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## ONE) - EU COMMISSIONER PESSIMISTIC ABOUT DOHA TRADE TALKS

There is a big gap between the emerging countries and what developed countries in Europe and elsewhere would like them to do. EU trade commissioner Karel De Gucht has hinted that the long-running Doha trade talks could be on the brink of collapse.

The Doha round was launched in 2001 to boost the world economy and to stimulate growth and wealth in developing countries through trade.

But the talks stalled in 2008 over disagreements over agriculture imports

Addressing the European business summit in Brussels on Thursday, the Belgian official appeared pessimistic about the prospect for a breakthrough in the protracted negotiations.

Although he did not name names, he also questioned the commitment of some of the parties involved in the talks to find a successful resolution.

He told a side meeting at the summit that the chances of success of an EU proposal to revive the Doha round of world trade talks should be known in the next few days.

While De Gucht said that the gaps that needed to be bridged at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) were "still enormous", success was possible with "political will".

He said that countries locked in the trade talks do not want the so-called Doha round to fail but may not have the political will to agree on how to cut industrial tariffs.

Speaking on the second day of the summit, he warned that "stumbling blocks" still had to be overcome for the talks to end in a success.

He said, "The big stumbling block at the present time, and I emphasise that because another one could come along later, is in reaching agreement on industrial products and electronics.

"At present, there is a big gap between the emerging countries and what developed countries in Europe and elsewhere would like them to do.

"There is also an equally big gap between the US and China."

He added, "There is also an apparent reluctance by some to even engage in negotiations. The EU has proposed a compromise – a way out of the current impasse – which I see as being the basis for negotiations."

The commissioner, a keynote speaker at a special session on the Doha trade talks, said he was "not optimistic" for the prospects of a successful outcome.

He said, "If our compromise proves not to be the starting point for negotiations then, really, I do not see much future for the Doha round and that would be a great pity."

"We will continue to work for a Doha deal and an agreement on 'modalities' plus by this summer. We are seeking to turn the political engagement of the G20 summit in Seoul into genuine progress. What we need is simple: to build on the results in 2008 which means that all parties will now have to engage in genuine give and take."

He added, "We will be working hard to conclude on-going negotiations, particularly those most advanced at this stage."

Last month, WTO Director-General Pascal Lamy warned that an "unbridgeable" gap in the negotiations on manufactured goods could doom the 10-year-old trade round, triggering a last ditch plan by the EU to restart the stalled talks.

Lamy told a business audience in Oslo, "What members have told me so far is that nobody wants the death of Doha."

The Doha round is expected to figure prominently on the agenda of a summit of the G8 group of leading economies in Deauville, France, on 26-27 May.

## TWO) – EU FACING €15BN SHORTFALL IN AID COMMITMENTS

A new report says the EU is "dramatically off-track" in meeting its development aid goals.

The report, published on Thursday, says that in 2010 only nine countries met their aid targets.

It says there is a €15bn shortfall against pledges made by member states, three quarters of which is accounted for by just three countries: Germany, Spain and Italy.

The nine countries which have met their targets are Belgium, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Sweden and the UK.

The report, by Concord, the confederation of relief and development NGOs, also says the way aid is used is "increasingly" being dictated by domestic political agendas.

Presenting the document at a news conference on Thursday, Nick Roseveare, director of Bond, the UK-based development NGO, "This is not just another report and another set of data.

"It shows that the EU is dramatically off-track in meeting its international aid commitments."

He accepted that member states were currently implementing "painful" austerity measures and that some might expect them to struggle to meet their aid commitments.

"I do not accept that. It is not impossible to meet their targets. It is eminently achievable," he insisted.

The report, called AidWatch, said that in 2010, the EU spent €54.82bn on aid, falling short of its commitment by nearly €15bn.

The EU is the world's biggest aid donor but in 2010, only nine countries' met their EU aid targets.

It says that member states are becoming increasingly "inward-looking" and "eager" to promote aid policies which "prioritise" domestic policy aims.

"In addition to weakening their ambitions on aid levels, they are linking their aid more closely to EU security, migration and commercial interests," it says.

