

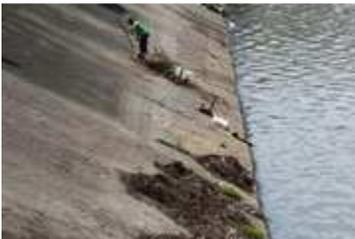


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COP21: UN chief launches initiative to build climate resilience of world's most vulnerable countries



In Pasig, Philippines, a city worker cleans the Manggahan Floodway, built to reduce flooding along the Pasig River during the rainy season. Photo: World Bank/Dominic Chavez

30 November - On the opening day of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21), dozens of announcements were made in Paris by Governments and leaders of the public and private sector, all aiming to generate climate solutions and build a sustainable future.

A new initiative to build climate resilience in the world's most vulnerable countries was launched by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and 13 agencies of the UN system.

"Three out of four humanitarian disasters are now climate-related," Mr. Ban told delegates attending a High-level meeting on climate resilience at the Paris-Le Bourget site, COP21's main venue.

"Economic losses have increased by more than half over the past decade. Ecosystems, and food and water supplies are under increasing pressure. The hardest hit are the poor and vulnerable – including small farmers, fishing communities and indigenous peoples," warned the UN chief.

According to the UN, the new initiative – called 'Anticipate, Absorb, Reshape' – will strengthen the ability of countries to anticipate hazards, absorb shocks, and reshape development to reduce climate risks.

It is expected to help address the needs of the nearly 634 million people, or a tenth of the global population who live in at-



risk coastal areas just a few meters above existing sea levels, as well as those living in areas at risk of droughts and floods. The world is now experiencing a strong El Niño event, which could place as many as 4.7 million people at risk from drought in the Pacific alone.

Over the next five years, the Initiative is set to mobilize financing and knowledge; create and operationalize partnerships at scale, help coordinate activities to help reach tangible results, catalyze research, and develop new tools.

The Secretary-General also joined the launch of the International Solar Alliance, set up by the Governments of India and France. In the presence of India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the UN chief said the Alliance will "enable solar-rich developing countries to make the best use of an abundant, free natural resource."

"The broad support for this international coalition is testament to the resonance of your vision of a solar-powered path to prosperity," said Mr. Ban. "As the Prime Minister has said, we need 'development without destruction.' Solar energy offers major potential for reducing poverty and limiting greenhouse gas emissions."

He added that he counts on developed countries to partner with the International Solar Alliance by providing technology support, capacity-building and financial resources.

Other news at the opening of COP21 included a pledge by 11 donor countries of close to \$250 million dollars in new money for adaptation support to the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF), a climate fund hosted by the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

"I have seen for myself how people from across the developing world are leading the way to climate solutions," said Mary Robinson, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Climate Change.

"But the scale and international nature of climate change requires an unprecedented level of international solidarity and support. So today's announcement should be seen in that context: they are not just about dollars and cents and accounting. They are about supporting millions of people across the world," she added.

Meanwhile, a new Fossil Fuel Subsidy Reform Communiqué was presented to Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), by the New Zealand Prime Minister John Key.

The Communiqué calls on the international community to increase efforts to phase out perverse subsidies to fossil fuels by promoting policy transparency, ambitious reform and targeted support for the poorest.

In addition, the World Bank announced it has been working with four European countries – Germany, Norway, Sweden, and Switzerland – to set up a new \$500 million initiative that will find new ways to create incentives aimed at large scale cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in developing countries to combat climate change.

The initiative, called the Transformative Carbon Asset Facility, will reportedly help developing countries implement their plans to cut emissions by working with them to create new classes of carbon assets associated with reduced greenhouse gas emission reductions, including those achieved through policy actions.

Twenty countries, all of them major economies, launched Mission Innovation, a landmark commitment to dramatically accelerate public and private global clean energy innovation, including doubling their current investments in the sector.

According to UNFCCC, these national commitments "are coupled with a major, independent private sector initiative spearheaded by Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates in which entrepreneurs, investors, and businesses will deploy billions more dollars to drive innovation from the laboratory to the marketplace."

Finally, the opening of COP21 also included new partnerships forged between world leaders from major forest countries who today endorsed forests as a key climate solution.

A press release issued by UNFCCC indicated that they recommitted to providing strong, collective and urgent action to



promote equitable rural economic development while slowing, halting and reversing deforestation and massively increasing forest restoration.

Additional initiatives and pledges are expected during the two-week conference, which is scheduled to end on 11 December.

UN health agency urges expanding antiretroviral therapy to all people living with HIV

30 November - Expanding antiretroviral therapy to all people living with HIV is the key to ending the AIDS epidemic within a generation, the World Health Organization announced today on the eve of World AIDS Day as it presented new “treat all” recommendations to enable countries to expand treatment rapidly and efficiently.

