts and aid refugee problems.

The emerging system of international justice, including the international criminal court, should have more robust support from all countries, including the United States. "The world doesn't have global institutions with the muscle to adequately address the most urgent human rights issues of our time," said Kenneth Roth, executive director of Human Rights Watch. "We urgently need to remedy these institutional failings." Among the crises addressed in the report are those of Russia and her conduct during its war in Chechnya with gross disregard for the suffering of the civilian population. Although the United Nations did censure Russia, Moscow has largely escaped international penalties for its conduct in Chechnya.

Fresh atrocities continue in the nine-year civil war in Sierra Leone, despite the capture of a major rebel leader there. International efforts to establish a war crimes tribunal in Sierra Leone are not proceeding quickly enough. The military in Colombia has still not severed its links with paramilitaries who are responsible for grave human rights abuses. U.S. President Clinton's waiver of the human rights conditions on "Plan Colombia," the massive U.S. aid package, is almost certain to exacerbate the abuses.

The government of Indonesia has not called to order militias in West Timor who were responsible for scorched-earth tactics in East Timor in 1999. Armed insurgencies in Ambon and Aceh are testing civilian control over the military. Israel responded to Palestinian demonstrations protesting continued military occupation of parts of the West Bank and Gaza with force that was frequently excessive and indiscriminate, leading to many civilian casualties.

As the fiftieth anniversary of the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees approaches on December 14, some of the least developed countries in the world are bearing the brunt of caring for refugees. Developed countries, which were responsible for establishing UNHCR in the first place, should bear a greater burden financially and keep their own doors open to refugees.

Human Rights Watch said the global economy had yielded undeniable wealth, opportunities, and jobs. But street protests over the past year in Seattle, Prague, Washington, D.C., and elsewhere reflect widespread popular concern over associated ills, such as an increase in the number of people living in poverty and the abuse of migrant workers. In the polarized debate over globalization, human rights offer an important and promising framework to address many problems, such as the tendency of some governments and corporations to compete by profiting from repression.

Within the workplace, respect for freedom of association should allow workers to join together - in trade unions should they choose - to improve wages and working conditions. Similarly, the prohibition against discrimination should be used to help ensure that historically marginalized people enjoy the fruits of their labor on the same terms as others.

On a societal level, respect for civil and political rights, including the right to elect one's government, should enable the disadvantaged to have a voice in the direction of their country's social and economic development, including on such matters as increasing the minimum wage, protecting union activists from retaliation, enforcing prohibitions on discrimination, regulating extraction industries, or ensuring that investments are made with social values in mind. This emphasis on rights would not guarantee particular wage levels, working conditions, or regulatory policies. Nor would it eliminate inequalities in bargaining power or eradicate all forms of social exclusion. But rights guarantees would allow a vigorous civil society to make its views heard, and permit people from around the world to have a say in the pace and direction of global developments.

Human Rights Watch

Tragedy Mars Historic Discovery

8mins.

Four-hundred million year-old coelacanth fish have been discovered off the coast of St Lucia in South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal. The fish termed the dinosaur of the deep - because of its prehistoric features - was thought to be extinct until the discovery of a dead fish in the net of a fishing trawler off East London, South Africa, in 1939. That find caused international headlines. Two scuba divers captured historic video footage of six coelacanths - about two metres long - at a depth of 115 metres near the popular resort.

The dramatic discovery earlier this week was marred when one of the divers, 34-year-old Dennis Harding, died while filming the fish. A second unnamed diver also got into serious difficulties and had to be rescued. Two years ago, another diver, Riaan Bouwer, died in the same area while searching for the fish.

South African coelacanth expert Dr Phil Heemstra who viewed the footage has verified that the fish are coelacanths. In December last year, St Lucia was listed as South Africa's first World Heritage Site and the latest discovery is expected to give it an enormous boost in tourism. The coelacanths, which have survived for 30 million generations, are the last example of the crossopterygians, whose fleshy limb-like fins were the probable precursors of arms and legs.

It is the end of the line that scientists believe gave rise to the first tetrapods, or four-legged, land-dwelling vertebrates. The discovery of the extraordinary fish in South African waters in 1939 was regarded as the marine equivalent of finding a living dinosaur. South African scientist JLB Smith, reacting to reports that the fish had been spotted near the Indian Ocean Islands of Madagascar and the Comoros, posted notices throughout the islands offering 100 pounds for a specimen. His efforts went unrewarded until 1952, when a second coelacanth was caught off the Cormorian Island of Anjouan.

