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EUROZONE

The Greek deal that was inked last week had an immediate and positive effect on the debt markets. It also helped the euro gain some more ground on the dollar.
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HUMAN RIGHTS

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NE speaks with Professor Anne Glover, who was appointed as the EU's first chief scientific advisor in late 2011, and shares her passion for her mission with the citizens of Europe.
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RUSSIA

The project of the creation of the Eurasian Union does not depend on the outcome of the upcoming presidential elections in Russia to be held on 4 March, Russian experts say.
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There can be only one

TAP, Nabucco, SEEP battle for Azeri gas; ITGI hits back



Originally there were four options to carry Azeri gas to Europe: Tran-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP), Interconnector-Turkey-Greece Italy (ITGI), South-East Europe Pipeline (SEEP) and Nabucco. Now there are three. | EPA/ROBERT SCHLESINGER

EU pipeline projects competing in the so-called Southern Gas Corridor are battling to the end. Italy and Greece will build a project to import natural gas into the European Union with or without gas from Azerbaijan, Elio Ruggieri, CEO of IGI Posidon and head of international gas infrastructures for Edison, told New Europe on 22 February, two days after he was informed that the Interconnector Turkey-Greece-Italy (ITGI) project, a venture of Greece's DEPA and Italy's Edison, was excluded. "Both with Azeri gas or without Azeri gas, ITGI will play a key role," Ruggieri said.

On 20 February, the consortium that is developing the natural gas field Shah Deniz

located offshore Azerbaijan said it selected the Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project for the Italian pipeline option. Northern routes - Nabucco and the South-East Europe Pipeline (SEEP) - also remain in the game for now.

Asked if ITGI could become the southern branch of Russian-backed South Stream gas pipeline, Ruggieri said: "ITGI is a pipeline project and we are looking at all sources of gas; that's all I can say."

Following the latest developments in the Southern Gas Corridor pipeline competition, TAP Managing Director Kjell Tingland said in an e-mailed statement on 20 February that TAP firmly believes that it remains a

strong contender to win the bid to transport Shah Deniz II gas to Europe. "We are also confident that the TAP route to Italy offers the Shah Deniz consortium the most attractive market and the most advanced evacuation route. No further comment," he said.

Meanwhile, European Investment Bank (EIB) Vice President Pitarachos Sakellaris told New Europe on 23 February in Athens that the Southern Corridor is central in EU energy security. "There is the Southern gas corridor which is important also from that point of view. There is ITGI, there is TAP and there is the potential of Nabucco. All of these are big question marks," he said.

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ANNUAL REPORT

Time to stop war rape

I will name and shame the perpetrators of this crime



By Margot Wallström

Sexual violence in conflict is a serious, present-day crisis affecting millions of people around the world. Ending sexual violence as a tactic of war remains one of the greatest challenges to the protection of human rights. The UN Secretary-General's annual report this week is the first to contain a list of named and shamed for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence. The list is the Security Council's most recent tool in the fight against impunity and sends a strong signal to those who tolerate sexual violence that they do so in defiance of international law.

Some of the individual stories included in the report are nothing but heart wrenching. In Syria, testimonies were received from men who stated they had been abused sexually and had witnessed teenage boys being raped. And in Libya, women were abducted from their homes, from cars or from the streets and were raped in places unknown to them, while men were sodomized in prisons and in places of detention as a means to obtain intelligence.

It is positive and encouraging that the Security Council continues to be seized of the issue of sexual violence in conflict. I am, however, gravely alarmed about the incessant violations of human rights, including the high rate of conflict-related rape, across the globe. Of particular concern is the fact that many of the reported cases of sexual violence seem to have been perpetrated by national security forces – the very same people who have a mandate to protect their own citizens. Whereas the uniform should symbolize security, discipline and public service, in too many places it instead represents



Survivors of sexual violence receive treatment at the Hospital of Panzi, a non-profit health centre focusing on improving the quality of medical care for the population, reducing the maternal and infant death rate, and providing treatment for the victims of sexual violence, South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo, 6 September 2007. | UN Photo/Mark Fineman

rape, pillage and terror. Another concern is the use of sexual violence, or the threat thereof, as a tool of political repression in the context of elections and civil unrest.

We also know of examples of different forms of sexual violence being employed in detention centres and at border crossings in several conflict situations.

Conflict-related sexual violence is used by political and military leaders to achieve political, military and economic ends, destroying the very fabric of society. It is a silent, cheap and effective weapon with serious and long-lasting effects, affecting both the individual and the chances of building a sustainable peace. There is a lingering myth that rape is inevitable in times of war. But if sexual violence can be planned, it can be punished; if it can be commanded, it can be condemned.