While the OECD categorises 48 countries as "fragile", more than 30 per cent of all global development aid channelled to such states since 2002 has gone to just three: Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

High levels of poverty in Afghanistan "cannot fully explain the EU's interest in engaging in the country", it says.

The report comes ahead of a summit in South Korea where member states will review the contribution of the international commitments made towards improving aid effectiveness.

Roseveare said, "Democratic ownership and gender equality are the building blocks of effective development policy.

"The EU has the opportunity to restore its credibility as an aid partner by placing these values at the core of its future aid efforts."

Concord is recommending that 15 per cent of the commission's country allocations be earmarked for civil society in the next EU budget.

### THREE) – OBAMA TO OFFER \$ 1BILLION TO EGYPT

President Barack Obama will unveil an economic aid program for Egypt and Tunisia on Thursday as part of a broad effort to support democratic reform in the Middle East and North Africa, U.S. officials said. Senior advisers to Obama, previewing parts of his speech, said on Wednesday the United States would offer debt relief totaling roughly \$1 billion "over a few years" to Egypt through a debt swap mechanism that would invest the money to boost youth employment and support entrepreneurs. Washington would also loan or guarantee loans up to a total of \$1 billion through the Overseas Private Investment Corp (OPIC) for Egypt to finance infrastructure development and boost jobs, the officials told reporters on a conference call. Several billion dollars in additional financing would come from multilateral development banks as well. (Reuters)

### FOUR) - IMMIGRATION IS PART OF THE SOLUTION TO AGEING CRISIS, SAY EXPERTS

Rich nations need migrant workers to provide and care for their rapidly ageing populations, experts said this week, challenging a wave of hostility towards new arrivals driven by the impact of the economic downturn. Immigration was a recurring theme of a two-day conference at London's [Chatham House](#) on managing greying economies ("[Transforming ageing economies](#)") , with speakers from the United States, Europe and Japan all in favour, despite the social tensions it can cause. In Europe, for one, antipathy towards foreign workers and asylum seekers has grown in the last few years because of their perceived pressure on scarce jobs and public services. An influx of immigrants from north Africa this year triggered by upheavals in the region has added to the tension and prompted plans to temporarily restore border controls, eliminated between most EU states under the Schengen treaty. **IMMIGRANTS ARE NET CONTRIBUTORS TO PUBLIC FINANCES** The experts said turning away young migrants would be short-sighted as their taxes support an increasing number of pensioners in developed countries who are living longer. "You take young migrants who were educated abroad and they are generally net contributors to public finances," said Philippe Legrain, a senior policy analyst at the European Union's executive arm. Fertility rates in the European Union remain too low to secure future pensions for all EU citizens, a European Commission demographics report showed last month. Such trends, combined with record budget deficits, have already forced governments across Europe to raise retirement ages despite widespread protests, and many countries, including the United States, are eyeing pension reforms. Without such reforms, by 2060 the number of people in work for every retired person in the EU is expected to drop from the current level of four to just two, a 2010 report by the European

Commission found. "(A) priority is attracting more migrant workers to improve the dependency ratio, help provide social services and boost economic growth," Legrain told the conference. Other speakers echoed that view, although some observers impact on economic growth was negligible. The arrival of migrants from 10 eastern European countries which joined the EU in 2004 and 2007 has boosted Britain's output by only 0.95 percent, the National Institute of Economic and Social Research, a think-tank, estimated earlier this month. **DOES YOUR COUNTRY NEED THEM?** But Legrain, the author of "[Immigrants: Your Country Needs Them](#)", said demand for migrants would grow because many of them work in health and social care. "The fastest-growing area of job growth in Europe is not in high tech but in care for the elderly," he said. Laszlo Andor, a member of the European Commission, said migrants from outside the EU accounted for the bulk of population growth in the bloc. "Migration remains an important source to rejuvenate the age profile of the European work force and can help bridge anticipated overall labour shortages in the long run," he said. The European Union was expected to lack between 384,000 and 700,000 IT workers by 2015 and between 1 million and 2 million health professionals by 2020. "It is highly unlikely that all these resources would be found within the union," Andor said. Nicholas Eberstadt, a political economy researcher at the American Enterprise Institute, noted immigration brought with it difficulties, such as problems integrating into host societies. "Immigration can be part of the solution but I think a rather limited part of the solution," he told the conference. Legrain noted that migrants' contribution might be limited at first but said it grew over time, citing the examples of Google, EBay, Tesco, EasyJet and Marks and Spencer which were all founded by immigrants or their children. Referring to the co-founder of Google, he asked: "How many Sergey Brins does Europe turn away and at what cost?" (Reuters)