The South African government lent Smith and his team a military Dakota to fly to the island and claim the fish. Coelacanths were caught in increasing numbers until the 1980s; most were sent to museums and aquaria for study. Scientists were concerned that even in the race to get specimens for research, they were endangering the species. Until this week, no other coelacanths have ever been found in South African waters. There are 125 species of coelacanth in the fossil record - but only one species is known to remain and it is in serious danger of becoming extinct.

Panafrikan News Agency

U.N. Marks World AIDS Day Amidst Increasing Infection Rates

7mins.

Men must change their sexual behaviour if the world is to stop the spread of the AIDS killer pandemic, the United Nations has warned as it launched World AIDS Day. The virus has cut through southern Africa, is firmly gripping Asia and is threatening to spread among wealthier nations that are able to buy expensive

anti-viral drugs. More than 36 million people worldwide are now living with AIDS or the virus that causes it, the U.N. says, while 20 million others have been killed by the disease around the globe. The disease, which attacks the body's immune system, is passed through direct contact with body fluids, most commonly during sex, blood transfusions and through drug-users' shared needles. Africa is the worst hit region but Asia and Russia are also facing the prospect of the disease reaching epidemic proportions.

This year's U.N. campaign, called "Men Make a Difference," is aimed at sending a message to men and adolescent boys that multiple sexual partners, sex without a condom and lack of health care are recipes for disaster. Often male infection leads to a deadly encounter for women, who are more susceptible biologically to HIV, according to UNAIDS, the world body's coordinating agency in the fight against the deadly virus.

"Men are expected to be physically strong, emotionally robust, daring and virile. Some of these expectations translate into ways of thinking and behaving that endanger the health and well-being of men and their sex partners," an agency spokesman said while the U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan has been quoted as saying "Men can make a particular difference...by being more caring, by taking fewer risks, and by facing the issue of AIDS head-on," A report by the UN released on the eve of World AIDS Day, said the main hope for achieving that goal rests with stopping the spread of the disease to the next generation through a strong campaign of sex education and the promotion of condom use.

The World AIDS Day emerged from the call by the World Summit of Ministers of Health on Programmes for AIDS Prevention in January 1988. Each year, it is the only international day of coordinated action against AIDS.

CFC

African Leaders Restate Their Commitment To The War Against AIDS 11mins.

African leaders have reiterated their commitment to fight HIV/AIDS while addressing the last day of the 2nd African Development Forum, which in December. Amidst discussions on the challenges of HIV/AIDS to the development of the continent, the leaders emphasized the crucial role of national mobilisation, with the government spearheading the campaign against the scourge of the epidemic. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni believes that such a campaign would necessitate "the largest and loudest alarm possible to the dangers of the syndrome." The plenary's "Heads of State and Government Forum" at which each leader delivered a statement, was chaired by OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, who stated that the AIDS pandemic had indeed constituted a great leadership challenge as indicated by the theme of the gathering. Ethiopia, Botswana, Rwanda, Malawi and Chad and Senegal took turns to express their country's commitment to stop AIDS.

Prime Minister Meles Zenawi of Ethiopia stated that there was no reason why Africa could not succeed in what he described as a war for the future of the continent. "What is required is the active participation of all sectors of our population in all aspects of fighting against the pandemic," he said. Museveni, who has been credited with being the first African leader to have taken a bold leadership role against the pandemic, stated that by sounding the alarm about AIDS at political gatherings, through radio and television broadcasts and at community gatherings, Uganda has been able to attain 100 percent awareness of the pandemic.

President Mogae of Botswana said an appeal must be made to "our partners" in the developed world to convince major pharmaceutical companies to make the cost of anti-AIDS drugs affordable to Africans. The President of Rwanda mentioned the Great Lakes Initiative on AIDS set up in 1999 in which countries in the region were co-operating and co-ordinating efforts to fight the epidemic. He went on to observe that

while only 2 percent of Rwandans were infected with the disease after the 1994 genocide, the figures have increased to 11 percent by 1998. He added that his government was providing anti-AIDS drugs to the affected at reduced prices. The Vice President of Malawi said increased access to anti-AIDS drugs was crucial and should be made the agenda of African leaders, reiterated by the petition of the youths attending the conference. He further stated, "We should mount a campaign for debt cancellation, not debt relief," pointing out that sub-Saharan African external debt presently stands at 227 billion US dollars.

