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Global News Dispatches: 5 Stories

Carbon Credits in Kenya: Climate Solution or Just More Hype?

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Note to Editors: This is a selection of news wire reports that have been edited to be relevant for audiences for the next two weeks. You are welcome to select and publish individual items or the whole stack.

Headlines in This News Package:

- Carbon Credits in Kenya: Climate Solution or Just More Hype?
- Malaysia Seeks International Arrest of U.S.-Singaporean Comedian
- Gabon Latest Country to Swap Debt to Promote Conservation
- Amazon Deforestation Decreases Under Lula
- Tourists Break \$200,000 Italian Statue

[NEWS ITEM TEXT]

Carbon Credits in Kenya: Climate Solution or Just More Hype?

[225 words]

[New Internationalist magazine](#) reported that Kenyan pastoralist groups like the Borana and Samburu have been converting their lands to “conservancies,” a form of protected status, since 2013 with the assistance of the [Northern Rangelands Trust \(NRT\)](#).

In addition to encouraging pastoralists toward conservancy land conversions, NRT also

promotes shifting livestock grazing practices from traditional ones to [rotational grazing](#). NRT argues that plants are able to regrow more effectively under the new system, allowing for more carbon to be kept from the atmosphere. This generates carbon credits, which are then sold to companies like Meta and Netflix for millions of dollars on the global carbon market. With at least some of the money passed on to the community, items like children’s school fees are being paid for.

But as the magazine’s report detailed, the program has [come under fire](#) from UK-based nonprofit Survival International for a number of reasons, including lack of informed consent by the pastoralist peoples, allegedly false claims about the amount of carbon saved, and opacity about where the money is going. The NRT program is currently under review by Verra, the standards-setting body for carbon trading.

And local critics are up in arms too. Abdullahi Gonjobe, chair of the Borana Council of Elders, [told](#) New Internationalist that preexisting systems of grazing were “beneficial” and that “wherever... [NRT goes], they divide the community.”

Malaysia Seeks International Arrest of U.S.-Singaporean Comedian

[120 words]

Some jokes are bad. Some are tasteless. But to Malaysia’s government and large numbers of its social media users, comedian [Jocelyn Chia’s jokes](#) in June about the Southeast Asian country were beyond the pale. In particular, Chia attempted to poke fun at the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in 2014 and denigrated Malaysia’s level of development.

Chia made the jokes at a comedy club in New York and is a U.S. citizen. Nonetheless, the Malaysian government has sought various means, including a so-called “[Red Notice](#)” from [INTERPOL](#), to arrest the comedian. A red notice is a request to foreign governments’ law enforcement agencies to arrest an individual. The comedian also faced intense backlash on social media from Malaysians.

Gabon Latest Country to Swap Debt to Promote Conservation

[151 words]

Gabon is seeking to replace \$450 million in higher-priced debt with lower-priced borrowing and use the savings for conservation, [reported Reuters](#). The country is the first in Africa to attempt a so-called “[debt-for-nature swap](#).” Gabon is home to one-third of the endangered leatherback turtles on Earth.

The African country's move follows [Ecuador's record-setting \\$1 billion-plus debt-for-nature swap in May](#). The South American country's existing \$1.6 billion bonds were bought up by Credit Suisse at a fraction of their face-value price. New bonds were then issued at approximately the price Credit Suisse paid, saving Ecuador over \$1 billion in debt-service payments over 17 years. The country's government, meanwhile, pledged to spend about \$18 million annually on conservation in the Galapagos Islands.

The swaps by Gabon and Ecuador, however, demonstrate the continued power of capital markets over governments of the Global South. In contrast, some activists have called for [outright debt cancellation](#).

Amazon Deforestation Decreases Under Lula

[147 words]

[CNN reported](#) that the change in leadership in Brazil from Jair Bolsonaro to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva has resulted in a 66 percent drop in deforestation in the Amazon in July 2023 compared to the same period a year ago. [Al Jazeera added](#) that this was the lowest amount of forest cleared in the Amazon in July since 2017.

[According to CNN](#), a Switzerland-sized area of tropical rainforest was lost globally in 2022. [Rainforests create about 20 percent of oxygen](#) in the atmosphere and host an enormous amount of biodiversity. As a result, preserving rainforests is crucial to efforts to combat global warming and protect the environment.

July was likely the [hottest month on record](#). [Much of the Mediterranean](#) struggled through a heat wave, and big parts of South America attempted to beat unusual winter heat ranging [above 100 degrees Fahrenheit](#) in at least one location.

Tourists Break \$200,000 Italian Statue

[111 words]

German tourists, allegedly including influencer Janis Danner, rented out a villa in Lombardy, Italy, and knocked over a 19th-century fountain statue worth \$200,000, said [Euronews](#).

“The boys did not respect the ban on entering the fountain and were filmed by video surveillance cameras while two of them embraced the statue, dropping it and destroying it, while four of their comrades shot videos with their cell phones,” said Bruno Golferini, the villa's manager.

The article reported that the incident was the latest act of tourist transgressions after the

Roman Colosseum was defaced. Earlier in 2023, [a Polish tourist climbed a Mayan temple](#), which is against the rules at Chichen Itza, Mexico.