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

CONFLICT

Afghan central bank says US plan for frozen funds an injustice. Afghanistan's central bank criticised [Washington's plan](#) to use half the bank's \$7 billion in frozen assets in the US for humanitarian aid and to potentially satisfy lawsuits over the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks.

ICJ orders Uganda to pay \$325m for DR Congo occupation. The International Court of Justice ruled Uganda had [violated international norms](#) as an occupying force between 1998 and 2003. The judges found that Uganda was responsible for the deaths of 10-15,000 people in the eastern Ituri region. DR Congo had demanded \$11bn.

Kazakh leader thanks Putin for help during January unrest. The Kazakh President thanked the Russian President for [helping end violent unrest](#) in the Central Asian nation last month, which both leaders blamed on international bandits and terrorists.

Guinea-Bissau president says convicted drug traffickers behind failed coup. The former navy admiral and his aides were arrested in 2013 in a [high-profile US drug sting](#) off the West African coast for conspiring to ship cocaine into the US.

Armed convoy moves into Tripoli to shore up interim Libyan PM. A [convoy of fighters](#) moved into Tripoli from the Libyan city of Misrata to shore up the interim prime minister amid a push by the parliament to oust him in favour of its d

Source: Reuters

DEVELOPMENT

Another major break-through on fusion generated power. Researchers at the Joint European Torus experiment in the UK managed to produce a record amount of heat

energy over a five-second period. The process replicates [the sun turning hydrogen into helium](#) with the by-product being energy.

Australia lists koalas as endangered species. [Koala populations](#) in New South Wales have fallen by 33% - 61% since 2001. Land clearing, bushfires, drought, disease and other threats have ravaged the once-thriving marsupial.

Geomagnetic storm wipes out 40 of 49 Starlink satellites. Space X sent 49 satellites into low earth orbit via a Falcon 9 rocket. 80% of the satellites were significantly impacted by a [geomagnetic storm](#).

Microbes are evolving to eat plastic. A handful of microbes have evolved the ability to eat certain plastics, breaking them down into their component molecules. These tiny organisms could soon play a [key role in reducing plastic waste](#) and building a greener economy.

EU announces €150 billion investment for Africa's infrastructure projects. The European Union president has announced that the Commission will invest over €150 billion for [infrastructure development projects in Africa](#).

ECONOMICS

Russia's inflation rate doubles in the last 12 months. The Bank of Russia has been among the most aggressive of emerging-market central banks in tightening [monetary policy](#) to rein in the price growth that's now running more than twice its 4% target.

US trade gap widens in 2021 to record \$859B. The [trade gap](#) surged 27% last year from \$676.7 billion in 2020. U.S. exports rose 18% to more than \$2.5 trillion, but imports rose more, climbing 21% to nearly \$3.4 trillion.

China resumes R&D push with record US\$441b outlay in 2021. Beijing has placed new breakthroughs in [original innovation](#) as a priority. Areas receiving the biggest support included space exploration, nuclear physics, quantum science and biological engineering.

Trade integration deepens in Asia and the Pacific amid pandemic. Trade among economies in Asia and the Pacific rose to the highest level in three decades. [Intraregional trade](#) made up 58.5% of the region's total trade in 2020, the highest share since 1990.

UK salaries rise at record pace amid rising inflation and worker shortage. Inflation and a shortage of workers pushed [UK starting salaries](#) up by their third-fastest pace on

record in January. Central bank Governor Andrew Bailey called on workers and companies to exercise restraint during pay negotiations to prevent inflation spiralling out of control.

POLITICS

Bosnian Serb region to form parallel legal body. Lawmakers in Bosnia's autonomous Serb Republic voted to form a separate body to choose judges and prosecutors, effectively pulling the region out of the state's top judicial institution as part of their leaders' [separatist agenda](#).