President Yamassoum of Chad told the gathering that the number of AIDS patients in his country, which only had two reported cases in 1986, had now reached more than 12,000. He said even this figure was "the tip of the iceberg," as experts estimate the number of AIDS patients in Chad between 40,000 and 50,000. "We have come to this conference to learn from the experience of others in the fight against the disease," he stated.

President Niassé of Senegal called for "concrete and concerted" action against the pandemic. Secretary General of the OAU, Salim Ahmed Salim, said that it was important that the message of the gathering reach the "African people and our partners involved in this struggle as a matter of urgency." He urged the participants to focus their attention on the "consensus declaration to be issued by the gathering and leave Addis Ababa with a total commitment to implement it." Salim said the consensus declaration will be taken to the special OAU summit on AIDS and other related issues to be held in April in Abuja, Nigeria.

CFC

Declaring War on AIDS in Africa

8mins. 13secs.

There is a need to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic in a war-like fashion through acceleration of the response to the disease and the mobilization of all key actors at national and international levels. It is essential to develop a true partnership with all stakeholders, especially communities, families and individuals, who must be empowered to deal with the HIV/AIDS issues. It is therefore imperative that institutions adopt a complete different approach to the HIV/AIDS problem in terms of behavioural and institutional change.

These were some of the conclusions that were made at the recently concluded ADF 2000. The conference tagged "HIV/AIDS: The Greatest Leadership Challenge", was organized by the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. The participants at the forum agreed that the fight against HIV/AIDS should benefit from conventional war experiences. Communities are very much aware of the way to approach the epidemic and should be given the opportunity to do so. Traditional and non-traditional approaches should be adopted to mobilize funds and governments should budget internal resources to fight the epidemic.

There is a need for the international community to adjust their policies to address this war-like situation. An appeal was made to the World Bank to examine the ethical and moral implications of loans for AIDS projects and several speakers called for debt cancellation and the conversion of loans to grants. Governments were urged to establish funding mechanisms to facilitate the transfer of funds to the communities. The importance of the international partnership against AIDS at country level was emphasized and the following implementation issues were highlighted: Community participation, information sharing, capacity building of People Living With AIDS (PLWA), women and communities ensuring sustainability, care and support including drug access for PLWA.

The need to move from rhetoric to action was reiterated consistently throughout the forum. All stakeholders were encouraged to intensify their response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Considerable progress has been

made at national, and international levels since the introduction of the International Partnership Against HIV/AIDS in January 1999. The main achievements at international levels include: high level political mobilization. For example the issue of AIDS was raised at the Security Council and the Secretary General launched the partnership in September 1999. There has also been an increase in resource mobilization from the stakeholders at the international level. At national levels the International Partnership against HIV/AIDS has resulted in increased political will and commitment, improved strategic plans, decentralization of the national response to district and community levels, and increased resource mobilization including innovative ways of raising funds.

CFC

Point of View

Africa's Thirst for Democracy

13mins.

There is a saying among my people in Ghana: one head alone is not enough to decide. I often think of that when I hear people say that democracy is alien to Africa, or that Africans are "not ready" for democracy. In reality, African communities from the village upwards have traditionally decided their course through free discussion, carefully weighing different points of view until consensus is reached.

So Africans have much to learn from their own traditions, and something to teach others, about the true meaning and spirit of democracy. We need to understand that there is much more to democracy than simply which candidate, or which party, has majority support. Of course, even that is not always easy, as one of the world's most successful democracies has recently shown us. But the US's difficulties should not cast doubt on the value of democracy itself. On the contrary, they remind us how important it is that elections are held within a broader contest of democratic institutions and culture. Democracy depends on the rule of law, because without respect for law it is not possible to hold free elections, to conduct them fairly, or to settle disputes about the electoral process.