#### **FIVE) – ILLEGAL LOGGING SPREADING IN MADAGASCAR**

The transitional authorities in Madagascar are struggling to overcome the problem of illegal logging of precious wood. In spite of an April 2010 decree that prohibits the logging, transporting, trading and export of precious woods, felling in the forests is still continuing.

In mid-April, the heads of the police force of Antalaha, a town on the northeastern coast of Madagascar - the area most affected by the phenomenon - seized 30 tonnes of rosewood being transported in two trucks. But this is far from the only place where trafficking in illegal timber is taking place on this island, which has the biggest rosewood reserves in the world. A few days earlier, three other trucks transporting 115 rosewood logs, were intercepted in Tolagnaro, in the southeast. Before the raid, more than 1,000 pieces of another kind of precious rosewood found in Malagasy forests were seized in the same region.

In Mahajanga in the northwest, more than 250 containers full of rosewood destined for export have been held at the port since December 2010. Most of this wood comes from Mampikony, an area situated about 250 kilometres southeast of Mahajanga, said Ndranto Razakamanarina, a forestry engineer and president of the Voahary Gasy alliance, an umbrella body of civil society organisations working for the protection of the environment.

"If no further exports have been officially recorded since the adoption of the decree, in 2009 [when the Malagasy political crisis started] and in the first quarter of 2010, more than 2,600 containers left Malagasy ports: illegal operations are continuing," said Razakamanarina.

"The logging does not only impact in the northeast, but is spread across the whole country, particularly in the southeast and northwest," he added. "The poachers continue their illegal activities, hoping to sell their products when timber sales are authorised again."

Bernard Rakotondrainibe, assistant director general of Madagascar National Parks, says the problem is under control in certain areas, due to the involvement of communities at the grassroots level, such as in Marojejy or Masoala, for example, forests in the east that are on UNESCO's World Heritage Danger List. "This is not the case in other regions," he explains.

#### ***Monitoring stretched thin***

At Antalaha, the police force complains of a lack of resources for surveillance. "For a district that covers more than 400 kilometres of forest, there are only 70 monitors," one police officer told IPS.

The officer also referred to the inadequate legal provisions adding to the difficulty of policing Madagascar's forests. "We could do better, considering the number of people holding onto the stocks of precious wood, but as the retention of stock is not prohibited in itself, we have to make do with tracking of those involved in transporting or trying to trade [proscribed wood]," he explains.

Another member of the Voahary Gasy alliance, a forester who spoke to IPS on condition of anonymity, points out without the right to take direct action against those illegally harvesting wood, citizens have to go in search

of a judicial authority when they encounter poachers. "In the meantime, the poachers have time to escape." "Furthermore, some forestry agents are afraid of reprisals and threats," says Razakamanarina. "[Since 2009] three forestry stations have been set on fire," namely, in Antalaha, Fenoarivo Atsinanana (in the north-east), and at Ambositra, in the south of the central highlands.

The loopholes in the law have also been exploited by timber operators in the forest region of Boeny, in the Mampikony district and the Mahajanga region, to get authorisation to recover 250 containers being held at the port.

"The ruling only prohibits the export of raw timber, whereas ours has been worked into a finished product," Liva Rakotojaobelina, president of the group of exporters of Boeny timber, insisted to the press.

But there's a kind of deadlock between timber operators and customs officials over the definition of the term "finished products". In terms of the four-sided planed pieces and the slats (horizontal pieces of wood) with pointed tips, the director-general of customs, Vola Dieudonné Razafindramiandra, reasserts that shipping them out is prohibited because these are not end-products, but timber that is still likely to be further worked.

