

December 14, 2021



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**Introducing another week of Future Trends** — *tracking current global news stories that provide insight into the future.*

## CONFLICT

**Gunmen torch bus, [kill 30 passengers](#) in Nigeria's Sokoto state.** Local bandits, have been targeting villagers and commuters travelling on highways and kidnapped hundreds of school children for ransom in the north of the country.

**Haiti's President was [probing officials linked to drug trade](#) when he was killed.** Haitian President Jovenel Moise was compiling a list of officials and businessmen linked to the drug trade before he was assassinated, he planned to give the names to the US government.

**The US House of Representatives passed a [\\$770 billion defense bill](#).** The new budget includes funds to support military projects in Ukraine, Europe, the Baltic, the Pacific, among other geopolitical defense initiatives. The act has been sent to the Senate to be discussed.

**[Russia urges NATO to rescind Ukraine offer](#) to join NATO.** Russia demands that NATO rescind a 2008 commitment to Ukraine and Georgia that they would one day become members and said the alliance should promise not to deploy weapons in countries bordering Russia.

**South Korea's President said South and North Korea, have agreed to [formally end the Korean war](#).** President Moon claims China and the US have approved the agreement. None of the other parties have confirmed Mr Moon's claims.

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## DEVELOPMENT

**Urban garden in Rio [feeds hundreds of families](#) in former ‘crackland’.** The Manguinhos neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro has been transformed into a community vegetable garden that now feeds some 800 families struggling with rampant food inflation.

**[Irrecoverable carbon stores](#) across the planet.** Researchers mapped the location and density of Earth’s irrecoverable carbon — carbon locked in ecosystems that is potentially vulnerable to release from human development.

**Researchers find the first warp bubble.** The discovery marks [a step toward making warp-capable spacecraft](#). This is a potential structure that would generate a negative vacuum energy density distribution very similar to what’s required for an Alcubierre space warp.

**Scientists use ostrich cells to make [glowing COVID-19 detection masks](#).** Japanese researchers have developed masks that use ostrich antibodies to detect Covid-19 by glowing under ultraviolet light. This could provide for low-cost testing of the virus at home.

**UN food agency announces [partial suspension of aid in Ethiopia](#).** The WFP have announced food distribution will stop in the towns of Kombolcha and Dessie as two storages were looted in northern Ethiopia.

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## ECONOMICS

**US [jobless claims fell to their lowest level in 52 years](#) as inflation hits 40 year high.** Jobless claims dropped to 184,000 in the first week of December, but US inflation is expected to rise to a 40 year high of 6.8% for November.

**China’s envoy says it will forego many developing country benefits at WTO.** China's ambassador to the WTO said that [Beijing would remain a developing country](#) at the global trade body but would forego many of the benefits, signalling an important shift to trading partners.

**Twenty Central Banks hold meetings as inflation forces split.** The [world’s top central banks are diverging](#), as some turn to tackling surging inflation while others keep stoking demand, a split that looks set to widen in 2022.

**[UAE cuts work week to 4.5 days](#) to improve work-life balance and competitiveness.** The weekend will start at midday on Friday and run until Sunday night. The changes mean the UAE will become the only Gulf state not to have a Friday-Saturday weekend, which is the case in other Muslim-majority countries.

**Africa's Biggest Economies.** With a total GDP of \$432.3 billion, [Nigeria has become the biggest economy on the African continent](#) over the last 30 years

**EU plan to boost gig economy workers.** A new EU plan to [improve conditions for gig economy workers](#) could mean millions more of them are classified as employees entitled to benefits.

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## POLITICS

**US wins appeal, Julian Assange can be tried again for extradition.** The win means Assange is a step closer to being extradited to the US to face charges of [conspiring to hack government computers and of violating espionage law](#).

**After Nicaragua flips, US sanctions seen pushing Central America towards China.** A [creeping barrage of US sanctions on top Central American officials has made China an attractive partner for governments](#) resisting Washington's push to tackle corruption and democratic backsliding.