Yes, democracy implies majority rule. But that does not mean minorities should be excluded from any say in decisions. Minority views should never be silenced. The minority must always be free to state its case, so that people can hear both sides before deciding who is right. How can people learn about those ideas? At the level of the village, they may learn directly, by face to face contact. But in today's mass societies they depend above all on mass media. For an election to be truly fair, different parties and candidates should have equal access to the media. Neither state power nor the power of money should determine that one party gets a hearing while another is denied it. The media must actively seek out the truth on the public's behalf, and be free to tell it as they see it. Often, especially in times of conflict, that requires journalists to take real risks. Many have lost their lives in the quest for truth. We owe them an enormous debt. Even more, we owe it to ourselves to give them better protection. It is our interests, and our freedom that they are upholding.

In mature democracies, parties alternate between power and opposition, as opinion shifts, and minorities become majorities. But not all societies are like that. Not all minorities are composed simply of people whose views are out of fashion. Many are structural minorities - people who in some sense form a separate group, defined by race, color, culture or creed. If parties are formed on the basis of such group identities, a winner-take-all election offers minorities no security. A minority in power will not risk losing it, and a minority without power will have no hope of winning it.

Democracy can only work if all groups in a society feel that they belong to it, and it belongs to them. Often that means ensuring, one way or other, that minorities are given a permanent share of power. In some

places, this can be done by decentralisation, so that national minorities can win local power, in regions where they form the local majority. In others it may be done by provisions giving minorities guaranteed representation at national level in the legislature, or the executive or both. What is important is not the particular device used, but the outcome.

It is easy to state such principles, but not always easy to practice them, especially in a country that has just emerged from conflict, or one whose people are desperately poor and hungry. People in such conditions are easily manipulated by those who use force to seize power, arguing that constitutional rights are a luxury which a poor country cannot afford. How often we have heard those arguments! "Democracy begins with breakfast", or "a hungry stomach has no ears". But over and over again we have learnt, especially in Africa that poor people's stomachs are not filled by rulers who refuse to submit themselves to the people's judgement. We have learnt that democracy begins at breakfast - that power has to be shared in the home, between women and men and from there on up the highest levels of the State, and indeed of the international system.

Oppression is not an alternative to poverty. Nor is development an alternative to freedom. Poverty and oppression go hand in hand, while true development means freedom from both. My generation of Africans has learnt, the hard way, that no State can truly be called democratic if it offers its people no escape from poverty; and that no country can truly develop, so long as its people are excluded from power.

The building of African nations has been one long struggle against poverty, ignorance, disease and conflict. It is hardly surprising that African democracy has known many setbacks. What is striking, rather, is the fierce and ever-growing thirst for democracy that Africans have shown; their indomitable courage in defying oppressive regimes; and their success, in so many countries, in insisting on accountable government. My generation saw its dream of independence come true, but our dream of democracy shattered. Thank God we have lived long enough to see democracy spreading again through Africa today, and taking root.

UN Secretary General, **Kofi A. Annan**, *Ghana Mail*

Noted

Number of Ebola victims reaches 400

4mins. 5secs.

The number of people infected with the deadly Ebola virus reached 400 in December, with 160 of those victims dying from the highly contagious disease, a health official said. Two people have died in the northern town of Gulu, while two others died in Masindi, 125 miles northwest of Kampala, said Dr. Alex Opio, assistant director of the National Disease Control Center. During the same period, Opio said seven new cases were identified in Gulu, the epicenter of the outbreak. So far the disease has been confined to Gulu, Masindi and Mbarara districts, he added.

The outbreak has taken a staggering toll on the health workers in Gulu. "So far 26 health workers have been affected by the virus," Opio said. "Of the 13 of these people who have died in Gulu, they include 11 nurses, one doctor and a clinical officer ... two nurses and one doctor are down with the disease." The fever caused by the Ebola virus is transmitted through body fluids. The disease can cause severe hemorrhagic fever and is often fatal, but victims aggressively treated with fluids to fight dehydration stand a better chance of survival.

Associated Press

Girls Move to Stop Female Genital Mutilation

2mins. 8secs.

Two teenage Kenyan girls obtained a court injunction restraining their father from forcing them to go for female genital mutilation. The court restrained the father, Pius Kandie, a farmer at Simotwo in northern Kenya's Keiyo district, about 312 miles north west of Nairobi, from taking the girls to a traditional circumcision ceremony scheduled for 9 December 2000. Keiyo's Resident magistrate, Daniel Ochenja, ordered Kandie and his agents not to circumcise the secondary school girls — Edna Jebet Kandie, 17, and Beatrice Kandie, 15, until the case is heard and determined. The girls had filed a court application under certificate through an attorney, Nixon Sifuna, who argued that Kandie had not obtained the consent of the girls to undergo female genital mutilation or FGM under the Keiyo customary law. Kandie had threatened to stop paying school fees for the two if they failed to comply with the traditional cut.

