



Network

The UN Women's Newsletter, Volume No. 8, Issue 2 • April, May and June 2007

Letter from the Focal Point for Women

Dear Friends,

Welcome to this issue of Network.

In this issue, it is our pleasure to bring to your screens and desks reports on activities of the second quarter of 2007. In particular, we draw your attention to the statement of the Secretary-General on World Refugee Day, 20 June 2007, and to the interview of Mr. Inder Kumar Gujral, former Prime Minister of India.

The Secretary-General issued a reminder to the world of the plight of refugees. He particularly emphasized the situation of women on account of persecution and violence in their homelands.

The former Prime Minister of India, Mr. I. K. Gujral, wrote in response to our request for an interview. He has been a staunch advocate for the empowerment of women, as also noted by his sponsorship of a bill reserving one third of the seats in parliament for women. In his letter, he explains the historical and personal basis of this commitment. Above all, the Prime Minister speaks to the real and potential effect of women on the lives and minds of men.

Without the empowerment of women, no nation or institution can achieve its full potential. Mr. Mahbub ul Haq, the architect of the United Nations Development Programme's Human Development Report, captured this when he said in the 1995 report dedicated to gender: "Unless human development is engendered, it is endangered."

Sit back and be inspired.

In solidarity,

Aparna Mehrotra

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LETTER FROM THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, MR. I. K. GUJRAL, ON GENDER

10 April 2007

My dear Aparna,

Various preoccupations left me little time to respond to your questionnaire expeditiously. I hope it is not too late now.

Your queries made me dig deep into the memories of the early days of my life. I take pride in recalling that it was my mother who moulded me and my siblings.

She was born in a small village to a conservative family. As was usual in those days, she was married to my father at the early age of 16. Her elder brother had courageously sent her to a boys' school in the village, since exclusive girls' schools were not available then.

My mother's own mental growth was shaped by my father, who was a law graduate. In a formal sense, it would be a mismatch if I were to look at their initial social orientations, but my father's attitude and beliefs in gender equality soon made them true companions.

I recall in my childhood how he would regularly read a book or a magazine to her in his spare time. This shaped my mother's personality, as well as mine and my brother's. My mother's interests thus reached a wider and modern outlook. She soon discarded her veil and devoted herself to the management of the Arya Patri Pathshala (name of a school).

Her active interest in the women's section of the Arya Samaj movement rid her of obscurantist rituals. Both of them were deeply religious, but not ritualistic. It facilitated their joining the Gandhian movement for liberation of the country. She thus became a true companion and comrade of my father. Their activities and beliefs shaped our personalities. There was a time in 1942 when both of them and I were incarcerated. We were not in the same jail but in three adjoining jails of Lahore. My brother and two sisters imbibed their philosophies too. We never consulted any soothsayer in our lives. Our wedding dates were not fixed in consultation with any pandit.

A very young daughter of my mother's sister was widowed at the age of 20. Her very conservative parents would never think of marrying her again. My mother took her over and gave her courage to take a positive view of life. She lived with us until she got over her trauma. She was married again in my parents' home. My cousin's own parents did not come even to bless her while my mother boldly faced a social boycott of the town. Participation in the Gandhian struggles made my mother very courageous and fearless. I recall how she would not permit the police force to enter our home to search during the freedom struggle.

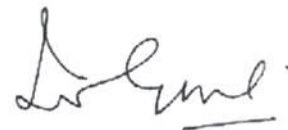
Partition of the country inflicted terrible atrocities on women on both sides of the dividing line. Many women were abducted. My father stayed back in Pakistan for a few months to rescue many women and children in remote villages of Jhelum. A few of these girls could not be united with their families. My mother took care of them in her own home in Jullundur, and later she set up a "Nari Niketan" (women's forum) for "unwanted" women and homeless children, which is now an important social welfare institution of the Punjab. It was my mother's dying wish that we continue to take care of these women. Her activities bequeathed to all of us a humanistic outlook and dedication to social causes.

It is a saddening part of our political life that the presence of women in our legislatures is still below par. I had tried to legislate a 30 per cent quota for women in our parliament and State legislatures, but social myopics barred the way. I continue to believe that it will be legislated soon.