Impunity remains a major concern in

many countries. That is why I have made fighting impunity for crimes of conflict-related sexual violence a priority. We have seen that this is starting to yield results, for example in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC): In less than a year, more than 250 trials of elements of national security forces were held with the assistance of the United Nations. This resulted in more than 150 individuals being sentenced for rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Much still remains to be done in the fight against rape as a tactic of war. With the help of the Security Council, I will continue to push for an end to impunity and ensure that perpetrators are brought to justice. In this fight, I count on the Security Council's willingness to be prepared to use all means available.

Margot Wallström is the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict

ECONOMY

ECB and banks having it their own way

The new governor of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi, nicknamed Super-Mario by commercial bankers probably because he is championing their interests, has introduced new ethics to the Eurozone's monetary affairs.

Now, he's going beyond that. On 24 February he warned "beleaguered Eurozone countries that there is no escape from tough austerity measures", speaking in an interview with Wall Street Journal Europe.

This is a direct threat and major economic policy line being recommended by Super Mario, that is to be followed by the governments of Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Ireland and probably Belgium, namely all the Eurozone countries that are at present running unsustainable fiscal deficits.

He fails to understand that European wages are very rigid downwards. By the same token, labour productivity in Eu-

ropean is much higher than in China and India. Low wage costs has never been the strong point of European exports of goods and services – German industrial workers and Greek sailors were and will continue to be very well paid, not forgetting that today's Eurozone is a net exporter of goods and services. So, it is a lie that the Eurozone is not competitive – the facts demonstrate the exact opposite.

When it comes to banks however the head of the ECB did not hesitate to distribute half a trillion euro to Eurozone's banks last December, and he is preparing a similar exercise for 29 February. The cost of this money bonanza was almost zero for the banks – the ECB charges them only 1% in interest, while they can easily lend it for anything around 11% and make a hefty gain of €50bn per year – what a wonderful way for the banks to recapitalise themselves at the expense of ordinary taxpayers.

FRIDE

AN INDEPENDENT
THINK-TANK FOR GLOBAL ACTION

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Lowering the bar in Yemen

By Ana Echagüe

US president Barack Obama has recently expressed his optimism about Yemen emerging as a model for how a peaceful transition in the Middle East can occur. But is a single candidate election brokered by outside powers more concerned about stability than reform and force-fed by the UN a model to be replicated? Is a one candidate, one party election something the international community should advocate?

Despite the undemocratic nature of the affair, voter turnout has been high in areas where it was actually possible to vote. But rather than an endorsement of the political agreement that the US and the EU were looking for, the vote should be read as a vote for the end of the Saleh era. Even if the arrangement, driven by the Gulf Cooperation Council with European and US endorsement, fell short of expectations Yemenis were keen enough to get rid of Saleh to give it the go ahead.

One could forgive the Yemenis for showing trepidation about the future. The removal of Saleh is unlikely to dismantle the structures of power and will not necessarily lead to significant changes. A military autocracy is likely to continue to oversee a system of tribal power sharing and patronage rife with corruption and nepotism. Saleh remains the chairman of the General People's Congress (GPC), his sons and nephew command branches of the military and the main forces in parliament are entwined in the tribal oligarchy. Meanwhile newly elected President Abdu Rabu Mansour Hadi has no independent power base, which will make it difficult if not impossible for him to replace Saleh's allies and relatives. The youth movement which has been camping out for the past year, the aggrieved southerners and the rebelling Houthis have yet to be offered a seat at the table. They were excluded from the agreement and their calls for a transitional council of technocrats were ignored, which could provide incentives for them to act as spoilers. They are already inflamed by an agreement that, illegally, grants immunity to the president and his close circle. There will be no prosecution, no freezing of stolen funds, no embargoes or exile for Saleh.

The plan foresees the newly-elected president forming a constitutional committee to prepare a new constitution to be put to referendum, but details are scarce and many important issues are still to be determined. Should the form of government be presidential or parliamentary? Does the parliamentary electoral system need to be changed to a proportional system? Should a women's quota be adopted? Technicalities ignored for this vote such as the voter registration update, required changes to the electoral law, constituency boundaries and electoral procedures will also have to be addressed. Most important will be the restructuring of the military.

A National Dialogue Conference is expected to address these sorts of issues. Hopefully those excluded will be able to participate and the conference will bring about many required changes. A broadly inclusive government where no one faction dominates and strong institutions are not subservient to powerful personalities might require further decentralisation as a post-Saleh state might have to be more federal in order to hold together. A flexible state and political system where power is distributed horizontally and vertically will be the most sustainable in the long run.

The odds are against those that want genuine change. The cards have been stacked in favour of nominal reform. But if the Yemenis are able to harness the power that has helped them get rid of Saleh, perhaps there is hope for the future. The international community must demand the same democratic rights and guarantees that are expected of other countries: transparency, accountability, a free press. Lessons from the Arab spring are still to be learnt in Yemen and stability continues to be prized over reform. Let's hope that despite international political appeasement, the end of Saleh's reign will spell actual change.

Ana Echagüe is senior researcher at FRIDE.