Panafrican News Agency

Bow You Must : Another Call To Action

5mins.

The struggle for gender equity received yet another boost on the 2nd November 2000. It was the public presentation of "Bow You Must", a book on the empowerment of women written by AdaOkere Agbasimalo. The presentation attracted eminent personalities in the country who shared in the vision of enhancing the status of women.

In "Bow You Must", Agbasimalo converted her field experience as a Program Officer with the John Hopkins University into a moving and inspiring story of the biased treatments meted out to women in the developing world. The book in a subtle way highlights issues of sexual harassment, discrimination, disinheritance, harmful widowhood practices and so on. "Bow You Must" is the story of Meriye, a hardworking mother, wife, leader of the women's League who despite the corrupt society around her refuses to bow but rather works to make a change. Rather than present a pessimistic view of the situation, the book focuses on creating a change, a revolution spearheaded by the Women's League. This revolution gives rise to a new awakening in society: a better life for men, women and children - a society with less violence, less corruption, ethnic tolerance, transparency, and better values.

In "Bow You Must", Agbasimalo challenges society to do more to enhance the status of women considering the positive effect this will have on the society. It is a call to action, a call to the entire society, a call that provokes the question, Must You Bow?

CFC

Dateline

Call for nominations

4mins. 50secs.

The Global Health Council invites you to submit nominations for The Jonathan Mann Award for Global Health and Human Rights. This is your opportunity to nominate an unsung hero - an individual or organization - that is out in the field as a leading practitioner in health and human rights, for the Jonathan Mann Award. Those working on the grassroots level as well as those operating at the national or international level are eligible.

The Award is intended to be a substantial cash prize, to allow its recipients a measure of freedom to pursue their work. Jonathan Mann was a key figure in the 20th Century against global poverty and illness. He was a crusader against AIDS and a champion of human rights. He died tragically in 1998 in the crash of Swissair Flight 111. In memory of his life and work the Association Francois- Xavier Bagnoud, Doctors of

the World, and the Global Health Council with the Mann family, established the Jonathan Mann Award for Global Health and Human Rights. The 3rd Annual Jonathan Mann Award will be presented in May 31 during the Global Health Council's 28th Annual Conference May 29 - June 1 in Washington, D.C. USA.

CFC

SA to hold 2002 Earth Summit

6mins. 22secs.

The South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism has announced that the United Nations General Assembly on Environment and Sustainable Development (UNCED) had chosen South Africa to host the Earth Summit in 2002. In a statement, Rejoice Mabudafhasi, the Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, said that South Africa welcomed the decision to bring the conference to the African continent. The summit would be held in Johannesburg. "Bringing the Earth Summit to South Africa is a major boost for Africa as the major conference on sustainable development on our soil will firmly place these issues and debates on the agenda of our continent" said Mabudafhasi. In February, President Thabo Mbeki made a formal offer to the United Nations to host the 10-year Review Summit, popularly referred to as the Earth Summit 2002. 'It is significant that it should take place in the developing world' Several heads of state will attend the summit that is expected to draw about 40 000 participants. More than 130 Heads of state participated in the summit in 1992 and it is expected that the majority of the 188 members of the UN will send delegations to the 2002 conference. More than 15 000 NGOs were represented at the 1992 meeting.

In related news the UN Secretariat has also released the following information from the UN General Assembly The Rio+10 event will carry the title "World Summit on Sustainable Development" Four Preparatory committees (Prepcom) have been set up for Rio+10. The first prepcom is scheduled from 30 April to 2 May 2001 (in New York), followed by prepcoms in 2002. The event and its preparatory process will include active participation of NGOs and other major groups, including multi-stakeholder dialogues. The event will also open accreditation to new NGOs interested in making a contribution to Rio+10.

CFC

NGOS Charged With The Task Of Fighting Corruption

4mins.