It might sound ironic that while we have allocated such quotas in our village panchayats and urban local bodies, the absence of women in similar strength in our parliament is still not visible. Our traditions, cultures and history—particularly of the freedom struggle—always assigned priority to gender equality both at home and in the working place. I continue to work for it!

The future of gender equality in our nation is NOT oblique, as I witness it in my own home with a highly accomplished wife who is a crusader for the causes of women and children. Her faith in gender equality has influenced my policies and efforts.

I see the face of the New India when I meet and talk to my daughters-in-law and their friends, working shoulder to shoulder with their husbands and in professions and vocations. This reinforces my faith in the policies that I had authored during my tenures in office.



I. K. Gujral

CONGRATULATIONS . . .

The United Nations ecological agency honoured the **2007 Champions of the Earth laureates** for achievements ranging from chemical safety, sustainable waste management, conservation of deserts and rainforests and the global climate. The seven new champions included Algerian Environmental Minister Cherif Rahmani, Philippines Environmental Secretary Elisea “Bebet” Gillera Gozun, Swedish Environmental Ambassador Viveka Bohn, Brazilian Environment Minister Marina Silva, former United States Vice-President Al Gore, Jordanian Prince Hassan Bin Talal, and the International Olympic Committee and its President Jacques Rogge.

On 23 April 2007, the United Nations Development Programme and the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) honoured **Sheikha Fatima bint Mubarak**, Mother of the Nation, with certificates of appreciation for her continuous support to women’s empowerment in the United Arab Emirates. They said the certificates were given to Sheikha Fatima for being a role model for Arab women because of her invaluable humanitarian contributions at national, regional and global levels. ■

FAREWELL . . .

Carla del Ponte, Chief Prosecutor for the United Nations tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, will be leaving the tribunal after serving two terms for eight years. Ms. del Ponte was the tribunal’s third Chief Prosecutor and is well known for pushing for the arrest and trials of high-profile fugitives, with proceedings now running against 61 accused. Ms. del Ponte’s remaining hope is to catch former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic and his military chief Ratko Mladic. The tribunal was set up in 1993 by the UN Security Council and is expected to complete all trials by 2008 and all appeals by 2010. ■

AROUND THE UN . . .

In a statement asking for greater international solidarity, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon marked **World Refugee Day on 20 June** by issuing a global reminder not to forget the plight of the nearly 10 million men, women and children who are forced to leave their homes. According to data from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), as a result of the violence in Iraq, the number of refugees worldwide has risen for the first time in five years and the number of internally displaced persons has nearly doubled. ■

AROUND THE WORLD; GENDER NEWS

• The National Assembly of Pakistan is working on a bill to safeguard women’s rights to inheritance and property.

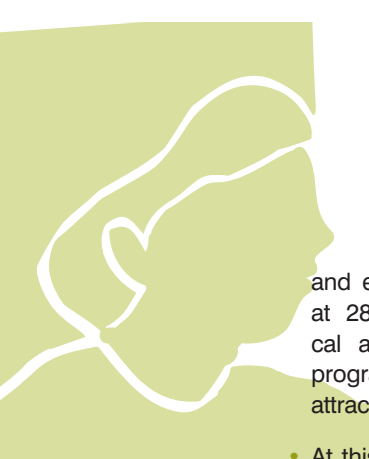
The **Prevention of Anti-Women Practices Bill** aims to outlaw customs that deny women the right to marriage or that force them into marriage against their will. Last November, the Assembly overcame opposition to amend controversial rape laws. The new bill criminalizes two customs known as “vanni” and “swara”, in which girls are given away to marriage to settle murder feuds. The bill also states that anyone found guilty of depriving a woman of her right to property can be imprisoned for up to seven years.

• In the tsunami-devastated province of Aceh, Indonesia, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) finished the first of its planned 227 mother-and-child health centres. The new facility will provide access to essential services such as antenatal and neonatal care, regular immunization and parental education, as well as access to midwives, specialized infant health care and development activities. This is the first time that UNICEF has taken on a construction programme, setting aside \$11 million for these health centres as well as \$90 million for the construction of permanent schools around Indonesia.

