

October 31st, 2023



Future Trends

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Welcome to this week's Future Trends - the must-read weekly briefing covering the changing face of global politics, economics, development, and conflict.

Here's what you need to know this week:

- US strikes Iran-linked sites in Syria following attacks on American troops
- Slovakia forms coalition government with pro-Russia party
- German inflation at lowest since 2021 as economy struggles
- Sudanese armed forces, Rapid Support Forces resume peace talks
- Africa and Europe to join forces on sustainable space programmes
- Scientists discover world's oldest human-built structure, built by extinct species

SPECIAL EDITION: INTERNATIONAL CONFLICT

US strikes Iran-linked sites in Syria following attacks on American troops. [US forces conducted airstrikes on two facilities in eastern Syria](#) used by groups linked to Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, in response to a series of ongoing and mostly unsuccessful attacks against US personnel.

Putin oversees missile drills amid nuclear strike practice. The Russian President [oversaw a practice nuclear retaliatory strike](#) in the country's far

north. The drills took place shortly after the Russian Parliament revoked the ratification of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban treaty.

The UN calls for a humanitarian truce in Gaza. The UN General Assembly has [voted in favor of a resolution calling for an immediate humanitarian truce in Gaza](#). The nonbinding resolution was backed by 120 countries, while 45 abstained and 14 voted against.

POLITICS

Slovakia forms coalition government with pro-Russia party. Slovakia's president [appointed a new coalition government](#) led by populist Robert Fico. Fico belongs to the Smer-SD party, which won the recent parliamentary election. Prior to the election, he promised to end military aid for Ukraine.

European Commission President pushes aid deal with Egypt. In a letter to EU leaders, [EC President Ursula von der Leyen pledged greater support to Egypt](#). This came as an attempt to support the economies of northern African countries to halt migration flows to Europe.

Colombia agrees strategic partnership with China. President Gustavo Petro met his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping with [the two countries upgrading their relationship to a strategic partnership](#), a sign that Washington's principal ally in South America is orienting itself towards Beijing.

Poland must form new government fast to get EU funds. [Poland risks losing access to frozen European Union funds](#) if it drags out the process of forming a new government, opposition leader Donald Tusk said after the president opted not to appoint a new prime minister.

Liberia to hold presidential runoff election in November. Liberia's presidential election is [headed for run off on November 14](#) in which incumbent George Weah will face his main rival Joseph Boakai as one of the candidates.

CONFLICT

Sudanese armed forces, Rapid Support Forces resume peace talks. The US and Saudi Arabia have [brokered the mediation efforts](#) which have so far had limited success. The talks are taking place with representatives of the AU and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, led by Kenya.

UN: 114 million people displaced by war, violence worldwide. UNHCR announced this week that [more than 114 million people are currently forcibly displaced worldwide](#) due to war, persecution, violence and human rights violations.

Biden warns China after incidents involving Philippine ships. The US President said that [any attacks by Beijing on Philippine vessels in the South China Sea](#) would trigger a mutual defence pact, forcing the US to intervene. This comes after two separate collisions in the disputed waterway.

Drone blasts hit two Egyptian Red Sea towns. [Drones caused explosions that rocked two Egyptian towns on the Red Sea](#). Egypt is exposed to the conflict that blew up after Hamas' assault on Israel and the subsequent bombardment of the Gaza Strip.

Russia accuses West of seeking to expand Ukraine war to APAC. It said [NATO is 'covering up a build-up of forces in the Asia-Pacific region'](#), and that US forces will use information exchanges with Tokyo and Seoul on missile launches to deter Russia and China.

ECONOMICS

German inflation at lowest since 2021 as economy struggles. Inflation slowed more than expected in October, as Europe's biggest economy struggled to grow. [At 3%, price pressures are the weakest since June](#)

[2021](#). The ECB said that record interest-rate increases is starting to show its effects.

Australia's free trade deal with EU collapses. [Negotiations for a free trade agreement between the European Union and Australia have collapsed.](#) Both sides accused the other of 'being unwilling to compromise'.

Zambia closes in on milestone debt restructuring deal with bondholders. Zambia's finance ministry said it had reached an agreement, in principle, on debt restructuring terms with a creditor group holding its international bonds, [a milestone in a drawn-out process.](#)

World Bank grants South Africa \$1 billion loan for energy reform. The World Bank said it will [support South Africa's transition to using cleaner forms of energy](#) with a \$1 billion loan. The funding aims to help facilitate restructuring of the power sector.