The Nigeria Network of Non Governmental Organisations recently organized a two day conference on "Issues in Corruption and Governance: NGOs Agenda for Combating Corruption". The conference was well attended with notable Nigerians such as the Nobel laureate Wole Soyinka, the Professor Ransome Kuti and a cross section of notable Nigerians from the business and academic communities, participating in the workshop. A communiqué issued at the end of the conference said that corruption is a complex problem that cannot be defined and adequately expressed in a single statement but nonetheless it is a constraint to development and cuts across cultures. It was also noted that poverty reinforces corruption. In view of this, the conference recommended that workers should be paid a living wage as at when due, elected officials should be accountable to their constituencies, who in turn should be educated in democratic principles and processes. The 30-point communiqué however NGOs to champion the fight against corruption, advocate for the rule of law and an independent Judiciary and that NGOs must be equally accountable.

The conference which was sponsored by the Democracy and Good Governance Program of the Embassy of the United States of America, ended on a hopeful with each participating NGOs promising to take these resolutions back to their constituencies.

CFC

Numbers

Breaking the Silence Around Violence Against Women

3mins. 10secs.

On November 25, 2000 people from all over the world joined international celebrities such as Annie Lennox, Dawn French, Ainsley Harriott and Gaby Roslin to publicise White Ribbon Day 2000 to protest against violence against women. The following statistics were broadcast:

One in four women experience domestic violence at some time during their lives

British Medical Association 1998

Globally, men's violence causes more death and disability amongst women under 44, than cancer, malaria or war

World Bank Discussion Paper 255

The police in the UK receive 1300 calls from victims of violence in the home every day: 81% of these are from women attacked by men

Violence Research Programme, University of London, 2000

The campaign against violence against women can certainly borrow a leaf from the UN AIDS campaign. Here is one problem in which the MEN can MAKE THE DIFFERENCE!

CFC

Children's Section

What's So Funny, Ketu?

A Neur Tale

21mins.

In Africa, near the Mountains of the Moon, there once lived a man name Ketu. He was a happy man. A big laugh lived inside him. But it was this that got him into trouble. It happened like this...

One day Ketu heard his dog yelping, *kao, kao, kao*, behind the hut. He investigated and found the dog worrying a harmless little snake. Ketu scolded the dog and sent him slinking off. The little snake raised its head and said, "Thank you, man. You are kind. I'm going to give you a gift." Ketu laughed, *tu-e, tu-e, tu-e!* "What can a small creature like yourself give to me?" he asked. "A magic gift," said the snake. "From now on, you will hear animals think. But you must not tell anyone, or you will die!" Ketu was not sure he wanted such a gift. He tried to protest. But the little snake had vanished!

That night Ketu's wife, Nyaloti, put their baby into her basket bed. She tucked a pacifier, made from the neck of a tiny gourd, into the baby's mouth. And she patted her to sleep. Then Ketu fasted the door. And he and Nyaloti lay down on their low beds along the walls of the hut. Soon they heard a mosquito going *zee* around the door. And Ketu heard it say to itself, "I know they're in there! Fat, juicy people! But I can't find a big enough crack!" Ketu laughed so hard, he rolled off his bed – *GU-MAPP!* Nyaloti cried, "what's so funny, Ketu?" "Nothing!" said Ketu as he climbed back into bed. He could not tell her.

Soon a rat tried the door. It could not get in either. But it found a hole under the roof and came in there. *Ta, ta, ta*, went the little feet of the rat, back and forth across the floor. Then Ketu heard it say to itself, "I wonder where that so-so woman keeps her butter!" Ketu exploded with laughter, *kye, kye, kye!* He laughed so hard he scared the rat. And it leaped up onto Nyaloti's bed – *TWUM* - in the middle of

Nyaloti! “A-a-a-a!” she screamed. “Get that rat off me!” The rat leaped to the wall and scurried out through the hole.

Nyaloti sat up in bed. She said, “Ketu, I think your big laugh made that rat jump on me! What were you laughing about?” “Nothing!” said Ketu.

The next morning Ketu fetched the cow from the shed and tied her to a tree so that Nyaloti could milk her. Soon he saw his wife coming with her big calabash bowl. The cow saw her too, and Ketu heard her say to herself “here she comes to steal my milk! This time I just won’t give any milk. And my calf will drink it afterward!” Ketu laughed, *ge-e, ge-e, ge-e!* he laughed so hard, he scared the cow, who ran.

