

Moving up the ranks

Global foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows rose 16 percent in 2011, surpassing the 2005–07 precrisis level, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development reports. The agency's *World Investment Report 2012* predicts that the growth rate of FDI slowed in 2012, however, with flows leveling off at about \$1.6 trillion.



Bayterek Tower, Astana, Kazakhstan.

The report's FDI attraction index, which measures the success of economies

in attracting FDI, features more developing and transition economies in the top 10 than in previous years. Newcomers in 2011 to the top ranks include Ireland and Mongolia. Resource-rich Chile, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, and the Republic of Congo also made the list.

Just shy of the top 10, a number of countries, including Ghana and Peru, exhibited sustained improvement in their ranking: both these countries moved up the list in each of the past six years.

Better educated, lower paid

Despite recent narrowing, the wage gap between men and women in Latin America prevails, according to a new study by the Inter-American Development Bank and the World Bank.

New Century, Old Disparities: Gender and Ethnic Earnings Gaps in Latin America and the Caribbean compares surveys



Students in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

of representative households in 18 Latin American and Caribbean countries. It finds that men earn 17 percent more than women of the same age and educational level. This wage gap has been decreasing in recent years, but at an unacceptably slow pace, the report says.

Though slightly better educated on average than men, women still dominate lower-paid occupations such as teaching, health care, and the service sector, the study says. According to the household surveys, women hold only 33 percent of the better-paid professional jobs in the region, which include those in the fields of architecture, law, and engineering. In these professions, the wage gap between men and women is significantly higher: 58 percent on average.

A change in household roles and stereotypes is essential to achieving gender equality in the labor market, the study concludes.

Smart growth

Global urbanization will have significant implications for biodiversity and ecosystems if current trends continue, according to a new assessment by the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity.

The *Cities and Biodiversity Outlook* report, which draws on contributions from more than 123 scientists worldwide, says that more than 60 percent of the land projected to be urban by 2030 has yet to be developed. This presents a major opportunity to improve global sustainability by promoting low-carbon, resource-efficient urban development that can reduce adverse effects on biodiversity and improve quality of life, the report says.

The world's total urban area is expected to triple between 2000 and 2030, with the urban population set to double to about 4.9 billion in the same period. This expansion will draw heavily on water and other natural resources and will consume prime agricultural land.

The new report highlights a wide range of successful initiatives at various levels of government both in developed and developing economies. In Bogotá, Colombia, for example, measures such as closing roads on weekends, improving the bus transit system, and creating bicycle paths resulted in increased physical activity among residents and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.



Events in 2013

January 15–17, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates
World Future Energy Summit

January 23–27, Davos Klosters, Switzerland
World Economic Forum Annual Meeting

March 14–18, Panama City, Panama
Inter-American Development Bank Annual Meeting

April 19–21, Washington, D.C.
Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund

May 2–5, New Delhi, India
Asian Development Bank Annual Meeting

May 10–11, Istanbul, Turkey
European Bank for Reconstruction and Development Annual Meeting

May 30–31, Marrakech, Morocco
African Development Bank Annual Meeting



Malnourished children in Zimbabwe line up for food.

One in eight is hungry

Nearly 870 million people, or one in eight, were suffering from chronic undernourishment in 2010–12, according to a United Nations (UN) report on hunger.

The *State of Food Insecurity in the World 2012*—jointly published by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and the World Food Program—finds that the number of hungry people worldwide declined by 132 million since 1990.

But hunger has risen in Africa and the Near East, and overall progress in reducing hunger has stalled since 2007, the report says.

With appropriate action, the Millennium Development Goal of halving the number of hungry people in the developing world by 2015 can still be achieved, the report notes.

2013: Year of water cooperation

The United Nations has designated 2013 the International Year of Water Cooperation.

The objective is to raise awareness of the potential for increased cooperation and of the challenges facing water management in light of the increase in demand for water access, allocation, and services. The United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) will lead the outreach efforts.

In its awareness campaign, UNESCO will highlight the history of successful water cooperation initiatives and identify key issues in water education, water diplomacy, transboundary water management, financing cooperation, national and international legal frameworks, and linkages with the Millennium Development Goals.



Anisakan Falls, Pyin u Lwin, Myanmar.

Addressing climate change in Afghanistan

The government of Afghanistan has launched a \$6 million climate change initiative, the first of its kind in the country's history.

This landmark effort—to be implemented by the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)—aims to help communities vulnerable to such effects of climate change as drought and build Afghan institutions' capacity to cope with climate change risk.

UNEP has identified Afghanistan as one of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, because it is both more exposed to and less able to grapple with the effects.

Many of the agricultural activities in Afghanistan depend on the

flow of rivers that originate in the Central Highlands area. Natural ecosystems throughout the country are very fragile, however, and the degrading effects of increasing human activity in many areas are worsened by current climatic variability, mainly frequent droughts and extreme-weather-induced floods and erosion.

The initiative includes plans for more efficient water management and use, community-based watershed management, improved terracing, agroforestry, climate-related research and early warning systems, improved food security, and rangeland management.

Agriculture provides a livelihood for more than 60 percent of the Afghan population.



Irrigated fields in Bamiyan province, Afghanistan.