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# 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:**

- NATO vows to respond if Finland-Estonia gas pipeline damage is deliberate
- The constraints facing Israel as they deal with the war in Gaza
- Egypt warned Israel days before Hamas struck
- Japan to add advanced electronic parts to critical supplies list
- Deforestation in Bolivia has jumped by 32% in a year
- NASA shows off the first asteroid samples delivered by its spacecraft

## **SPECIAL EDITION: UKRAINE**

**NATO vows to respond if Finland-Estonia gas pipeline damage is deliberate.** NATO has promised a “determined” response if [damage to an undersea gas pipeline](#) between Finland and Estonia proves deliberate. Investigators said traces of an “external, mechanical force” had been found.

**IOC suspends Russian Olympic Committee for incorporating sports councils in Ukraine.** The Russian Olympic Committee was [suspended by the IOC for breaching the Olympic Charter](#) for a land grab by incorporating sports councils in four regions in eastern Ukraine.

**US says North Korea sent Russia military equipment, Munitions.** The US has said North Korea [sent weapons to Russia](#) near Ukraine's border based on

satellite images. They 'condemned the action and suggested that it's for the purposes of military cooperation'.

## POLITICS

**The constraints facing Israel as they deal with the war in Gaza.** Israel is [grappling with challenges](#) that include fighting despite the presence of hostages, preventing a two-front war with Hezbollah and dwindling international support amid Palestinian suffering.

**Serbia seeks restart of Kosovo talks, new ballot in border area.** Serbia is ready to [return to European Union-brokered negotiations](#) with Kosovo and is urging the Serb minority in the Balkan neighbour to take part in local elections to help defuse tensions after a recent gun battle.

**Madagascar's presidential election postponed amid rising unrest.** Madagascar's top court has [ordered that presidential elections be postponed](#) by one week amid high political tensions after disputes over the regularity of the vote.

**Ecuador: Daniel Noboa wins presidential election.** The [center-right businessman](#) will become Ecuador's youngest-ever president at 35, defeating socialist Luisa Gonzalez in a run-off vote. Noboa has promised to 'restore peace' to violence-plagued Ecuador.

**Polish opposition declares win, ruling conservatives lose majority.** Voters [voted in even greater numbers](#) than when the nation ousted Communist authorities in 1989 with opposition leader Donald Tusk declared the 'beginning of a new era' for his country.

## CONFLICT

**Egypt warned Israel of the impending Hamas strike.** Egyptian officials [repeatedly cautioned Israel](#) about significant planning activity in Gaza. Israeli focus however remained on the West Bank, downplaying the Gaza threat, according to an Egyptian intelligence official.

**Estado Mayor Central (EMC), who were former FARC rebels, begin peace process in Colombia.** [Efforts to reach 'total peace'](#) with Petro's government will begin with the peace talks that are expected to start after an agreed cease-fire of at least 10 months.

**US Embassy in Kenya issues terror attack alert.** The US embassy in Kenya has [issued a terror warning to its citizens](#) in the country, warning them of a high risk of terrorism activities targeting locations frequented by foreigners and tourists in the capital, and elsewhere.

**Democratic Republic of Congo president eases restrictions in the east of DRC.** DRC's president said he will [gradually ease the state of military rule](#) in the conflict-riddled east and lift some restrictions imposed more than two years ago. The announcement comes two months ahead of the elections.

**South Korea targets firms building Taiwan navy submarines.** South Korean authorities cited the risk of Chinese economic retaliation when they [charged marine technology firm SI Innotec](#) last year with violating trade laws for its work on Taiwan's new military submarine program.

## ECONOMICS

### CHART: [Fossil fuel subsidies on the rise](#)

**Japan adds advanced electronic parts to critical supplies list.** Japan [will categorise advanced electronic components](#) as critical goods, receiving state support to shore up the supply chain during international emergencies. The government has so far approved plans for 57 items.

**Oil prices jump amid Israel, Gaza situation.** Prices [jumped on concerns](#) that the situation in Israel and Gaza could disrupt output from the Middle East.

Brent crude, the international benchmark, climbed by \$2.25 a barrel to \$86.83, while US prices also rose.

**Germany adds extra 80 million euros to IMF pot for poverty reduction.** Funds will be used for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust, which provides subsidies to enable zero-interest rate loans to the poorest countries. The IMF has been [urging member countries to fill a \\$1.2 billion gap](#) in the \$3 billion subsidy account.