• On 18 May, lawyer **Rachida Dati** was named as **French Justice Minister** by President Nicolas Sarkozy. Ms. Dati is the first person of North African origin to hold a top government post in France. She started working with President Sarkozy’s cabinet in 2002 as an adviser on immigration. She then became his spokeswoman during his presidential campaign. She is currently the highest-ranking person of North African descent in France.

• At a regional conference in Senegal on 10 May, experts discussed the issue of trafficking of women from West Africa to Europe for sexual exploitation. Consultants from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime say that the phenomenon is not in decline; rather it is thriving amid inaction from African Governments. The conference brought together experts from 12 West and Central African countries along with international and national non-governmental bodies for three days to identify, protect and help victims of cross-border trafficking.

• The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has set in motion plans to increase women’s jobs in government and labour sectors. Already more than 27 positions were given to women in the Ministry of Education and five posts for deans are reserved for women in a governmental effort to place women in top positions. The Ministry of Labour is working to create more jobs for women in different sectors,



and estimates unemployment for women to be currently at 28 per cent. The General Organization for Technical and Vocational Training has also set up training programmes around the country which have, so far, attracted more than 10,000 job seekers.

- At this year's World Social Forum held in Nairobi, Kenya, Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) Anna Tibaijuka informed hundreds of delegates that **women and girls suffer the most from conditions in slums**. In an age of accelerated urbanization, the promotion of socially and environmentally sustainable housing is crucial, especially when trying to deal with problems like HIV/AIDS and poverty. ■

IN YOUR INTEREST... reports, Secretary-General's Bulletins, information circulars and others

Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/9 of 15 June 2007 establishes the organization of the Joint Negotiation Committee at Headquarters. The objective of the Committee is to have an equitable and effective mechanism for staff-management relations at Headquarters.

Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2007/10 of 29 June 2007 establishes a regime for the archiving, disposition, management, preservation, storage and use of, and access to, the records of the United Nations Compensation Commission.

Information circular ST/IC/2007/14 of 27 April 2007 invites applications from staff members of the Secretariat at the P-3 level and below for the 2007 competitive examination for French interpreters, in accordance with the provisions of ST/AI/1998/7 of 23 March 1998.

Information circular ST/IC/2007/15 of 27 April 2007 invites applications from staff members of the Secretariat at the P-3 level and below to take the 2007 competitive examination for French-language translators/précis-writers/verbatim reporters, in accordance with the provisions of ST/AI/1998/7 of 23 March 1998.

Information circular ST/IC/2007/16 of 11 May 2007 provides for the renewal provisions for 2007 of the Vanbreda medical, hospital and dental insurance programme for staff members away from Headquarters.

Information circular ST/IC/2007/19 of 8 June 2007 provides the lists of the classification of duty stations and special entitlements for staff members serving at designated duty stations established by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) according to conditions of life and work and of the revised lists of duty stations designated by ICSC where special entitlements apply for eligible staff.

Information circular ST/IC/2007/18 of 21 June 2007 informs staff members about the hourly wage for household employees on G-5 visas, as per communication received from the Permanent Mission of the United States of America to the United Nations. The prevailing hourly wage has been established at \$9.47 per hour for the New York City metropolitan area by the United States Department of Labor 2007 wage determination for domestic employees. As this amount exceeds the federal minimum wage, effective 16 May 2007, all domestic employees on G-5 visas in the New York City metropolitan area must be paid according to the prevailing wage.

Administrative instruction ST/AI/2007/2 of 23 May 2007 promulgates the managed reassignment programme as a step towards achieving the Secretary-General's vision of a more versatile, multi-skilled, flexible and effective workforce. The mobility policy is designed to stimulate staff mobility as an essential element of career development, and to ensure that posts in all duty stations are filled with experienced and skilled staff. Mobility is defined broadly to include movement across functions, occupational groups, departments, duty stations and organizations of the United Nations system. ■

SUMMARY OF "WOMEN MATTER: GENDER DIVERSITY, A CORPORATE PERFORMANCE DRIVER"

The **current statistics about women in the labour market** indicate that women remain underrepresented, fewer women have full-time jobs than men, and fewer women occupy management and decision-making positions.