“Everyone, everywhere should have access to treatment,” Simon Bland, Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) Office in New York, told reporters at a press briefing at UN Headquarters today.

Meanwhile, UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé launched a global initiative in Libreville, Gabon over the weekend that encourages youths to get tested for HIV, calling on young people worldwide to join the movement and get involved in ending the AIDS epidemic.



In Uganda, 29 year old Christine Adokorach holds a tablet of Niverapine, an antiretroviral drug, wrapped in a sealed plastic bag. Photo: UNICEF/Shehzad Noorani

UNAIDS estimates that 17.1 million of the 36.9 million people living with HIV worldwide do not know they have the virus. Getting tested is a crucial first step for people living with HIV to access life-saving antiretroviral therapy.

Meanwhile, WHO said it is presenting the “treat all” recommendations at a major international AIDS conference taking place this week in Harare, Zimbabwe.

According to the UN health agency, trial results published earlier this year have confirmed that people living with HIV who begin antiretroviral therapy soon after acquiring the virus – before the virus has weakened their immune systems – are more likely to stay healthy and less likely to transmit the virus to their partners. Those findings led WHO in September to recommend that everyone living with HIV be offered treatment.

The recommendations include using innovative testing strategies to help more people learn they are HIV positive; moving testing and treatment services closer to where people live; starting treatment faster among people who are at advanced stages of HIV infection when they are diagnosed; and reducing the frequency of clinic visits recommended for people who are stable, according to WHO.

“WHO applauds governments, civil society, and organizations that have made availability of life-saving antiretroviral therapy possible in the most trying circumstances. The new recommendation to expand to all people living with HIV is a call to further step up the pace,” said Dr. Winnie Mpanju-Shumbusho, WHO Assistant Director General for HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Malaria and Neglected Tropical Diseases.

According to the agency, “the world is poised to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030 – provided it can accelerate the pace of progress achieved globally over the past 15 years.”

Since 2000, an estimated 7.8 million lives have been saved, fewer people are acquiring HIV, and projections of an end to the epidemic by 2030 – a goal once considered unattainable by many experts – are now realistic, according to the WHO report, Global Health Sector Response to HIV 2000-2015.

WHO Director-General, Dr. Margaret Chan said “the Millennium Development Goal of reversing the HIV epidemic was reached ahead of the 2015 deadline - an incredible achievement that testifies to the power of national action and international solidarity.”

Over the last 15 years, scale-up of antiretroviral therapy (ART) has been most dramatic in the WHO African Region where now more than 11 million people are receiving HIV treatment, up from 11,000 at the turn of the century, WHO said, adding that “People living with HIV in Africa are now more likely to receive treatment than people living in most other parts of the world.”

Reducing the number of new HIV infections remains a major focus for the vision of ending AIDS.

WHO said over the last five years in Africa some 10 million men have undergone voluntary medical circumcision, a procedure that reduces their risk of acquiring HIV by 60 per cent.

And the same drugs that keep people living with HIV from becoming sick also prevent transmission of the virus from pregnant women to their infants. Among the 22 countries that account for 90 per cent of new HIV infections, 8 have reduced new infections among children by more than 50 per cent since 2009, based on 2013 data, and another 4 are close to that mark.

“The sense of urgency that was the norm during the disease’s most-destructive years must not be allowed to abate,” WHO’s Dr Mpanju-Shumbusho said. “HIV remains a major health challenge.”

COP21: Ban tells world leaders ‘a political moment like this may not come again’



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses High-level Meeting on Climate Resilience. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

30 November - Speaking at the opening of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) which seeks to reach a new universal agreement to protect people and planet, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said a political moment like this may not come again.

“You are here today to write the script for a new future,” Mr. Ban told around 150 world leaders attending the kick-off of the much-anticipated conference in Paris, France.

“We have never faced such a test,” he continued. “But neither have we encountered such great opportunity. You have the power to secure the well-being of this and succeeding generations.”

Opening the floor alongside the President of France, François Hollande, the French Foreign Minister, Laurent Fabius, and the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Christiana Figueres, the UN chief recalled that last September, an “inspiring” new sustainable development agenda with ambitious goals was endorsed by all Heads of State and Government.

“You showed your commitment to act for the common good,” he underlined. “It is now time to do so again. I urge you to instruct your negotiators to choose the path of compromise and consensus. Bold climate action is in the national interest of every single country represented at this conference.”

Insisting that Paris must mark a turning point, Mr. Ban stated that the world needs to know that it is headed to a low-emissions, climate-resilient future, and that “there is no going back.”

Ahead of COP21, countries submitted voluntary climate action plans to UNFCCC, the UN entity organizing the conference. These are formally called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, and will form the basis of the agreement expected to be reached in two weeks.