**Burkina Faso signs agreement with Russia for nuclear power plant.** Burkina Faso's government announced that it signed an agreement with Russia for the [construction of a nuclear power plant](#) to support the energy needs of the populace, less than a quarter of which has access to electricity.

**Zambia and foreign creditors agree on debt restructuring deal.** Zambia has [agreed to a deal with its bilateral creditors](#) on restructuring \$6.3 billion in debt almost three years after the southern African country defaulted. The deal is yet to be signed.

## DEVELOPMENT

**Deforestation in Bolivia has jumped by 32% in a year.** A quarter of Chiquitanía has been deforested since 1985. [Tree clearance is only increasing](#) as the country moves towards more intensive agriculture.

**Colombia plans to spend \$4.25 billion to buy land for its poor farmers.** In a move aimed at increasing food output and addressing conflict that originally started over land rights, [150,000 families are expected to receive land.](#)

**Congressional commission says US must be ready for simultaneous wars against China and Russia.** Finding that the security environment has worsened, [the commission calls for modernising US nuclear](#) and conventional capabilities.

**Malawi begins program to make free internet widely available.** The program is [expected to yield benefits across many sectors](#) including education

and health. It is also expected to improve access for those who have not been able to afford it in the past.

**Outbreak of Diphtheria kills 600 in Nigeria.** Nigeria has an outbreak of an infectious disease which has [claimed more than 600 lives, primarily children](#). The West African nation confirmed the outbreak of diphtheria in December 2022 and has increased vaccination efforts.

## SOCIAL

**NASA shows off the first asteroid samples delivered by its spacecraft.** [Pieces of the asteroid named Bennu were collected](#) three years ago and brought to earth last month. NASA has said they show evidence of high levels of carbon and water, and 'will help scientists investigate the origins of life on our own planet'.

**Zimbabwe bans large gatherings as the threat of cholera outbreak grows.** With 100 suspected deaths, and nearly 5,000 possible cases of the water-borne disease, [authorities fear a repeat of the 2008 epidemic](#) where 4,000 people died.

**Wildlife photographer of the year.** Wildlife photographer Laurent Ballesta's winning images range from fighting goats to a hippo nursery. [The Grand Title Winner was of a golden horseshoe crab](#), beating 50,000 entries.

**Biggest-ever gaming deal cleared by Britain.** Microsoft's \$69 billion Activision Blizzard [deal was blocked in April by the Competition and Markets Authority \(CMA\)](#) which said it could give the U.S. computing giant a stranglehold over the nascent cloud gaming market. Microsoft agreed to sell streaming rights to win approval.

**AI tool help faster and more precise brain tumour diagnoses.** A Dutch study [unveiled AI-assisted surgery](#) decisions for brain tumor removal, with potential for tailoring treatments to specific tumor subtypes in the future.

## PEACEBUILDING

Chinese landscape architect So Yu has been promoting [“sponge cities”](#) with landscapes designed to absorb more water and reduce flooding. Almost all of China's medium and large cities are susceptible to floods, and Yu says 60% of them experience flooding every year. Elsewhere, policies like sponge cities are being implemented under different labels -- green infrastructure, low-impact development, sensitive urban design, and restoring wetlands. They all aim to create conditions that allow water to be absorbed into the earth, instead of flowing into channels, pipes or streets.

[Youth and Peace in Action](#) uses an online platform to provide [virtual and live peace education](#) to teachers and students. As part of the training, teams develop local projects. [One YPA team analyzed the food drive at their high school](#) and discovered that many donations had little nutritional value and low appeal for many local food pantry visitors. Team members interviewed hunger experts and local food bank employees and used that information to reimagine the school's food drive to focus on rice — one of the most requested items in local food pantries. The team collected more than 1,190 pounds of rice in the first year of #RiceforLife and 4,000 pounds the following year. The project has continued as an annual school event.

[The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office](#) has published a discussion paper on [Peace in the Humanitarian-Development-Peace Nexus: Good Practices and Recommendations](#). The document uses 10 case studies to explore the integration of peacebuilding, conflict prevention and human security into the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Each case study describes the activities carried out, good practices, and recommendations for the EU to strengthen peacebuilding efforts by partnering with, and supporting, civil society.

The [National Heritage Responders](#) is a volunteer network of about 100 US experts in cultural heritage conservation. They [help individuals and institutions figure out how to save important objects and buildings after disasters](#). So far in 2023, they have responded to around 70 calls, including holding workshops on disaster recovery for residents of Maui after last summer's wildfires. Their hotline is intended for the use of cultural institutions while individuals can contact the network via [email](#).