Ironically, however, **companies where women are most strongly represented in board or top-management levels are also companies that perform the best**, according to the results of a 2007 study of European companies conducted by McKinsey & Company, the international management consulting firm.

The study, "Women matter: gender diversity, a corporate performance driver", found that companies that are champions of gender diversity reveal that their efforts in this area amount to nothing less than a **cultural revolution**. The study noted

that to be successful, a change programme must be set up as a company transformation initiative in its own right, and driven by top management. Practices do not develop unless top management is convinced that diversity brings a competitive advantage, and commits to implementing change, under the leadership of the CEO. Without the personal commitment of the CEO, almost no company was shown to have succeeded.

The study found that a gender gap exists in the composition of corporate management bodies. Maternity leave and reduced mobility, for example, are seen as serious handicaps. In the United States, family obligations are perceived to be obstacles to career advancement. The study found that the “anytime, anywhere” performance model is irreconcilable with women’s double burden—the combination of work and domestic responsibilities. **This dominant model, which “equates leadership with unfailing availability and total geographical mobility at all times”, is felt by women to be the main barrier to career advancement and success because it cannot be reconciled with the double burden.**

According to the study, greater participation by women in corporate senior management will require social environments that are more supportive of working women. Two types of levers can be applied: support services and facilities to help reconcile work with family life (childcare, family support, family subsidies etc.), and gender equality promoted in the workplace (equal pay, equal hours, equal responsibilities).

In conclusion, the study identified four best practices for achieving gender diversity:

- 1) Creation of transparency by implementing **gender diversity** key performance indicators (KPIs);
- 2) Implementation of measures to facilitate the **work/life balance**, such as flexible working hours and career flexibility;
- 3) Adaptation of the **human resources management process** so that recruitment, appraisal and career management systems do not hold women back in their professional development;
- 4) **Assistance to women** to master the organizational codes, and nurture their ambition.

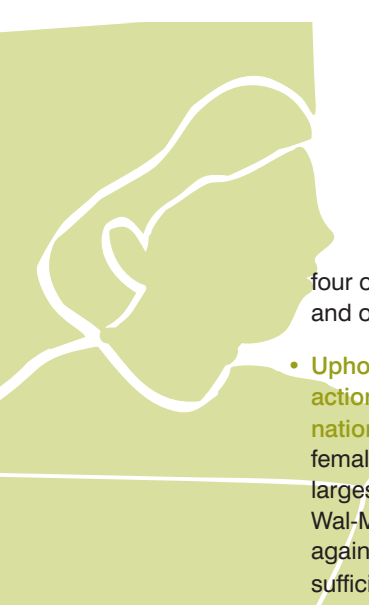
Notwithstanding the above, however, the study pointed out that two main areas not covered in the study require consideration: **education**—particularly in the fields of engineering and management, where women are underrepresented—and **models of family balance**. Certain tasks like the rearing of children remain and constrain the work and contribution of women, placing limitations on their career advancement. In contrast, men have more freedom. Thus, in seeking a balance in the work environment, a balance at home should likewise be encouraged.

In conclusion, the study notes that “we have come a long way in the quest for gender diversity in business. But busi-

ness cannot meet this challenge alone. **This will require concerted, concrete, repeated action upstream of working life at all levels of society and in all institutions, by individuals and by groups.** Slowly this will create the cultural and organizational basis for change”.