Marcos' son widens lead in Philippine presidential race. Ferdinand Marcos Jr., son of the late Philippine dictator, widened his lead in a [presidential preference survey](#). Marcos' running mate is Sara Duterte, the daughter of the current President.

Germany re-elects Steinmeier as president, favouring continuity. He was elected for a second term by a special assembly. His election is seen as a [symbol of consensus and continuity](#).

Australia foiled foreign election interference, says spy chief. The unnamed foreign government used a wealthy individual dubbed a [puppeteer](#) to fund candidates favourable to their country's aims.

President Ramaphosa says South Africa needs fundamental change to fight poverty, inequality. He promised [infrastructure programs](#), especially to improve the failing electricity grid and tackle corruption.

Source: Reuters

SOCIAL

Worldwide cancer drug sales are already way ahead of those of other drug classes. Oncology drugs reached \$176 billion in sales in 2021 and are expected to almost double to \$320.6 billion by 2026, approaching [22% of the health market in 2026](#).

Education under threat as Zimbabwe's government suspends teachers. Most schools will remain closed in Zimbabwe after the suspension of at least [135,000 public school teachers](#) for three months without pay.

The Horn of Africa is facing severe drought. After three dry seasons, UNICEF has predicted that as many as 20 million people in Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia will need water and food assistance in the next six months. The international community needs to act to prevent a [catastrophic loss of life and livelihoods](#).

New Zealand plays Barry Manilow to repel parliament protesters. In an attempt to disrupt [anti-vaccine protesters](#), police played songs and vaccination advertisements. The demonstrators responded by playing songs such as Twisted Sister's 'We're Not Gonna Take It'.

Rights group goes to court to get Nigeria to publish agreement with Twitter. The group has asked the High Court to force the government to publish an agreement with Twitter that led to the restoration of the social media company's services last month following a [six-month ban](#).

China is not granting passport renewals for non-essential travel. The National Immigration Administration said it will not be renewing [Chinese passports](#) for non-essential travel while the international COVID-19 epidemic situation is still severe, and cross border travel poses great security risks.

PEACEBUILDING

The [Environmental Law Institute's Blight Revitaliation Initiative for Green, Healthy Towns \(BRIGHT\) program](#) has released [The BRIGHT Guide](#) to help communities develop and execute projects in their own neighborhoods to “produce positive health, ecological, and economic outcomes.” An [ELI webinar](#) highlights a successful project in the former mining town of Whitesburg, Kentucky.

[Mercy Corps](#) and [Cisco](#) are partnering to develop digital solutions for delivering humanitarian and development aid “faster, better and to more people.” [In Nigeria](#), they have piloted technology platforms to distribute cash and vouchers electronically. They created digital identities for families receiving assistance, which improved the speed of distribution, reduced the potential of fraud, provided more flexibility in sourcing, and accorded more dignity to recipients. Cash and voucher assistance now makes up almost 18% of total international humanitarian assistance, according to Mercy Corps.

[Talking Drum Studio](#), one of the most popular radio production houses in Sierra Leone, is becoming an independent entity. Created by [Search for Common Ground](#) during the civil war that ended 20 years ago, Talking Drum Studio airs talk shows, dramas, and news programs that provide unbiased information, give a voice to everyone — including combatants and rebels, and inspires people to seek shared solutions to conflict.

As a part of the pitch event of the [UNLEASH Global Innovation Lab's Plus program](#), [Chemonics](#) awarded \$20,000 to [Wander Woman](#), a Bangladesh-based travel platform aiming to break the stigma for female travelers in South Asia. Wander Woman plans to develop an automated booking platform, hire female developers, and launch two new travel hubs. [Chemonics](#) is a lead partner in the [UNLEASH program](#), which offers a six-month incubator for early-stage social impact ventures that address the SDGs. This year, from August

2021 to 2022, 113 teams from around the globe are participating in the virtual program, which offers online modules on business modeling, facilitates peer-to-peer learning, and provides direct support from world-class experts on business topics.