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## **'Terrorism is on the march' Ban tells global dialogue in Madrid, urging unified response to end scourge**

**28 October** - Despite the world's best efforts, "terrorism is on the march" and the violent ideas that fuel it are spreading, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today, telling delegations gathered for a global dialogue in Madrid that a unified, multi-dimensional and rights-based response is required to wipe out the scourge.

"Violent extremism poses a direct threat to international peace and security," Mr. Ban said at the Club de Madrid's 'Madrid+10: the Global Dialogue on Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism.'

"Extremist groups – such as Da'esh [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, or ISIL], Al Shabaab and Boko Haram – undermine universal values of dignity and the worth of the human person. They reject the call of the United Nations Charter to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours."

Noting that terrorism is a global threat, he said that he commended the lead Spain had taken against terrorism and violent extremism, its support for the victims of terrorism, and its Presidency of the UN Security Council this month.

"Spain has suffered terrorism from within its society, and attacks inspired from beyond its borders," he continued. "We will never forget the train bombings in Madrid on 11 March, 2004, that killed 191 people and wounded 1,800 more."



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses students after receiving a Medal of Honour from the Carlos III University of Madrid, Spain. UN Photo/Amanda Voisard

The Secretary-General referred to the Club de Madrid's establishment of the International Summit on Democracy, Terrorism and Security a year after the bombings, where political leaders and civil society developed the Madrid Agenda to confront terrorism through a global democratic framework.

Also at the summit, he said, the key elements of what would become the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy were announced by the then-Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan. The strategy was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006.

“Yet, despite all our efforts, terrorism is on the march,” he said. “The violent extremist ideas that fuel it are spreading, added that it “threatens to reverse important development progress.”

He also noted that violent extremists are responsible for “egregious human rights violations, including mass executions, mutilations, torture, rape, the selling of women and sexual slavery” and that their actions “have contributed to the highest number of refugees and displaced persons since the Second World War.”

The Secretary-General also said that international response to combat violent extremism should be “unified and multi-dimensional” and that “conflict prevention is one of the best tools for preventing violent extremism.”

He turned his remarks to the underlying causes of the phenomenon, noting that the young men – and also women – who are recruited are often “frustrated with the few avenues available to them to pursue productive lives and find their place in society, adding that many of them were “galvanized and then radicalized by what they see around them or on social media.”

“We must show them another way, a better way,” he said, noting the importance of upholding human rights and providing peaceful channels for the resolution of grievances, as well as highlighting the importance of good governance to stop the spread of terrorism in the long-term.

Mr. Ban said that he would be presenting his Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism in the months ahead, which will call for governments, society and the UN to address the drivers of violent extremism at global, regional, national and local levels. The plan, he said, will also put forward recommendations on how to support Member States, noting that one important priority will be youth engagement.

“Young people are the main targets for recruitment by violent extremist groups,” he said. “But they can be our best allies to promote understanding.”

He also mentioned other initiatives, such as engaging with religious leaders, as well as the United States-led countering violent extremism process that culminated in September with the Leaders' Summit convened by President Barack Obama on the margins of the General Assembly.

During his visit to Spain, the Secretary-General also received a Medal of Honour from the Carlos III University of Madrid, which he accepted, he said, on behalf of past and present UN staff members around the world.

## Security Council urges Burundian parties to pursue dialogue, 'spare their people and country further suffering'



Amb. Román Oyarzun Marchesi of Spain, President of the Security Council for October 2015. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

**28 October** - Renewing its call for all stakeholder Burundian stakeholders to engage in dialogue “and to spare their country and its people further suffering,” the United Nations Security Council today voiced its deep concerns about the growing insecurity, the continued rise in violence, and the persisting political impasse there.

In a statement issued by Council President for October, Román Oyarzun Marchesi of Spain, the 15-member body also expressed its deep concerns about an increase in human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, arbitrary arrests and illegal detentions.

Other concerns cited in the statement included the prevalence of impunity, the daily assassinations, the restricted freedom of expression, and the worsening of the humanitarian situation, as illustrated by the more than 200,000 Burundian citizens seeking refuge.

Further, the Council strongly condemned all human rights violations and acts of unlawful violence committed both by security forces, militias and other illegal armed groups. It expressed its determination to bring perpetrators of such acts to justice and welcomed the African Union’s decision to launch investigations into those cases.

Recalling the importance of respecting the nation’s Constitution as well as the Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement of August 2000, the Council urged all stakeholders to reject armed rebellion, and engage in dialogue. It also emphasized the importance of the mediation efforts led by Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni on behalf of the East African Community and as endorsed by the African Union, as well as the importance of urgently resuming that process.