NEWS FLASH

- On 18 April, the United States Supreme Court upheld the nationwide ban on a controversial abortion procedure. The 5-4 ruling said the **Partial-Birth Abortion Ban Act** that Congress passed and President Bush signed into law in 2003 **does not violate a woman’s constitutional right to an abortion**. It was the first time the court banned a specific procedure in a case dealing with how, not whether, to perform an abortion. Abortion rights groups have said the procedure sometimes is the safest for a woman. They also said that the ruling could threaten most abortions performed after 12 weeks of pregnancy. Government lawyers, on the other hand, said there are alternative, more widely used procedures that remain legal.
- According to a **new report published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in May, mounting discrimination persists in the workplace** despite major advances. The report provides a global picture of job-related discrimination, examining both progress and failure in fighting discrimination ranging from sex, race, religion, age, sexual orientation, HIV/AIDS status or disability. Major emphasis in the report centres on the persistence of gender gaps in employment and pay, the need for policies to address sex discrimination in remuneration and occupational segregation by sex, and the reconciliation of work and family responsibility. The report demonstrates that a key measure of gender balance improvement is the availability of legislative, senior official, or managerial positions for women, and goes on to show that women still represent a minority in these fields, representing only 28.3 per cent worldwide.
- **France’s prestigious Michelin Restaurant Guide has given its top three-star ranking to a woman chef for the first time in more than 50 years.** Since the guide began awarding this honour in the 1920s, Anne-Sophie Pic is the fourth French woman to receive it. Ms. Pic runs The Maison Pic in Valence, where both her father and grandfather won three stars. Only



four other women currently have three stars—three in Italy and one in Spain.

- **Upholding a 2004 ruling, federal courts granted class-action lawsuits against Wal-Mart, claiming pay discrimination against women.** Claims from more than 1 million female United States employees could cost the world's largest retailer billions of dollars in damages. Although Wal-Mart claims it does not have a discriminatory policy against women, Judge Martin Jenkins claims there is sufficient evidence to support the case going to trial. ■

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Using 10 different case studies from various parts of the world, a study done by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) demonstrates **how community-based intervention aimed at stopping violence against women can yield significant results.** Rape, child marriage, genital mutilation and domestic violence are among the abuses studied. The cases have shown that public attitudes about violence against women can be changed with persistent advocacy and targeting of community leaders. This translates into a reduction of gender-based violence in these communities. For further details, see brochure *Ending Violence Against Women: Programming for Prevention, Protection and Care.* ■

WOMEN'S HEALTH

- The World Health Organization and UNAIDS said **circumcision should be added to current interventions recommended to reduce the spread of HIV.** Three African trials have yielded dramatic results showing a 48 to 60 per cent reduction in new HIV infections. The recommendation applies to countries where rates of heterosexual transmission are high. Although experts warned that the use of circumcision would not replace the need for other prevention methods such as condoms, they also said it could be used to save millions of lives, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The World Health Organization (WHO) and UNAIDS noted the need to scale up the practice of circumcision in areas with high rates of heterosexual infection and low rates of male circumcision, but warned that it constituted an additional intervention and not substitute programmes for HIV testing or prevention treatments. Training and monitoring are essential to ensure that circumcision is being done by appropriate health professionals in a sanitary environment and with proper equipment. Kevin De Cock, Director of HIV/AIDS at WHO, said the recommendation represents a significant step forward in HIV prevention.
- Cost-effectiveness, delivery and education stand in the way of nations making the cervical cancer vaccine widely available. The **vaccine for the human papillomavirus (HPV)**, which causes 70 per cent of all cervical cancers and kills more than 250,000 women each year, has been approved by 49 nations, with more expected to join this year. WHO underlined the importance of this vaccine, but warned that although it can dramatically reduce contraction of cervical cancer among young women, the vaccine will not eradicate the disease. Howard Zucker, WHO Assistant Director-General for Health Technology and Pharmaceuticals, noted that **the vaccine would be mostly effective in developing countries and that making it available to the developing world could save several thousand lives.**
- On 15 May, **WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan opened the 60th World Health Assembly with a call for global health leaders to build a health legacy for women.** Dr. Chan informed the assembly that she identified the health of women and the people of Africa as indicators of the organization's overall performance. **She stressed that improving the health of women is crucial in the health agendas because of women's role as caregivers, their reproductive role, and most importantly their role in lifting households and communities out of poverty.** She also stressed that Africa bears an overwhelming burden of disease and must not be left behind by development.
- On 17 May, **results by London researchers revealed that a new drug may be able to be used as a substitute for chemotherapy for women with breast cancer.** A drug class, LHRH agonists, suppresses ovarian function. Many types of breast cancer are sensitive to hormone production, including estrogen. Treatment works by preventing the luteinizing hormone from stimulating the release of more estrogen. Although additional tests and research are currently under way, LHRH agonists are found to be effective where a tumour is proven to be sensitive to estrogen.
- On 12 June, **UNFPA started a campaign to lead a worldwide effort to resolve the problem of obstetric fistula in the Sudan.** There have been around 5,000 cases each year of obstetric fistula in the country—a severe medical condition in which a fistula (hole) develops between either the rectum and vagina or between the bladder and vagina after severe or failed childbirth, when