"We need to wait to find out the real quantity of precious wood that we are holding, before deciding what we are going to do with it," says environmental minister General Herilanto Raveloharison, adding that as long as the decree remains in force, no trade, in whatever form, may take place.

Raveloharison has called on different local authorities to step up the struggle to prevent the trafficking of precious wood.

The justice minister, Christine Razanamahaso, met with public prosecutors from all jurisdictions of the country to give reinforced instructions to resolutely prosecute trafficking of rosewood.

"Now more than ever," says Razakamanarina, "the government must show its will to fight this phenomenon if it wants the support of the international community."

Since the beginning of the political crisis in 2009, Madagascar's foreign development partners have suspended most of the aid that was earmarked for the preservation of the environment.

## SIX) – KENYA - LEGAL LACUNA WHILE BIOTECHNOLOGY IS SNEAKED IN

Farming with genetically modified organisms (GMOs) is becoming more widespread in Kenya due the promotion of biotechnology through clever schemes, exacerbated by the lack of a legal framework for the commercialisation of these controversial products.

The Kilimo Salama (Safe Farming) insurance scheme not only compensates farmers for losses incurred due to prolonged drought but also for destruction by excessive rains, according to Rose Goslinga, insurance coordinator at the Syngenta Foundation for Sustainable Agriculture.

The Syngenta Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation attached to the Syngenta Company that researches and produces GM seeds. The foundation is involved in the "Safe Biotechnology Management" (SABIMA) project aimed at promoting GM technology among small-scale farmers in Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Kenya, Uganda and Malawi.

Goslinga explains the scheme in Kenya as follows: farmers that suffer crop losses are compensated through seed payouts. Initially, they purchase eight kg of seeds, which is the standardised measure for sowing one acre piece of land. The stockist issues the farmer with a code.

The farmer then sends the code to a fixed-line number through the mobile phone short messages service (SMS), which is then picked and registered at the UAP Insurance Company and the Syngenta Foundation databases.

Every crop season is monitored by a weather station fitted with solar technology to inform the insurance company of impending crop failure. Data is then processed to determine the compensation range, she says.

"If there has been crop failure, each farmer is informed through SMS about the payouts," says Goslinga. "The automated weather stations keep the costs down by avoiding the need for expensive field visits to farms to ascertain risk and loss. This makes the insurance feasible both for the farmer and the insurance company."

So far 12,000 Kenyan farmers have been enrolled in the scheme and, according to the Syngenta Foundation's executive director, Marco Ferroni, some 50,000 others are expected to join.

"This initiative has grown from a small pilot programme in 2009 to become the largest insurance programme in Africa and the first to use mobile phone technology to speed up access and payouts to rural farmers," says Ferroni.

The Kenya Biodiversity Coalition (KBioC) regards the scheme as part of seed-manufacturing multinational companies' renewed appetite to use Kenya as a testing ground for GMOs by offering seeds to farmers.

Wanjiru Kamau, KBioC spokesperson, acknowledges that it is a noble idea to offer insurance to farmers who continually face crop failure but fidgets when she hears Syngenta is one of the organisations behind it.

"We doubt if it is in the interest of Kenyans because Syngenta is one of the leading multinational companies that manufacture GM seeds," observes Kamau. "Pro-biotechnology groups resourced by seed-manufacturing multinationals are exerting a lot of pressure on Kenya's policymakers to commercialise GMOs."

GM technology has made inroads into agriculture in Kenya despite the legal framework not being in place yet. As an example, the Bt cotton variety has been tested but Roy Mugiira, acting chief executive of the National Biosafety Authority (NBA), says his agency cannot yet sanction its release because regulations on commercialisation of GMOs have not been finalised.

According to Mugiira, three sets of regulations on contained use, environmental protection and export and import transit have been drafted and have to be scrutinised further before approval.

But an investigation by KBioC found that a seed variety had been planted by farmers in the Rift Valley region despite confirmation that it contained a GM strain. This, according to KBioC, happened before President Mwai Kibaki had assented to the Biosafety Act in February 2009.

"We suspected that a lot of GM seed, particularly for maize, was being imported from South Africa either as contaminated maize or plain GMOs," recalls Kamau. "We went to the key maize-growing regions and did random sampling. We bought the seed and found it was laced with GM strains."