The Council welcomed the decision of the Peace and Security Council of the African Union to increase the number of its human rights observers and military experts in Burundi, and noted the Union’s decision to impose sanctions against the stakeholders perpetuating violence and impeding the search for a solution.

## DPR Korea: UN rights expert 'deeply regrets' unchanged human rights situation



Special Rapporteur Marzuki Darusman. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**28 October** - The international community was strongly urged today by a UN rights expert to maintain effective and meaningful efforts to address the continued dire human rights situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

“This has been a year of intensified action, particularly in the follow up to the landmark Commission of Inquiry report on the human rights situation the DPRK, of which I was a member,” Marzuki Darusman, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the country, told reporters in New York, following a presentation to the Third Committee – the Organization’s main body dealing with social, humanitarian and cultural issues.

“The commission concluded that a number of long-standing and ongoing patterns of systematic and widespread violations in the DPRK met the high threshold required for crimes against humanity in international law,” he continued, noting that since his last appearance before the General Assembly, numerous efforts have been undertaken to follow up on the findings and recommendations by the independent commission and other UN bodies.

Mr. Darusman also informed the press that he visited the new headquarters in Seoul of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and had “a very fruitful discussion” with the team. He said they have started implementing their mandate, to strengthen monitoring capacity and documentation recording of the human rights situation in

the DPRK.

Meanwhile, the UN Human Rights Council also convened an historic first of its kind panel discussion on the human rights situation in the DPRK last September, including on the issue of international abductions and enforced disappearances and related matters.

“I express deep regret that the human rights situation in the DPRK remains the same, despite the grave concerns constantly reiterated by the international community in different fora,” the expert stressed.

“I continue to receive numbers of reports regarding the precarious challenges of daily life in the DPRK, severe discrimination based on the songbun [people classification] system, summary executions in total disregard of due process and other international human rights standards [...].”

He added that he also received reports about DPRK nationals who are sent abroad to work in many regions of the world, labouring under conditions that amount to a subjection to forced labour both by their own and the hosting governments.

“I further call on and urge the Government of the DPRK to immediately halt all the blatant human rights violations identified in my report to the General Assembly as well as in the report by the commission,” he insisted.

To that end, he said he firmly believes that the accountability track must be pursued urgently, in parallel with sustained efforts to seek engagement with the DPRK to ease the suffering of people. He further stated that he remains convinced that the Security Council should refer the situation in the DPRK to the International Criminal Court, as recommended by the commission of inquiry and subsequently encouraged by the General Assembly.

“I also regret that the DPRK have declined my repeated requests for meetings with delegates from the DPRK on the margin of the sessions of the Human Rights Council, lately extended again both in March and June 2015,” he expressed. “I also requested for a meeting this time in New York, but regrettably did not hear from the DPRK. I firmly believe in the practical value of straightforward dialogue and hope that the DPRK authorities will positively respond to my future requests to meet.”

He also requested the DPRK grant access to all UN human rights agencies, including the Working Group on Enforced and Involuntary Disappearance and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, to assist, assess and verify the implementation of such recommendations.

“I emphatically call upon the United Nations system as a whole to continue its efforts to address the grave human rights situation in the DPRK in a coordinated and unified manner, in line with the Secretary-General’s Human Rights Up Front strategy,” he underlined. “I also call upon Member States to continue ensuring that the Security Council hold regular briefings on the situation in the DPRK, to maintain its correlation with international security and constant visibility of the DPRK problem.”

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Darusman said he is encouraged by the recent union of separated families between the two the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea, and urged that necessary arrangements for further reunions on a larger scale and a regular basis be undertaken without delay.

Independent experts or special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

## Social protection systems should be more inclusive of persons with disabilities – UN rights expert



Photo: World Bank/Masaru Goto

**28 October** - States should make their social protection systems more inclusive for persons with disabilities, rather than pursuing models that often lock them into a cycle of dependence and poverty, a UN expert on the rights of persons with disabilities has said.

“Most countries base their social protection systems on a ‘medical approach’ to disability, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, told the UN General Assembly.

Under this model, Ms. Devandas Aguilar said that persons with disabilities are seen as incapable of studying, working or living independently in the society.

“Such an approach promotes a false sense of well-being and protection,” the expert warned. “Yes, persons with disabilities get services and benefits but often at the cost of their autonomy and independence. Such approach has without any doubt resulted in more poverty, segregation, stigmatization and exclusion.”

In addition, she highlighted that non-inclusive poverty reduction programmes implemented in the past decades also constitute “a missed opportunity,” which could have enabled persons with disabilities to get out of poverty.