Nyaloti set the bowl down so she could scold her husband with both hands. She said “What’s so funny, Ketu? Now you’ve frightened the cow with that silly laugh! Were you laughing at me?” “No” said Ketu as he walked away. “it was nothing.” The cow did not give any milk. Nyaloti didn’t get a drop in her bowl. But the calf drank from her mother until her belly was round and fat. It was as if she knew the saying, Lest good food wastes, let the belly bust. That evening at milking time the cow still could not give milk. Nyaloti called Ketu. “Look,” she said, “no milk again. Our baby is ill for want of it. That calf is killing our daughter!”

The cow swung her big head around and looked at Nyaloti. And Ketu heard her say to herself, “What! My daughter is killing her daughter!” Ketu tried to hold back the laughter. But it burst out between his fingers, *gug, gug, gug!* The cow was so startled, she kicked and sent the milk bowl rolling, in the dirt. “Now see what you did!” cried Nyaloti. “You and that stupid laugh. I’m going to tell the chief.” Nyaloti told the chief. The chief called Ketu and all his wise men to the Tree of Justice in the middle of the village. Nyaloti came too, with the baby in a basket on her head. And many other people came, just to hear the palaver.

“Ketu,” said the chief, “your wife tells me you laugh when there is nothing to laugh about. Is that true?” “Oh, Chief,” said Ketu, “I never laugh without a reason. But I can’t tell the reason. If I tell, I will die!” “Nonsense!” exclaimed the chief. “Talking never killed anyone!” Nyaloti said, “he laughs at me, Chief. I’m the only one around.” “No,” said Ketu. “it isn’t that!”

If you don’t laugh at your wife, what do you laugh about?” demanded the chief. Someone shouted, “tell us, Ketu. We want to laugh too!” The chief said, “Ketu, if you will not tell, your wife will have to take the baby and go back to live with her father.” Ketu’s head drooped. He dug his toe into the sand at his feet. He didn’t know what to do. Just then his baby began to cry, *ke-yaa, ke-yaa, ke-yaa!* Ketu watched as Nyaloti lowered the basket and lifted out their beautiful baby. The pacifier he had made dangled from the baby’s fat little wrist. Suddenly Ketu knew that no matter what happened, he could not let his wife and baby go. So he told about the little snake, the magic gift, and the funny thoughts of the animals.

Then KWAM! He fell over dead! “Look!” cried the oldest wise man. “We made him do what he should not have done. And he has had to pay with his life!” Nyaloti and many of the women began to wail, *wolu, wolu, wolu!* The chief shook his head sadly.

Presently the little snake appeared. It put its shiny head on Ketu’s head. Ketu opened his eyes. He turned his head in time to see the little snake wriggle off into the weeds. And he heard it say to itself, “Snoopy! That’s what they are! They can’t let a man keep a secret!” Ketu laughed, *kye, kye, kye!* He rolled on the ground with laughter. The oldest wise man bent over him and asked “What’s so funny, Ketu?” The chief

cried, "Don't ask him that!" And Nyaloti said, "Laugh all you want, Ketu. I'll never make palaver about it again!"

Then all the people began to laugh. They laughed so hard, they scared the baby. And above the sounds of the laughter was heard the crying of the baby *KE-YAA, KE-YAA, KE-YAA!*

Retold by Verna Aardema

Parting Shots

Some memorable quotes from the recently concluded ADF 2000:

In this age of information technology, let www be our driving force. If we are committed and dedicated, WWW, we will win!

Kenneth Kaunda, Former president of Zambia, encouraging Africans in their fight against AIDS

Loans would have been acceptable without AIDS but they are not acceptable in a World with AIDS

Michael Kelly, A Participant at the ADF 2000, commenting on debt relief for African countries

The Youth are angry about poverty, debt, corruption and social injustice.

Genevieve - Global Youth Connection, one of the members of the Youth Forum at the ADF 2000

And a bit of ancient African wisdom...

Those who refuse to drink from the well of knowledge will die of thirst in the desert of ignorance
Guinea

If you listen to the voice of thunder you will not be soaked by the rain
Ghana

The only thing to do with good advise is to pass it on
Uganda

More African Proverbs

Communicating for Change will like to wish all readers of Change Radio the very best this season has to offer. Happy New Year!