After submitting the evidence to the agency in charge of seed imports, the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Services (KEPHIS), it emerged that there was no certificate of clearance to prove that the seeds were not GMOs.

"KEPHIS went public and denied the allegations but we knew from our networks in South Africa that the agency had not demanded a certificate which would have shown that the import was indeed GM maize seeds," says Kamau.

"So even if Kenya has not commercialised GMOs, it is likely that farmers are planting GM seed without their knowledge," says Kamau.

While GMO proponents deny that GM crops may already be growing on hundreds of Kenya's small-scale farms, director of the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-Biotech Applications (ISAAA) in Nairobi, Dr. Margaret Karembu, predicts that 10 African countries will have adopted the technology before 2015. ISAAA promotes the use of GM by poor farmers.

## **SEVEN) – LIBYA SAYS IT HITS NATO WARSHIP SHELLING MISRATA**

Libya said on Tuesday its forces had hit a NATO warship while it was shelling areas in the western parts of the rebel-held Libyan city of Misrata. Libyan state television said "our forces fired (at warships) and hit one directly and severely". It gave no further details. It was not immediately possible to verify the report. (Reuters)

## **EIGHT) – LIBYA REBELS WANT TO ATTEND NEXT OPEC MEETING**

Les rebelles libyens ont annoncé mercredi leur volonté de représenter leur pays à la prochaine réunion de l'OPEP en juin et affirmé que le patron du pétrole libyen se trouvait à Vienne, sans pouvoir confirmer sa défection. "Nous voulons participer à la prochaine réunion de l'OPEP (le 8 juin à Vienne) et nous allons étudier le moyen légal de le faire", a déclaré à l'AFP le responsable de l'Information du Conseil national de transition (CNT), l'instance dirigeante de la rébellion, Mahmoud Chammam. "Nous ne savons pas encore si l'OPEP nous invitera", a ajouté M. Chammam dans une déclaration à l'AFP à Dubai. Il a indiqué que le patron du pétrole libyen Choukri Ghanem, qui a quitté la Libye, se trouvait à Vienne, sans pouvoir confirmer sa défection. "M. Ghanem se trouve à son domicile à Vienne selon nos informations, mais il n'est pas entré en contact avec le CNT", a-t-il dit. Il a ajouté que tout responsable du régime du colonel Mouammar Kadhafi faisant défection devait "annoncer publiquement son ralliement à la rébellion" pour en faire partie. Une source proche du gouvernement tunisien avait indiqué mardi à l'AFP que M. Ghanem, un cacique du régime du colonel Kadhafi, avait quitté la Libye et était entré en Tunisie le 14 mai par le poste frontalier de Ras Jedir. La source avait précisé que M. Ghanem, président de la compagnie nationale pétrolière NOC, se trouvait à Djerba, une île touristique dans le sud de la Tunisie. Mais il a quitté l'hôtel où il résidait, un des plus luxueux à Djerba, pour une destination inconnue, selon cet établissement. La Libye, membre de l'Organisation des pays producteurs de pétrole (Opep), exportait en temps normal 1,49 million de barils par jour, en majeure partie (85%) vers l'Europe, selon l'Agence internationale de l'énergie (AIE). Mais sa production a fortement chuté après le début de la révolte le 15 février. Les rebelles contrôlant l'Est de la Libye avaient indiqué début mai qu'ils n'envisageaient pas de reprendre les exportations de pétrole et que leur priorité pour le moment était de

protéger les installations pétrolières. Le département du Trésor américain a indiqué le 8 avril que les sanctions économiques de Washington contre le régime libyen avaient été étendues à cinq membres du régime, dont Choukri Ghanem, qui voient leurs éventuels avoirs aux Etats-Unis gelés. (AFP)