In her report, the UN expert further argues that well-designed social protection systems are an essential tool to combat poverty and promote the independence, inclusion and participation of persons with disabilities in a sustainable manner.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the report provides concrete steps that States can take to ensure that their systems become more inclusive.

These include reviewing domestic legislation, ensuring access by persons with disabilities to general and disability-specific social protection without discrimination, and guaranteeing that benefits offered promote independence and social inclusion and cover disability-related costs.

Meanwhile, the Special Rapporteur also expressed her deep concern about the disproportionate effect of austerity measures on persons with disabilities.

“While adopting austerity measures, some countries make budget cuts that have a profound impact on the livelihood of persons with disabilities and their right to live independently in their community,” she noted, stressing that States should refrain from adopting measures that are deliberately regressive in the exercise of the right to social protection.

“Inclusive social protection is essential to achieve the new Sustainable Development Goals [SDGs],” Ms. Devandas Aguilar underlined, referring to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September by all UN Member States.

“The inclusion of persons with disabilities in social protection systems is not only a question of rights, but also a crucial step to move towards the proposed new SDGs: end poverty in all its forms everywhere; ensure healthy lives and promote well-being; ensure inclusive and equitable quality education; achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and reduce inequalities,” she concluded.

Independent experts or special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

## Tuberculosis deaths nearly halved since 1990, but 4,400 dying daily from disease – UN health agency



A child receiving Tuberculosis medicine in South Sudan under a programme supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and UNDP. Photo: UNDP South Sudan/Brian Sokol

**28 October** - The World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that the fight against tuberculosis (TB) is paying off, with this year's death rate nearly half of what it was in 1990, but 1.5 million still people died from the disease last year, with more than half occurring in China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan.

"Most of these deaths could have been prevented," according to WHO's Global Tuberculosis Report 2015, which was released today in Washington, D.C.

The report said to reduce TB's overall burden, detection and treatment gaps need to be closed, funding shortfalls filled and new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines developed.

On the positive side, effective diagnosis and treatment saved 43 million lives between 2000 and 2015, according to the report.

"The report shows that TB control has had a tremendous impact in terms of lives saved and patients cured," said WHO Director-General Margaret Chan. "These advances are heartening, but if the world is to end this epidemic, it needs to scale up services and, critically, invest in research."

Dr. Mario Raviglione, Director of WHO's Global TB Programme, said 'despite the gains, the progress made against TB is far from sufficient' with 4,400 people are dying from the disease every day, "which is unacceptable in an era when you can diagnose and cure nearly every person with TB."

In 2014, TB killed 890 000 men, 480 000 women and 140 000 children, according to the report.

"The disease ranks alongside HIV as a leading killer worldwide," it said.

The report went on to say that "this year's report describes higher global totals for new TB cases (9.6 million) than in previous years," reflecting increased and improved national data and in-depth studies rather than any increase in the spread of the disease.

And "more than half of the world's TB cases (54 per cent) occurred in China, India, Indonesia, Nigeria and Pakistan," it said. "Among new cases, an estimated 3.3 per cent have multidrug-resistant TB, a level that has remained unchanged in recent years."

Detection and treatment gaps are especially serious among people with multidrug-resistant TB MDR-TB, which remains a public health crisis, the report showed. The three countries with the largest numbers of cases are China, India and the Russian Federation.

The number of people living with HIV who were given TB preventive therapy was nearly 1 million in 2014, an increase of about 60 per cent compared with 2013. More than half (59 per cent) of these people were in South Africa.

"From 2016, the global goal will shift from controlling TB to ending the global TB epidemic," the report stated.

"Ending the TB epidemic is now part of the Sustainable Development Goal agenda" said Dr. Eric Goosby, UN Special Envoy on Tuberculosis. "If we want to achieve it, we'll need far more investment – at a level befitting such a global threat."

## 'Fear must be eclipsed by wisdom' to end violence between Israelis and Palestinians – UN rights chief



High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein (right) and Mahmoud Abbas, President of the State of Palestine, at a Special Meeting of the Human Rights Council in Geneva. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

**28 October** - At a special meeting of the United Nations Human Rights Council today, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights stressed that Israeli-Palestinian violence will draw “closer to a catastrophe” if not stopped immediately, while President Mahmoud Abbas called for creation of a “special protection” regime for the Palestinian people, amid roiling tensions in the region.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the latest wave of violence resulted in 58 Palestinian deaths, with 2100 wounded, and 11 Israeli deaths, with 127 wounded.

“Some of these people were stabbed, shot, and even beaten to death by members of the public, both Israeli and Palestinian,” High Commissioner Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein told President Abbas and members of the Council, which is based in Geneva, Switzerland.

