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

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

Here's what you need to know this week:

- Governments rally around Mexico after embassy raid in Ecuador
- UN body calls for Israel be held accountable for possible war crimes
- Global supply of equities shrinks at fastest pace in decades
- Majority of recent CO2 emissions linked to just 57 producers
- Mount Etna puffs “smoke rings” in rare display

POLITICS

Latin American governments rally around Mexico after embassy raid in Ecuador. Ecuador was criticized by Central & South American governments after it raided the Mexican embassy to arrest a controversial politician, [Jorge Glas](#), Ecuador's former vice president who had been granted asylum by Mexican authorities.

Pellegrini wins Slovak presidential election in boost for pro-Russian PM Fico. At stake is whether [Prime Minister Fico](#), who took power in October for the fourth time, will get an ally in the presidential palace or an opponent who could challenge his pro-Russian stance and plans to reform criminal law and the media.

Senegal swears in Africa's youngest elected leader as president. The 44-year-old previously little-known [Bassirou Diomaye Faye](#) completed a dramatic ascent from prison

to palace. Ousmane Sonko, the popular opposition figure who helped Faye to victory, was named the country's new prime minister.

India rejects China's renaming of 30 places in Himalayan border state. India said the [Chinese renaming of about 30 places in its northeastern Himalayan state](#) of Arunachal Pradesh was "senseless" and reaffirmed that the border province was an "integral" part of India.

Ethiopian ambassador ejected from Somalia. The Somali government ordered the closure of two consulates after [accusing Ethiopia of "bluntly interfering" in its affairs](#). It follows the signing of a maritime deal between Ethiopia and the semi-autonomous region of Somaliland that soured diplomatic relations.

CONFLICT

UN rights body demands Israel be held accountable for possible war crimes. A resolution adopted with 28 votes in favour, 13 abstained and 6 oppositions has been adopted by the UN Human Rights Council to see Israel be held accountable for possible [war crimes and crimes against humanity](#) in the Gaza strip, although Israel dismissed it as "distorted text".

New findings link Russian military to Havana Syndrome. The mysterious "[Havana syndrome](#)" ailment that has afflicted US diplomats and spies across the world may be linked to energy weapons wielded by members of the Russian military intelligence (GRU) unit known as 29155, tasked in sabotage, assassination, and subversion.

Top UN expert warns of extremely deteriorating situation in Haiti. A [criminal uprising](#) has displaced thousands of people and cut the Caribbean country's capital off from the world. The state is rapidly moving towards becoming "like Somalia in the worst of its times", UN's top expert on human rights in Haiti says.

Guatemala ex-general on trial accused of genocide. A former general accused of ordering the murder of more than 1,200 [indigenous Ixil Maya people](#) during Guatemala's civil war, has gone on trial. Benedicto Lucas Garcia, 91, has been indicted for genocide, crimes against humanity - including widespread rape - and forced disappearances.

Ukraine lowers its conscription age to 25 to replenish its diminishing troops. Ukraine lowered its draft-eligible age for men from 27 to 25, [reflecting the](#)

[strain](#) that more than two years of war with Russia has put on its military and the need to infuse its depleted ranks with new conscripts. This would result in an additional 50,000 recruits.

ECONOMICS

Global supply of equities shrinks at fastest pace in decades. Data shows that the [global universe of public equities has shrunk by a net \\$120bn](#) this year, exceeding the \$40bn taken out over all of last year - a phenomenon not seen since the data series began in 1999.

Natural disasters caused \$65 billion in losses for Asia Pac. Economic losses in the Asia Pacific region due to [natural disasters](#) soared to \$65 billion in 2023, mainly fuelled by floods in China and droughts in India, reported an insurance company. The report found that floods remained the costliest threat in Asia-Pacific for the fourth consecutive year.

Oil prices above \$90 for first time since October. These gains follow Ukrainian attacks on Russian refineries and news that Mexico is cancelling up to 436,000 barrels per day of crude exports. Rising tensions between Israel and Iran, the third-largest oil producer in OPEC, has further led to [price increases](#).

Zimbabwe unveils new currency amid turmoil. Authorities hope the new measure will halt a [currency crisis](#) underlining the country's economic troubles. The previous currency has been hit by depreciation, and in some instances rejection by the population, making the Zimbabwe dollar one of the world's worst performers.

Taiwan quake to hit some chip output, disrupt supply chain. Taiwan's biggest earthquake in at least 25 years is likely to tighten [supply of tech components](#) such as display panels and semiconductors, analysts said, as manufacturers in the global tech powerhouse restore operations at affected facilities.

DEVELOPMENT

Majority of recent CO2 emissions linked to just 57 producers. From 2016 to 2022, the 57 entities including nation-states, state-owned firms and investor-owned companies reportedly produced [80% of the world's CO2 emissions](#) from fossil fuels and cement production.

OpenAI debuts voice cloning tool, but deems it too risky to release. ChatGPT creator says [Voice Engine](#) can replicate a person's voice based on a 15-second audio sample. The concern to release it publicly is due to a possible misuse in a key election year.