#### **NINE) – EXPERT SEES LIBYA STALEMATE DESPITE TWO MONTHS OF NATO BOMBARDMENTS**

Eric Denécé, directeur du [Centre français de recherche sur le renseignement](#) (CF2R), estime que l'opération sous commandement de l'Otan a réussi à empêcher un bain de sang en Libye, mais a abouti à un "blocage complet". Q . Quel bilan après deux mois de frappes aériennes en Libye ? R . "L'opération aérienne a permis qu'il n'y ai pas le bain de sang que toute le monde prédisait, ce qui était l'objectif initial de la zone d'interdiction aérienne. Mais si l'objectif non dit était d'éliminer Kadhafi et de faire gagner le CNT, là elle a totalement échoué. Il n'y a absolument aucun changement de terrain. Kadhafi est toujours au pouvoir, même si on a détruit une partie de son arsenal. Il s'est passé des choses essentiellement la première semaine et depuis en gros la mi-mai. Il y a eu plusieurs tentatives d'éliminer Kadhafi depuis la mort de son fils, mais pour l'instant on ne voit rien de vraiment concret". Q. Les insurgés du Conseil national de transition (CNT) sont-ils en mesure de s'imposer militairement ? R. "Le CNT, c'est une stratégie de front. Avec 20 à 25% de démocrates, un autre quart qui sont des islamistes, un quart de la monarchie senousis, elle-même assez proche d'un islam radical, et le quatrième quart d'anciens (partisans) de Kadhafi, mouillés jusqu'à la moelle dans ses affaires. Au moins cinq nations - Egypte, Etats-Unis, Grande-Bretagne, France, Italie - ont des conseillers militaires auprès des insurgés. Mais ils ont face à eux des individus absolument incompetents, même s'ils sont pleins d'enthousiasme. Dès lors que nous sommes entrés dans une logique de guerre civile, les insurgés arrivent à tenir leurs positions à Misrata ou Ajdabiya, mais ils sont incapables d'avancer. D'ailleurs, ils sont de plus en plus favorables à une intervention terrestre de l'Otan, quand ils ne la réclament pas ouvertement". Q. Des négociations en vue d'une solution politique peuvent-elles aboutir ? R. "Pour l'instant, personne n'a voulu discuter avec Kadhafi. Les gens du CNT se font un point d'honneur à refuser toute négociation avec lui et son entourage, ils mettent en préalable le fait que Kadhafi quitte le pouvoir (...). Nous sommes dans une situation de blocage complet. De toute façon, l'opération aérienne va devoir s'arrêter faute d'adversaires. Sur le terrain, on est à peu près arrivé à une ligne de partage qui correspond au partage géographique - à part Misrata (à l'est de Tripoli) qui est une épine dans le pied de Kadhafi. Mais quand on discute avec les gens de là-bas, personne ne veut de la partition. Du coup, on risque de voir une situation de fait se mettre en place. Est-ce qu'elle sera entérinée plus tard?" (AFP)

#### **TEN) – EU FISHING COMMISSIONER WANTS CRACKDOWN ON LIBYA TUNA TRADE**

Europe's fisheries chief called on Wednesday for close monitoring of the trade in bluefin tuna caught in Libyan waters, fearing illegal catches could push the endangered fish closer to extinction amid the chaos of war. Atlantic bluefin fetch more than \$100,000 each in markets such as Japan, but stocks have plunged by more than 80 percent since the 1970s due to overfishing, many scientists say. High-tech fishing vessels using echosounders are so efficient at locating and netting the fish when they go to spawn in the Mediterranean that a season's quota can be met in just 10 days. Further fishing can inflict long-term damage. EU fisheries chief Maria Damanaki said no international observers would be onboard the Libyan fleet to monitor and document their catch, after confusion over whether the North African country's fishing boats would sail at all this season. "On this basis, bluefin tuna caught by the Libyan fleet will be well on track to be deemed illegal," she said in a statement on Wednesday. "I therefore urged EU ministers to monitor the fishing activities of these vessels." Without observers, any fish caught by the Libyan-registered fleet would not be documented, and Damanaki said that without proper documentation, EU law prohibits their trade, landing, import, export and transshipment. Nearly half the fishermen in France's main bluefin fishing port, Sete, will be grounded this season because their boats are owned by firms with links to Muammar Gaddafi. Last November, the agency that governs Atlantic tuna fishing, ICCAT, set a 2011 quota of 12,900 tonnes, of which 5,756 tonnes can be caught by Europe's 408 tuna vessels and 902 tonnes by Libyan ships. But illegal fishing is widespread, creating a black market that conservationists estimate to be worth about \$400 million per year. (Reuters)