“In the context of suspected attacks, several Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces, sometimes allegedly acting with disproportionate force, to the extent that extra-judicial killings are strongly suspected,” he continued at the special meeting convened on the occasion of the Palestinian President’s visit.

“In other incidents, Palestinians involved in demonstrations in the West Bank and along the Gaza fence have been reportedly shot by security forces using live ammunition – raising strong concerns again about excessive use of force.”

Mr. Zeid added that the stabbing and shooting and car attacks that have targeted Israelis are also “totally unjustifiable.”

“No matter what the grievances on both sides, violence cannot be the answer,” he insisted. “This crisis is dangerous in the extreme because it is a confrontation drawn in part from that most combustible of human emotional mechanisms: fear.”

The High Commissioner underlined that it is a “confrontation between peoples who fear each other, who fear the corresponding motives of each other, and so fear the future.”

Fears that, unless checked quickly, Mr. Zeid said “become in time so raw, so stark – for many considerations of humanity will become secondary the longer this crisis continues.”

“There will be no mutual accommodation, no mutual acceptance, no warmth, no peace, only hate and bloodshed, and fear mixing, constantly, both into a poison for all,” he declared. “And the fears of one people are deepened by the actions and words of the other, also carved from fear, and heightened on both sides by visceral rage.”

He further stated that a “catastrophe” becomes more likely because of the “supremely sensitive issue” of the status quo with respect to occupied East Jerusalem, and specifically the site that is known to Muslims as the Al Aqsa compound or the Haram Al Sharif, and to Jews as the Temple Mount.

“For Palestinians, and the Arab and Muslim worlds generally, their fear has centred on the perceived increasing aggressiveness of Israeli attitudes toward this compound, strongly suggesting a desire to alter the status quo,” Mr. Zeid said. “The Israeli Government says this fear is misplaced, and believes that rumours have inflamed passions; repeated assurances have been given by the Prime Minister that there is no threat to the al Aqsa compound.”

Instead, Mr. Zeid continued, the government fears the Palestinians are “stoking resentment and anger to incite violence against Israel and Israelis – and that the Palestinians are ultimately responsible for this violence.”

“Fear must be eclipsed by wisdom,” the High Commissioner urged, calling for actions by the settler movement throughout the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in and around occupied East Jerusalem, to be halted.

“The excessive use of force by Israeli military and police, house demolitions and other collective punishments also cannot be permitted to continue,” he warned. “The blockade of Gaza must be ended.”

Mr. Zeid concluded that in other words, the Middle East peace process “must now be reactivated with an unprecedented sense of purpose.”

“Israel has to be assured its security for good, and not remain the object of any threat to it or its people,” he said ending his address. “And the occupation, which has caused the Palestinian people such intense suffering for almost fifty years, generating rage and resentment – the occupation must end too. The people of Palestine, Mr. President, deserve to live free, and in dignity, enjoying their full rights, in their own liberated state of Palestine.”

In his remarks, President Abbas said: “What we have warned of has happened. The human rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, including East Jerusalem, as a result of the Israeli occupation and practices, are the worst and most critical since 1948.”

The current situation, he continued, calls for “strong and decisive intervention and requires that the United Nations, its Member States and its agencies shoulder their responsibility “before it is too late.” Specifically, the UN Security Council is requested, “more urgently than [ever before] to set up a special regime for international protection for the Palestinian people, immediately and urgently.”

Stressing that peace and stability would not be achieved unless the Israeli occupation is and an independent Palestinian state is obtained, Mr. Abbas said the he had repeatedly warned of the consequences of what has been happening in Jerusalem and its surroundings, which includes “tightening the noose around the necks of the population and violation of civil, political, economic and social rights.”

“I have noted over and over again that pressure will generate and explosion, and that the violations committed by settlers and extremists, protected by the Israeli Occupation forces, against our Christian and Islamic holy sites in Jerusalem, namely to alter the status quo of the Al-Aqsa Mosque...is the thing that will turn the political conflict into a religious on that will have grave consequences for us all.”

Reaffirming the important role of the Human Rights Council and the necessity of Israel abiding by its resolutions and wider international law, including the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Mr. Abbas also underlined what he called “the principal role” assumed by High Commissioner Zeid the work of the various experts and special procedures looking into human rights violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

## Two-thirds of world’s population is infected with herpes, says new UN health agency report



Photo: WHO/Jim Holmes

**28 October** - More than 3.7 billion people under the age of 50 are infected with herpes simplex virus type 1, which in most cases causes “cold sores” around the mouth, according to the first global estimates of the infection by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The new estimates published today in the journal *PLOS ONE* also note that the herpes simplex virus type 1 is an important cause of genital herpes.