immediate medical care and attention are unavailable. This medical problem occurs mostly among impoverished women and girls who develop complications during childbirth. Obstetric fistula often results in incontinence, severe infections, ulcerations of the vaginal tract and paralysis due to nerve damage. If not treated, kidney disease or kidney failure can occur which can lead to death. The major side effects are urinal and fecal leaking since women suffering from this disease do not want to leak, thus limiting themselves to take water, which eventually leads to dehydration. **UNFPA's goal is to end fistula by 2015.** The objective of this campaign is to train medical practitioners in the area of obstetrics on the prevention, treatment and post-surgical care of obstetric fistula. UNFPA will provide free surgery for women who already have fistulas. According to Saira Stewart, UNFPA Media Officer, emotional, economic and social support will be given to these female patients. Furthermore, Ms. Stewart stated that "Ending fistula worldwide will demand political will, additional resources, and strengthened collaboration between governments, community groups, NGOs and health professionals." ■

RECOMMENDED READING

Off-Ramps and On-Ramps: Keeping Talented Women on the Road to Success

by Sylvia Ann Hewlett and Carolyn Buck Luce

The book seeks to answer the question of "Why is it that after decades of creating opportunities for women and proactively nurturing diversity, companies are still struggling with the challenge of retaining and advancing women?" Through surveying 34 of the world's leading companies, the authors wrote this book to be an advocacy tool and practical guide in which to make suggestions for employers on how to help themselves by advancing women in their workforce. ■

From Patriarchy to Empowerment: Women's Participation, Movements and Rights in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia

The book offers 20 studies on women's empowerment in countries of the Middle East, North Africa and South Asia, where women's rights have been restrained. The collection reveals the economic and cultural changes occurring in these areas because of the development of women's movements, women's demands for participation in the economic and political sectors, as well as the opportunities brought by globalization. Chapters of the book reflect several aspects of women's lives. Valentine M. Moghadam, editor of the book, is a professor of sociology and women's studies and director of the women's studies programme at Purdue University. ■





WEBSITES

www.wunrn.com/news/2007/05_07/05_21_07/052807_pwescr.pdf

This discussion paper explores the relation of gender equality and human dignity. The Programme on Women's Economic, Social and Cultural Rights asks for your responses to the following questions:

- What is dignity to you?
- How can we move forward to make the right to dignity real?
- Would you like to share any thoughts, comments, suggestions and experiences regarding any idea raised in this paper?

Please send your comments to:

pdarooka@pwescr.org

http://www.uneca.org/eca_programmes/acgd/default.htm

The site of the Economic Commission for Africa's (ECA) Gender and Social Development Programme (African Centre for Gender and Social Development) provides news on the different events—conferences, meetings, workshops—as well as projects concerning gender equality in Africa, the challenges of African women, and their participation to fight for their rights.

<http://www.unescap.org/esid/gad/index.asp>

The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's (ESCAP) Gender and Development Section informs readers of the events, resources, publications and statistics concerning “gender equality and gender mainstreaming, women's rights as human rights, addressing violence against women, and the economic, social and political empowerment of women”.

<http://www.eclac.cl/mujer/>

The web page of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean's (ECLAC) Women and Development Division provides the statistics, regional conferences, projects, publications, seminars and meetings regarding women's issues in the region and in the world.

<http://www.escwa.un.org/divisions/ecw.asp?division=ecw>

The Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia's (ESCWA) Centre for Women web page contains news and publications on women's empowerment and gender. ■

INFO

You can find a monthly list of senior vacancy announcements (P-5 and above) at
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/>

You can read Network online at
<http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/Network>

To receive hard copies of Network, please send an e-mail request to network-newsletter@un.org

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