## ELEVEN) – NATO BECOMING MORE AGGRESSIVE IN LIBYA

NATO has adopted a more aggressive approach to air strikes in Libya, Western officials say, after two months of attacks on Muammar Gaddafi's government have failed to prompt the defiant leader to resign. U.S. and European officials told Reuters this week that the targeting by NATO air strikes against sites including military headquarters recently has become more "aggressive." A NATO airstrike on a house in Tripoli is believed to have killed Gaddafi's youngest son and three grandchildren, and there has been speculation about Gaddafi's whereabouts and health since then. A White House official said there had been no change in NATO tactics or targeting policy. "There has been no shift from the U.S. perspective," the official said on condition of anonymity. "Based on the situation on the ground, they're going to be targeting command and control facilities, which is part and parcel of our mandate to protect Libyan civilians," the official said. NATO, too, has insisted that, in line with the U.N. mandate that authorized the campaign, it is not targeting Gaddafi or other individuals but will go after command sites from which the government orders attacks against civilians. But another U.S. official indicated there was a conscious effort by NATO military planners to target air strikes closer to where Gaddafi is thought to have been taking shelter -- and the Obama administration is privately supporting the intensified strikes. The more aggressive targeting selection is being crafted and carried out on a day-to-day basis by NATO military commanders. One European official said that a possible explanation for the targeting of locations closer to Gaddafi is that NATO is running out of potential command and control targets and so is going deeper into its target list. **FRAGILE COALITION** But NATO risks fracturing its fragile coalition, which includes non-NATO states like Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, if it is seen as targeting Gaddafi too directly. That might not be an issue if Gaddafi is killed in a strike on military facilities. "Everybody agrees that it's not possible to have Gaddafi around any more," one NATO diplomat said on condition of anonymity. He said no major fissures in coalition unity had appeared so far. "As long as you can make an interpretation about this possible targeting within the context of the U.N. security council -targeting for instance Gaddafi's palace, if you have proof that it's part of the command-and-control system- you may agree with that." The political calculus in Washington, where President Barack Obama is eyeing his 2012 re-election bid and grappling with pressure to cut spending, may also change as time passes and the financial burden of a third war in a Muslim nation grows. The Libya mission has cost the United States about \$750 million so far, Defense Secretary Robert Gates said recently. (Reuters)

## TWELVE) – U.N. SEEKS LIBYA TRUCE TO GET SUPPLIES IN

The United Nations is negotiating with Libya's government, rebels and NATO to stop fighting for up to three days to allow food and medical supplies to reach civilians, its envoy said on Wednesday. Besides the proposed ceasefire, Panos Moutziz, U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Libya, said he would also seek security guarantees for U.N. aid workers to reach the rebel-held city of Misrata and the Western Mountains in talks with authorities in the Libyan capital on Friday. Misrata is a key battleground in the three-month-old war in which rebels fighting to topple Gaddafi have seized control of the oil-producing east of the country, aided by a NATO bombing campaign to enforce a U.N. mandate to protect civilians. The war is deadlocked on its main front but fighting flared again in the besieged port city in western Libya and seven people were killed, most of them rebel fighters, in clashes on Tuesday with government forces, a hospital doctor said. Moutziz said the pause could last one to three days. While not a formal ceasefire, it would help evacuate migrants, wounded and others wishing to leave areas riddled by fighting. (Reuters)

## THIRTEEN) – UP TO 27 MILLION PEOPLE TRAPPED IN SLAVERY WORLDWIDE, SAYS U.S. ENVOY

Up to 27 million people are modern-day slaves, and migrants fleeing violence in North Africa are among those most at risk of being exploited, a senior U.S. official said on Wednesday. Countries where migrants arrive should try to identify potential victims and protect them, rather than opting for immediate repatriation which often sends them back into the hands of human traffickers, U.S. Ambassador-at-Large Luis CdeBaca said. Tens of thousands of migrants are fleeing turmoil in North Africa, with many trying to reach Europe by boat, but the problem of slavery exists all over the world and India, Thailand and Malaysia are among the worst-affected countries. The European Union has urged African border authorities to bolster controls to prevent human smugglers taking advantage of the situation. But CdeBaca, who directs the [U.S. Department of State's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons](#), said it was more effective to fight slavery in the countries