Herpes simplex virus is categorized into two types: herpes simplex virus type 1 (HSV-1) and herpes simplex virus type 2 (HSV-2).

Both are “highly infectious and incurable, “ and while HSV-1 is primarily transmitted by oral-oral contact and in most cases causes orolabial herpes or “cold sores” around the mouth, HSV-2 is almost entirely sexually transmitted through skin-to-skin contact, causing genital herpes.

“Access to education and information on both types of herpes and sexually transmitted infections is critical to protect young people’s health before they become sexually active,” according to Dr. Marleen Temmerman, Director of WHO’s Department of Reproductive Health and Research.

“The new estimates highlight the crucial need for countries to improve data collection for both HSV types and sexually transmitted infections in general,” Dr. Temmerman said.

Herpes is a lifelong infection, which often has mild or no symptoms but can be detected by the presence of antibodies for HSV-1 or HSV-2 in the blood, according to WHO.

“It is difficult to determine the proportion of HSV-infected people worldwide who have symptomatic disease, as symptoms may be mild or simply not recognized as herpes,” it said.

#### **Estimates for HSV-1 prevalence by region among people aged 0-49 in 2012**

- Americas: 178 million women (49 per cent), 142 million men (39 per cent)
- Africa: 350 million women (87 per cent), 355 million men (87 per cent)
- Eastern Mediterranean: 188 million women (75 per cent), 202 million men (75 per cent)
- Europe: 207 million women (69 per cent), 187 million men (61 per cent)
- South-East Asia: 432 million women (59 per cent), 458 million men (58 per cent)
- Western Pacific: 488 million women (74 per cent), 521 million men (73 per cent)

#### **Estimates of new HSV-1 infections among people aged 0-49 in 2012**

- Americas: 6 million women, 5 million men
- Africa: 17 million women, 18 million men
- Eastern Mediterranean: 6 million women, 7 million men
- Europe: 5 million women, 5 million men
- South-East Asia: 13 million women, 14 million men
- Western Pacific: 11 million women, 12 million men

WHO is currently working on the development of a global health sector strategy for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including for HSV-1 and HSV-2, to be finalized for consideration at the 69th World Health Assembly in 2016.

## **Amid ‘unpredictable’ situation in Darfur, senior UN peacekeeping official urges political settlement**

**28 October** - Warning of an “unpredictable” political and security situation in Darfur, a senior United Nations peacekeeping official told the Security Council today that a comprehensive resolution of the Darfur conflict, which would allow for the return of over 2.6 million displaced persons, required first and foremost a political settlement between the Government and the armed movements.

In his briefing to the Council, Assistant Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet said operations against the non-signatory armed movements, implemented by the Sudanese Government, which involved a series of violent ground clashes and aerial bombardment, had led to over 104,000 newly confirmed displacements, as well as 69,000 unconfirmed cases.

He went on to say that there had been “no pause in inter-communal conflicts, which remains a major source of instability,” resulting in approximately one third of all conflict-related fatalities and forty per cent of displacement so far this year.

Mr. Mulet noted that the disputes have been further exacerbated by the involvement of local armed groups in counter-insurgency operations against the armed movements, their access to weapons, continued local influence and widespread



Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmond Mulet briefs the Security Council. UN Photo/Kim Haughton

impunity for their attacks against other tribes and other criminal activities.

The UN official added that the Government of Sudan, particularly at the state level, has attempted to contain the violence through the swift deployment of security forces across Darfur, and the organization of inter-communal mediation conferences for the cessation of hostilities.

“However, the underlying causes of these conflicts, related to the use and management of resources and impunity of actors involved in the violence, remain unaddressed,” said Mr. Mulet.

He further noted that following the decrees provided by the Government, a two-month cessation of hostilities in Darfur, Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile states and an unconditional pardon to members of the Sudanese political and armed opposition who decide to participate in the National Dialogue process, the Sudan Revolutionary Front declared its own six-month cessation of hostilities in Darfur and the Two Areas in accordance with its roadmap of 14 September.

The roadmap, Mr. Mulet explained, provides for the protection of civilians, unhindered humanitarian access and the creation of a conducive environment for peace talks and the National Dialogue.

Further, he said that President Omar al-Bashir has highlighted his Government’s readiness to engage in discussions on a permanent ceasefire with the armed movements.

However, the UN official said that the Sudanese political and armed opposition reiterated their boycott of the process in the absence of a conducive environment for a genuine dialogue but expressed their willingness to participate in a pre-dialogue meeting in Addis Ababa under the auspices of the African Union High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP).