**US imposes sweeping [human rights sanctions on China, Myanmar and North Korea](#).** The US has imposed extensive human rights-related sanctions on dozens of people and entities tied to China, Myanmar, North Korea and Bangladesh, and added Chinese artificial intelligence company SenseTime Group to an investment blacklist.

**Saudi crown prince on first visit to Qatar since Gulf row resolved.** Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler [Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman arrived in Doha](#) on his first visit since Riyadh and several Arab allies imposed an embargo on Qatar in mid-2017.

**Germany's Olaf [Scholz takes over from Merkel as chancellor](#).** His centre-left Social Democrats will govern alongside the Greens and the business-friendly Free Democrats.

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## SOCIAL

**Study finds almost [half of Argentinians living in poverty](#).** A new report by the Catholic University of Argentina finds that 43.8 percent of people living in Argentina were living below the poverty line between July and October 2021, with 8.8 percent considered destitute.

**US Emergency Room visits by teen girls for suicide increase by 51%, 4% for boys.** The United States surgeon general warned that [young people are facing "devastating" mental health effects as a result of the challenges experienced by their generation](#), including the pandemic.

**[Dozens of camels barred from Saudi beauty contest over Botox](#).** Saudi authorities have conducted their biggest-ever crackdown on camel beauty contestants that received Botox injections and other artificial touch-ups. Total prize money for the beauty contest is \$66M.

**[Thai construction tycoon jailed](#) as Supreme Court upholds wildlife poaching verdict.** Construction tycoon Premchai Karnasuta will serve more than three years in jail after losing his final appeal. He was found guilty of killing and eating a rare black panther.

**[Rohingya refugees sue Facebook](#) for \$150 billion over Myanmar violence.** Rohingya refugees are suing Meta Platforms Inc for \$150 billion over allegations that Facebook did not take action against anti-Rohingya hate speech that contributed to violence.

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## PEACEBUILDING

**The first five years of implementation of the Colombian Final Agreement have created an institutional infrastructure that lays a firm foundation for the ongoing peace process,** according to a [new special report](#) from the [Peace Accords Matrix \(PAM\)](#) at the University of Notre Dame's [Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies](#). The report indicates that 30 percent of the agreement's 578 provisions have been completed while levels of progress vary across the six points of the agreement and within the agreement's cross-cutting approaches focused on gender and ethnic inclusion.

**A number of NGO's have recently announced new funding programs designed to support local women's peacebuilding organizations.** Working with the [University of San Diego's Kroc Institute for Peace and Justice's Women Waging Peace Network](#), [Search for Common Ground](#) is initiating a [five-year \\$5 million program](#) to support women-led peace initiatives in Yemen, Uzbekistan, Central African Republic, Cameroon, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. [Saferworld](#), working with [Women's International League for Peace and Freedom](#) and [Women for Women International](#), is providing core and flexible funding to women's rights organizations in Yemen, South Sudan and Nigeria. [A recent paper touting reforms](#) designed to overcome structural barriers to financing women peacebuilders highlighted the positive models of [ICAN's Innovative Peace Fund](#), [MADRE's Trust-Based Grantmaking Model](#) and [Kvinna till Kvinna's](#) financial support practices prioritizing local ownership.

**A new long-term initiative, [Blue Lifelines for a Secure Sahel \(BLiSS\)](#), will focus on water management** and aims to "accelerate the safeguarding, restoration and sustainable use of the region's wetland ecosystems." The goal of the project is to make 10 million people more resilient and restore 20 million hectares of wetlands. The core partners are [Wetlands International](#), [CARE](#), [International Alert](#) and the [International Water Management Institute](#), which are building a wider alliance of regional government agencies, private sector and civil society organizations.

**[Biosphere 2](#), a center affiliated with the University of Arizona, aims to reshape agriculture for a warming world,** according to the [Washington Post](#). In the Southwest United States, they are using plants and farming practices that Native Americans have

long used and adapting new technologies to imitate those practices, for example growing vegetables under a canopy of solar panels rather than mesquite trees. Southern Arizona is a center of these efforts in part because of the presence of the [Tohono O'odham Nation](#) southwest of Tucson, which has grown traditional "desert" cultivars on the [San Xavier Cooperative Farm](#) since the 1970's.