US firm AT&T says data of 73 million customers leaked on 'dark web'. Personal information belonging to [millions of past and present AT&T customers](#) has been leaked online, including Social Security numbers, passcodes and contact details, the telco said. A dataset found on the "dark web" contained information for about 7.6 million current and 65.4 million former users.

Argentina court reopens probe into alleged crimes against humanity in Venezuela. The defendants in the case are President Maduro, Chavista number two Cabello, and all those identified as responsible for serious [human rights violations and crimes against humanity](#). The unidentified plaintiffs suffered "persecution and murder of their relatives, in a context that is public and has repercussions beyond territorial borders."

At least 241 people have died in El Salvador's prisons. They have died since the start of President Nayib Bukele's "[war on gangs](#)" two years ago, according to the organisation Humanitarian Legal Relief. Since 2022, El Salvador has arrested 80,000 people – more than 1% of the country's population – placing them into prison, often without evidence.

SOCIAL

Mount Etna puffs "smoke rings" in rare display. Italy's Mount Etna has been putting on a show by blowing [near-perfect circles into the Sicilian sky](#). A new crater opened on the summit of Europe's largest active volcano leading to an unusual display of the so-called 'smoke rings' made of gases and propelled by a circular vent in the volcano.

Botswana threatens to send 20,000 elephants to Germany. Angered by proposals in Berlin to [restrict the import of hunting trophies](#), President Masisi claimed that an explosion in the number of elephants roaming his country has produced a "plague" and declared that Botswana "would like to offer such a gift to Germany".

Korea's 'artificial sun' achieves record 48 seconds at 100 million degrees. Korea's "[artificial sun](#)" broke its own record during a plasma operation in which temperatures of

100m degrees Celsius were supported for 48 seconds. Nuclear fusion happens when two light atoms' nuclei merge to form a single heavier one, generating a huge release of energy.

Top artists want stop to AI music generation. Billie Eilish and Nicki Minaj are among 200 artists calling for the ["predatory" use of artificial intelligence in the music industry](#) to be stopped. In an open letter also signed by Katy Perry and the estate of Frank Sinatra, they warn AI "will set in motion a race to the bottom" if left unchecked.

First patient receives cell therapy that turns lymph node into tiny liver. LyGenesis is currently carrying out the trial in only one patient with end-stage liver disease. The Pittsburgh-based biotech company has a goal to grow a [functional second liver](#) within the patient's body.

PEACEBUILDING

[Garden for Wildlife](#), a for-profit subsidiary of the National Wildlife Federation, promotes the use of indigenous plants to sustain ecological balance. They categorize native plants by zipcode and offer them for sale online. For every plant sold on their website, they reserve one plant to be donated to a community garden or public space, such as a school, park, place of worship, or historically-marginalized community. In addition, they have launched a fundraising program designed for nonprofit organizations who want to raise funds while doing something for the environment.

A [recent UN report documented the extent of food waste](#) and highlighted some successful efforts to address the issue. Building on a cultural mindset of conservation and efficiency, Japan has reduced its food waste by 31 percent since 2000. A 2001 law requires businesses to measure their food waste, prompting more awareness of the problem. A [report from the Pacific Coast Food Waste Commitment](#) showed that grocery retailers on the West Coast of the US and Canada have made significant progress in reducing food waste by increasing the rates of unsold food being composted or donated. The UN report, which was first produced in 2021, estimated that more than 1 billion metric tons of food went to waste in 2022. Food waste is not limited to one part of the world or one segment of the food economy; households, restaurants, work and school cafeterias, farm to store logistics, and methane from landfills all contribute to the problem, according to [PBS](#), which cited [ReFED](#) and the UN report.

[Rotary clubs in Nigeria and Germany are partnering to reduce maternal and neonatal fatalities in Nigeria](#) by training health workers who conduct home visits to expectant and new mothers. The training topics include basic prenatal and postnatal

care as well as pregnancy complications and clinic referrals. Top participants at the trainings become trainers themselves, helping to expand the program. Its goal is to reduce maternal and neonatal mortality in target areas by 25 percent in three years. The initiative received a Programs of Scale grant from [The Rotary Foundation](#) and is sponsored by a Rotary District in Germany in partnership with four districts in Nigeria and the Rotary Action Group for Reproductive, Maternal, and Child Health. Nigeria has the highest rate of maternal fatalities in the world; in 2020, 82,000 pregnant women and new mothers died there, nearly four times the maternal fatalities in India, where the second-most deaths occurred.

[Cooperatives in Kenya are promoting inclusive economic growth](#) by providing equitable and accessible opportunities. The [Women in Sustainable Energy and Entrepreneurship](#) worker cooperative trains and certifies women in solar panel engineering and panel installation. In addition, it supports members by sourcing installation materials, marketing products and assigning teams of member engineers to complete installation projects. The [Vision 4 Housing cooperative](#) helps single and widowed women own land and build homes. Both cooperatives have received support from [Global Communities](#).