“The AUHIP meeting on the National Dialogue followed by cessation of hostilities talks on Darfur and the Two Areas, which were initially scheduled for next week, are now expected to take place, respectively, in Addis Ababa on 16 to 17 and 18 to 19 November,” said Mr. Mulet.

He also reiterated the difficulties faced by African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and humanitarian actors in the region as the Government continues to restrict their air and ground movement, primarily to conflict areas citing security concerns.

“Delays and denials of customs clearances for UNAMID containers, including food rations, and visas for staff by the Government have threatened to significantly undermine mandate implementation efforts,” said Mr. Mulet.

“I would like to urge the Government of Sudan to maintain its current cooperation in ensuring the swift clearance of UNAMID food rations and their delivery to the Mission,” he added.

Mr. Mulet further called upon the Government to lift all existing restrictions on the free movement of its personnel and assets, particularly with regard to access to conflict areas and, importantly, the issuance of visas, consistent with the provisions of the UNAMID Status-of-Forces Agreement.

He also reported of an increase in attacks against UNAMID and its personnel, including the killing of a South African peacekeeper by an armed group north of Mellit, Darfur, on 27 September.

“Despite these considerable obstacles, UNAMID remained steadfast in the implementation of its strategic priorities and addressing key challenges to mandate implementation,” said Mr. Mulet.

“The Mission also focused its efforts on developing early warning capacity and other preventive measures with local stakeholders, promoting dialogue between farming and pastoral communities and supporting local institutions to address the root causes of conflict, in collaboration with the United Nations Country Team,” he added.

Lastly, Mr. Mulet also said that UNAMID and the UN Country Team are continuing their work on developing an operational plan for the gradual and phased transfer of tasks to the latter, outlining which tasks will be conducted jointly or



transferred and the requisite budgetary requirements, in accordance with Council resolutions 2173 (2014) and 2228 (2015).

“The initial phases of the process are expected to focus on capacity-building of sexual and gender-based violence prevention mechanisms, and joint activities in the police, justice and corrections sector,” concluded Mr. Mulet.

## Eleven major firms agree to promote inclusion of persons with disabilities – UN labour agency

**28 October** - Eleven major international companies today agreed to promote and include persons with disabilities throughout their operations worldwide in a move the International Labour Organization (ILO) hailed as “not only just a good moral cause” but also “good for business.”

In an announcement, ILO said that Accenture, AccorHotels, Adecco Group, AXA Group, Carrefour Group, Dow Chemical, Groupe Casino, L’Oréal, Orange, the Standard Bank Group, and Michelin have become the first signatories of the newly-created ILO Global Business & Disability Network Charter, in a ceremony in Geneva, Switzerland.



A disabled man operates a mobile phone repair business in Sri Lanka. Photo: ILO

“This new Charter can also make a substantial contribution to realizing many goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” said ILO Director-General, Guy Ryder.

According to the Charter, “promoting and including persons with disabilities in the workplace is important for companies seeking the best talent and a diverse workforce.”

“Companies that are disability-inclusive provide a better workplace for all their employees,” the new Charter says. “Such companies maximize the full potential of the workforce for the benefit of both the company and its employees and are better positioned to respond to diverse market needs.”

By signing the Charter, the companies commit to promoting and including persons with disabilities throughout their operations worldwide, protecting staff with disabilities from any kind of discrimination and making the company premises and communication to staff progressively accessible to all employees with disabilities.

“The lack of equal employment opportunities for persons with disabilities often means lives of poverty and social exclusion,” said the ILO chief. “By honouring the commitments of this Charter, the private sector will be showing real leadership in making it possible for people with disabilities to have productive work and to live in dignity.”

The Charter will be provided to national employers’ federations and national business and disability networks as a way of promoting the inclusion of people with disabilities among their member companies, including small and medium size enterprises, according to ILO.

All signatories are members of the ILO Global Business and Disability Network, which brings businesses together to promote disability inclusion by highlighting the business advantages of employing people with disabilities. And the Network also benefits from insight of people with disabilities themselves, thanks to a partnership with the International Disability Alliance, a network of global and regional organizations representing people with disabilities.

## UN food relief agency boosts value of vouchers for Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon



WFP's partner Save the Children distributes food vouchers at a station inside the WFP food distribution centre at the Za'atari refugee camp in northern Jordan. Photo: WFP/Salah Malkawi

**28 October** - Extremely vulnerable Syrian refugees in Jordan and Lebanon will now receive higher-value electronic vouchers from the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), with an average value of \$21 per person per month, or 80 per cent of the full intended value of the vouchers.