where the victims are exploited. "You don't fight trafficking on the borders, because people don't yet know they are trafficking victims, it's only when they get to where they are going that they are enslaved," he said at a [conference organised by the U.S. embassy to the Vatican](#). "People should be keeping an eye on where these refugees end up, what kind of jobs they are being put into and how they are being treated," he said. He estimated between 12.5 and 27 million people are trapped in slavery around the world, ranging from children forced to work as domestic servants or in sweatshops to women coerced into prostitution. Speakers at the conference stressed the need for more cooperation between governments, companies and religious groups to prevent more people from falling victim to the slave trade. "The criminal organisations that prey on men, women and children are highly organised and well connected from one part of the world to the other," said Sister Estrella Castalone, who coordinates anti-trafficking group Talitha Kum. "It is only through an equally well organised network that links the countries of origin to those of transit and destination, that we can prevent the weakest and the most vulnerable from becoming a human commodity." The Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility said it was pressing businesses to scrutinise their supply chains and ensure their labour contracts included clear language to prevent human trafficking. It called for more public reporting on the measures firms are taking to fight slavery. (Reuters)

#### FOURTEEN) - **STUDY SEES HIGHEST WATER SHORTAGES RISK IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

Water shortages are worst in Africa and the Middle East, and the hardest hit are nations in the Gulf, including Bahrain, Qatar, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia, according to a study released Wednesday by risk analysis firm [Maplecroft](#). The U.K.-based company, which compared the amounts of water available in a country compared to the demands for it, also found that the booming economies of China and India were facing increasing shortages, and parts of Africa with adequate water like Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo and Kenya could face increasing problems as they lease out huge chunks of farmland to foreign nations. Maplecroft said China has a contract to grow 2.8 million hectares (1.98 million acres) of palm oil, while in the last year in Sudan, companies from South Korea purchased 700,000 hectares and the UAE 750,000 hectares. "One of the primary water users is agriculture, providing a direct link between water stress and food security," said Principal Environmental Analyst at Maplecroft, Kimberlee Myers. "When a country goes outside its borders to ensure food security, it creates a situation in which water is reallocated away from host countries," she said. "If local water supplies are being used for agriculture for food destined for foreign countries at the expense of the needs of local communities, then the governments could be open to accusations of negatively impacting on the right to water of their people. As water resources deplete in countries that currently experience low water stress, this will become increasingly problematic." Maplecroft's [Water Stress Index](#) pinpoints areas of water stress down to 10 square kilometers (3.86 square miles) worldwide by calculating the ratio of domestic, industrial and agricultural water consumption against renewable supplies of water from precipitation, rivers and groundwater. The index can be used by companies to identify risk of water interruptions to supply chains, operations and investments. According to the index of 188 countries and regions, the 15 worst effected - categorized as extreme risk - are all in the Middle East and Africa. For countries like Yemen and region of Western Sahara, the shortages are due mostly to their being located in semiarid regions where poverty is rampant and the populations are growing. For others, like the oil-rich Gulf states including the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, their rapid economic growth that has included a massive building boom exacerbated underlying shortages and increased the demand for water among growing populations, the study found. (See [more details](#)) (AP)

#### FIFTEEN) – **CONGO CALLS FOR GRADUAL WITHDRAWAL OF UN FORCE**

Congo is calling for the U.N. peacekeeping force in the central African nation to be gradually withdrawn "without delay," saying the security situation has been stabilized in nearly all parts of the country. Raymond Tshibanda, Congo's minister for international and regional cooperation, told the U.N. Security Council Wednesday that the withdrawal of the military force should take into account the recommendations of a U.N.-Congoese evaluation team. Last year, Congo's President Joseph Kabila called for the U.N. force to leave before September 2011. But the council only authorized a withdrawal of 2,000 troops, leaving a 19,000-strong force. The Security Council said Wednesday peace and security has improved in Congo but significant security challenges remain. (AP)

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