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World faces turmoil: economist

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#### **Author**

Nicholson, Brendan

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## World faces turmoil: economist

By BRENDAN NICHOLSON

LOW-LYING countries like Bangladesh could disappear under rising oceans within 100 years, a Perth conference was told yesterday.

That was one of several chilling warnings delivered not by a radical "greenie" but by a speaker at the International Union of Local Authorities World Congress.

Mr Jeb Brugmann, an economist and field programs director of the Centre for Innovative Diplomacy in Massachusetts, said rises in ocean levels caused by the Greenhouse Effect could send a human flood of refugees through India.

"This could begin extremely volatile mass migrations in the Indian sub-continent," he said.

Such migrations would increase as people were forced to leave expanding areas of desert such as the Sahara and Central Asia and areas of extreme drought such as parts of South America.

### Councils urged to face threats

LOCAL governments had a crucial role to play at home and internationally if the world was to survive environmental threats, the congress was told.

Mr Dale Martin, a metropolitan councillor from Toronto, Canada, said national governments were saying all the right things about the Greenhouse Effect and the ozone layer but were doing little about it that mattered.

They alone could not handle the

Regions with dramatic temperature increases would lose their water supplies or find them dramatically reduced, Mr Brugmann said.

Crops already badly damaged by radiation because of the ozone layer's depletion would be hit by lack of water.

He said the US could be so bad-

scale of the impending global disaster.

"The world is already in the midst of a profound environmental crisis and the way they are dealing with it simply won't work," Mr Martin said.

"The kinds of change we will be facing over the next 60 or 70 years are unprecedented in the whole course of human history.

"We must elevate the environ-

ly hit within 60 or 70 years that it would cease to be a food exporter.

Mr Brugmann said global warming could only be stopped if the use of fossil fuels was cut in half by 2000.

The worst impact would be felt between the latitudes of 40 degrees north and south which meant major climatic changes over most of

ment past the status of an issue." Dealing with the crisis had to become an imperative and all other decisions faced by governments had to be considered less important.

"Our environmental resources must assume higher status than our financial resources in determining what we can and cannot do," Mr Martin said.

He said people did not yet feel the immediacy of what was a desperate situation.

the land in the southern hemisphere.

This warming would increase the number of storms and the wind speed of hurricanes would increase from 280 km/h to 350 km/h, making them twice as destructive.

Mr Brugmann said higher ocean temperatures would attract these

super hurricanes to areas that had never suffered them before.

It was imperative that the environment be protected if tens or even hundreds of millions of the world's poor were to survive.

He said that because of climatic conditions, the level of ozone depletion in the Southern Hemisphere was far more extreme than in the north.

That meant that the poorest areas would be hardest hit by increased levels of ultra-violet light from the sun.

Within decades that increased radiation would begin to reduce the productivity of the southern oceans and farmlands.

The rate of skin cancer would increase dramatically with an additional 80 million additional cases expected in the US alone over the next 60 or 80 years.

"Hundreds of millions of rural poor who spent long hours working beneath the sun are predicted to suffer widespread skin cancer, cataract and immune system maladies," Mr Brugmann said.