As a result of new donor support, WFP is also resuming assistance to 229,000 vulnerable Syrian refugees in Jordan who stopped receiving food vouchers in September due to severe shortage of funds. Their electronic vouchers will be uploaded with a value of \$14 per person per month, according to UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric.

Based on the funding that WFP received, he said, the agency can continue to assist Syrian refugees at the current levels until January 2016, but it is still wrestling with trying to run this operation on an ad hoc basis.

“Without predictable sources of funding, WFP may not be able to provide regular food assistance to the most vulnerable Syrian refugees for more than two months,” said the Spokesperson, adding that inside Syria, the agency continues to provide food for more than four million people every month, but as a result of the funding crisis, it has reduced the size of food parcel.

## 'Minorities face discrimination at every turn' in criminal justice systems – UN rights expert

**28 October** - In criminal justice processes worldwide, minorities face discrimination ranging from excessive and sometimes lethal use of force, torture by police, to longer periods of stay in pre-trial detention, discrimination during judicial procedures and biases influencing sentencing, according to the UN human rights expert on minority issues.

“The disproportionate targeting by law enforcement officers of individuals for identity checks, stop and search or other forms of coercive or privacy invasive police powers which are related purely to identity-based minority group characteristics, continues to take place around the world,” said Rita Izsák, the UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues.



Independent Expert on minority issues  
Rita Izsák. UN Photo/Jean-Marc Ferré

Presenting her fourth report to UN General Assembly's Third Committee – the Organization's main body dealing with social, humanitarian and cultural issues, Ms. Izsák assessed the situation of the human rights of persons belonging to national or ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities in the various stages of the criminal justice process, from before arrest through to sentencing.

“The Special Rapporteur is alarmed by the many allegations that she has received of human rights violations committed against minorities in the administration of criminal justice, owing to their minority status,” the report said.

“[She] strongly condemned the practice of racial profiling,” according to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in a press release of the report.

The report highlights the following areas of concern for minorities in the administration of criminal justice, including: excessive and sometimes lethal use of force, torture or other ill treatment by police, including in detention; the overrepresentation of minorities in pre-trial detention, and longer periods of stay in pre-trial detention; discrimination against minorities during judicial procedures; and biases influencing not only on the outcome of a criminal trial itself, but also on sentencing for accused minorities.

“Although remedying the discrimination that minorities face in criminal justice system is not an easy task,” the expert said,

“it is paramount that States address the underrepresentation of minorities in law enforcement agencies, including judiciaries, prosecution services and legal professions.”

Saying that measures to eliminate discrimination and ensure equality before the law are more likely to be effective if undertaken with a minority rights-based approach, the report outlined a series of recommendations to address discrimination in the administration of justice.

Ms. Izsák was appointed as Independent Expert on minority issues by the Human Rights Council in June 2011 and subsequently her mandate was renewed as Special Rapporteur on minority issues in March 2014. She works on a voluntary basis, is not UN staff and does not receive a salary for her work.

## Central African Republic: deploring recent violence, UN envoy says ‘dialogue is only way out of this crisis’

**28 October** - Following a series of incidents earlier this week in the Central African Republic (CAR) capital of Bangui, the top United Nation official in the crisis-riven country strongly deplored the use of violence to resolve differences and had called on all Central Africans to exercise restraint “to avoid an increase of violence with serious consequences.”

In a statement, UN Special Representative Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, also reassured the population about the presence in the field of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), which he heads up, and its partners to avoid an escalation of violence.



UN Special Representative and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) Parfait Onanga-Anyanga. Photo: MINUSCA

“MINUSCA strongly condemns the use of violence to resolve differences. We call for restraint to ensure that recent unfortunate events will not lead to a larger drama, including more human life losses and material damages and a step back for peace consolidation,” Onanga-Anyanga stated in a message aired on Tuesday on Guira FM, the mission’s radio station.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga’s call for calm came in the wake of incidents Monday and Tuesday in Bangui. The Mission had also reported that incidents farther afield in Bambari and Bira were quickly brought under control.

“We make an appeal to all people of good will,” he added while urging religious leaders, community leaders, civil society, politicians and national authorities to raise their voices “to avoid an escalation and [senseless] violence.”

In his message, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga reassured the population, stressing the coordination between MINUSCA and its partners, namely the Sangaris (French forces) operation, to avoid the escalation of violence. “We worked very closely with Sangaris. Our forces have been at work all night. We are present, we are in the most difficult neighbourhoods,” he said, while reaffirming that MINUSCA would work with all Central Africans, “whatever their differences, so that the country to move out of this simply unacceptable situation.”