German top court backs legislation speeding up LNG projects. The country's top administrative court [rejected another case challenging the nation's laws on liquefied natural gas](#), backing the government's package of measures to speed up construction of installations to secure energy supply.

DEVELOPMENT

Scientists discover world's oldest human-built structure, built by an extinct species. British and African archaeologists have [discovered evidence of the world's oldest human-built structure](#), and is considered to be at least twice as old as any other known human-made structure, in northern Zambia.

EU report: Roll-out rate of renewables rose 50% from 2021 to 2022. The report on progress of clean energy technologies revealed that although the EU continues to lead the way in research on clean energy, there is [an increasing reliance on imports for some of its technologies](#) that threatens progress.

Renewables switch could put fossil fuel peak in sight this decade. [Almost half of the world's electricity could come from emissions-free sources](#) such as wind, solar and nuclear by the end of the decade according to a report from the International Energy Agency.

Africa and Europe to join forces on sustainable space programmes. At the AU-EU Space Dialogue in Dakar, [the blocs discussed cooperation in space exploration](#), as Africa's growing space sector is becoming increasingly important for the sustainable economic development of the continent.

Microsoft to buy more clean jet fuel than most airlines. The tech giant is [purchasing sustainable fuel credits](#) to jumpstart production and fulfill its carbon-negative pledge. The new credit system is aimed at allowing the companies to claim the environmental benefits of investing in cleaner jet fuel.

SOCIAL

Skeletons discovered in an "incredibly rare" 5,000-year-old tomb in Scotland. These remains from the neolithic era form [one of the only twelve such discoveries made to date in Orkney](#). Alongside the 14 skeletons, pottery, stone tools and a pin carved from bone were found.

Google launches tool to predict floods. [Flood Hub](#) has already provided early evacuation warnings in Chile, India and Bangladesh. The tool [utilises thousands of detailed satellite images](#) of waterways that can build a topographical understanding of the river's course.

Icelandic women, including PM, strike over inequality. The strike was called to [protest gaps in pay and gender-based violence, as well as to highlight unpaid work that often falls on women](#). Schools, libraries and hospitals were closed or operated on limited hours as female staff stayed home.

Meta's Instagram linked to depression, anxiety, insomnia in children. Dozens of US states are suing Meta and its Instagram unit, accusing

them of [fueling a youth mental health](#) crisis by making addictive social media platforms.

World is far off track on pledges to end deforestation by 2030. Action taken has been too slow to meet pledges to end deforestation, with 66,000 square kilometres (25,000 square miles) destroyed in 2022. [The world is currently 21% off track to end deforestation by 2030.](#)

PEACEBUILDING

[The government of Peru has signed a deal to redirect more than \\$20 million it owes to the US to conservation areas in the Peruvian Amazon.](#) Funds from this debt-for-nature swap will protect areas covering roughly 10 percent of the country, by establishing parks and protected areas, as well as improving the livelihoods of communities that are [guardians](#) of large areas of Amazonian lands. [Conservation International](#) and other environmental organizations provided \$3 million to support the debt swap.

[A young conductor in Kentucky is using music to build community throughout the state.](#) In addition to bringing new ideas to the orchestra, he is trying to bridge differences with music and dance, according to [PBS](#). He has appeared in Louisville churches and at meetings of local NGO's, such as the Kentucky Refugees Ministry. He has started a rap school, a Latin American music festival, and an intro to instruments program for children. A program for young composers requires each one to develop a community-based project in addition to writing music. The conductor is now engaged in a two-season tour of the state, bringing the orchestra to some 50,000 people in 28 rural towns.

In some US cities, nonprofits [Growing Real Alternatives Everywhere](#) and [Black Voters Matter](#) are partnering with local judges and community organizations to support [weekend warrant clinics](#). The clinics help people who are subject to outstanding warrants for failing to appear for court dates to clear their records. Childcare and transportation are available for those who need them while a limited police presence and a promise not to arrest those who show up allays their fears. In one recent clinic in Michigan, the clinic helped more than 200 people and lifted 160 warrants, according to [PBS](#).

[Refugees International](#) and the [Center for Global Development](#) have issued a [research paper](#) advocating that National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) for climate change explicitly consider impacts on refugees and Internally Displaced People and contain concrete commitments to build their resilience. NAPs are the primary instrument through which the [United Nations](#)

[Framework Convention on Climate Change](#) supports adaptation to climate change in developing countries. This research is part of the Let Them Work initiative, which is funded by the [IKEA Foundation](#) and the [Conrad N. Hilton Foundation](#).