He went on to condemn reported violence against the international forces including MINUSCA on Tuesday and aid workers in September. “This violence must stop. The international presence in the country is nothing but helping the country move forward throughout these difficult times and to support the reconciliation process which is essential for the return of peace, stability and prosperity for all in CAR,” Onanga-Anyanga concluded.

The Mission had earlier condemned an attack that took place Monday in Bangui against a delegation of the *Union pour la paix en Centrafrique*, ex-Seleka (Union for Peace in Central African Republic, or UPC), which had reportedly traveled from Bambari to participate in consultations with the *Forces Vives*.

The delegation was attacked by “unknown elements” in the eighth district of the capital. One person was seriously wounded, and was taken to the MINUSCA Level II Hospital in Bangui. The whereabouts of at least three of the delegates is currently being investigated.

“MINUSCA calls on the actors behind this violent attack to release any hostages they might be illegally detaining. The Mission also exhorts all actors to calm and restraint and to resolve their differences through dialogue,” said a statement.

In addition, Mr. Onanga-Anyanga called on all armed groups to abide by the Brazzaville Cessation of Hostilities Agreement signed on July 2014 as well as the disarmament, demobilization and reconciliation agreement, signed in Bangui in May 2015.

“Violence will never be a solution; dialogue and reconciliation are the only way for the Central African Republic to overcome this crisis,” Mr. Onanga-Anyanga stated.

He also noted that MINUSCA reported that the attack coincided with the consensus-building dialogue currently in progress, which seeks to establish an electoral calendar between the Head of State of the Transition, the national authorities, and the international community.

MINUSCA denounced the attack as a “direct attempt to use violence to disrupt, once again, the positive developments underway,” and called on those behind it to release any hostages they might be illegally detaining.

## UN agencies warn of deteriorating food security in Southern Madagascar



Vulnerable communities in Behara, in drought-hit southern Madagascar, participate in a food for assets programme funded by the European Union. Photo: WFP/Volana Rarivoson

**28 October** - Leading food agencies of the United Nations warned that 46 per cent of the population from eight regions of Madagascar, comprising of 1.9 million people are food insecure, including 450,000 people who face chronic food insecurity.

The UN agencies also announced deliverance of a number of programmes in the country with an aim to eliminate hunger, improve nutrition, promote sustainable agriculture and contribute to achieving Sustainable Development Goal Two of the recently adopted Agenda 2030.

According to the Crop and Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM), an assessment by the Government of Madagascar, Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and World Food Programme (WFP), the highest food insecurity rates are found in the island's drought-hit

southern regions of Androy, Anosy and Atsimo Andrefana where 380,000 people, totalling 30 per cent of the population are severely affected.

“The current situation requires real action from a range of actors to help vulnerable people recover and to avert a deterioration in the food security situation,” said Patrice Talla Takoukam, FAO Representative in Madagascar in a press release, adding that the recent food security assessments have not of themselves been sufficient to address the crisis.

The UN agencies said that a significant decrease in food production during the past three agricultural seasons due to recurrent shortage of rainfall has been the causes for food insecurity in the region.

They also reported that many households are resorting to negative coping strategies, such as sale of assets, reducing their number of daily meals, withdrawing children from school and consuming wild foods such as cactus fruit.

“When households adopt negative coping strategies, their resilience to shocks decreases,” said WFP Country Director Willem Van Milink. “Continuing assistance is crucial not only for communities to have adequate food consumption during the lean season but also so they can regain their livelihoods and increase their resilience to shocks,” he added.

WFP said that they will be assisting 130,000 of the most vulnerable people in five districts through food- or cash-for-assets programmes, starting from November and continuing until the next harvest which is due in February.

Such programmes are designed to help communities to build resilience and prepare for the next harvest season. The UN agency also said that the households that unable to work will be supported through food distributions.

To treat and prevent malnutrition, WFP has said that it will provide supplementary feeding to pregnant women, nursing mothers and to children less than two years of age.

FAO said that they have distributed improved drought-resistant seeds as an emergency response measure in the agricultural sector.

The seeds will help in replanting of more than 6,000 hectares of land and helps ensure food availability for 13,000 households in Anosy and Androy regions, said the UN agency.

FAO also reported that crops and pasture in 2013 and early 2014 were affected by a plague of crops which has now been eradicated with support from the Malagasy Government and donors under a three year locust eradication programme.

WFP said it has supported national efforts to treat moderate acute malnutrition among 7,000 children.

The agency also said that in early October, a WFP-chartered plane airlifted a nutritional supplement to Madagascar's capital Antananarivo. This, the agency said, will be used in state-run nutrition centres to fight increasing levels of acute and moderate malnutrition among children aged less than five years old, in the south of the country.