The Secretary-General announced today that more than 180 countries have now submitted their national climate plans which cover close to 100 per cent of global emissions.

“This is a good start,” he said. “But we need to go much farther and much faster if we are to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius.”

According to experts, even a 2-degree rise will have serious consequences for food and water security, economic stability and international peace, which is why a universal, meaningful agreement in Paris is crucial, Mr. Ban told the leaders.

Turning to success criteria at COP21, Mr. Ban said the agreement must be durable, dynamic, embody solidarity with the poor and most vulnerable, and finally, the agreement must be credible.

“Developed countries must keep their pledge to mobilize \$100 billion dollars a year by 2020,” he added. “A new agreement must also include a single transparent framework for measuring, monitoring and reporting progress. And countries with low capacity should receive flexibility and support so they can meet the requirements of this new system.”

Meanwhile, UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christiana Figueres echoed that this past year has been a turning point for the climate agenda.

“After many years of hard work, we finally see irreversibility of direction, depth of engagement and boldness of action,” she told leaders in her opening remarks.

“This turning point is remarkable, but the task is not done,” Ms. Figueres continued. “It is up to you to both capture this progress and chart an unequivocal path forward, with a clear destination, agreed milestones and a predictable timeline that responds to the demands of science and the urgency of the challenge.”

She added that never before “has a responsibility so great been in the hands of so few,” and that the world is looking at world leaders and counting on them.

Delivering a strong message to the opening ceremony, Oh Joon, President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), said: today: “We are at a tipping point in the Paris climate change conference. There is no turning back. A global decision needs to be taken for a low carbon agreement.”

DR Congo: Ban condemns attack on UN base, calls for perpetrators to be brought to justice



Tanzanian troops of the MONUSCO Intervention Brigade and FARDC soldiers conducting a joint patrol in the fight against the Ugandan rebels of ADF, in Beni territory, North Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Photo: MONUSCO

30 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called for swift action to bring to justice the perpetrators of a deadly attack yesterday against the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), pledging continued support in the battle against rebel forces.

One peacekeeper from Malawi was killed and another wounded during a heavy exchange of fire when the Ugandan rebel Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) attacked a base of the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in DRC (MONUSCO) in Makembi in North Kivu province, in the east of the vast country.

Four national Congolese soldiers and a number of civilians were also killed in two other ADF attacks in the area.

“The Secretary-General calls for swift action to bring the perpetrators of these attacks to justice,” a statement from his spokesman said.

“He is extremely concerned by the series of attacks by the ADF in North Kivu, which have already resulted in more than 500 known civilian deaths since October 2014. Such attacks on civilians are a clear violation of international human rights and humanitarian law,” it added, reiterating UN commitment support the DRC authorities in neutralizing the armed groups.

Earlier this month, the UN Security Council today called for the elimination of local and foreign armed groups, including ADF, which have for decades devastated the eastern regions of the DRC, urging the immediate resumption of joint operations between the UN peacekeeping force’s Intervention Brigade and the national army.

In a separate statement, the UN Security Council also strongly condemned the attack and called on the Government of the DRC to swiftly investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

Underlining that attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law, the Council also strongly condemned the repeated attacks perpetrated against civilians by the ADF in North Kivu, which have already resulted in more than 500 civilians killed since October 2014. Council members further stressed the utmost importance of neutralizing, once and for all, all armed groups in the DRC and called for the urgent resumption of operations against these groups.

The members of the Security Council reiterated their support to MONUSCO and called on all parties to cooperate fully with the mission and to remain committed to the full and objective implementation of the mission's mandate.

In Central African Republic, Pope Francis calls for peace among Christian, Muslim communities – UN



Pope Francis,(left) and President Catherine Samba Panza of the Central African Republic (CAR), in the capital Bangui. UN Photo/Nektarios Markogiannis

30 November - The United Nations brought in 250 additional peacekeepers from Côte d'Ivoire over and above those already stationed in the Central African Republic (CAR) to help the authorities provide security for Pope Francis's two-day visit to Bangui, the war-ravaged country's capital.

As well as bringing in the special unit, which will remain for another eight weeks, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) also helped build the pope-mobile that Francis used during his visit, which ended today.

In a statement, MINUSCA said it was pleased to see that the Pope delivered messages of peace and reconciliation to members of the Christian and Muslim communities including victims of violence in a country that has been torn apart by more than two years of fighting

between the mainly Muslim Séléka group and the mainly Christian anti-Balaka movement.

The Pope ended his trip this morning with a visit to the mosque in a Muslim enclave known PK5, where he called for peace between Christians and Muslims, after which crowds followed him to the Bangui Stadium where he officiated a mass.

Last week, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) called on the warring groups to use the visit to rebuild national reconciliation after renewed violence since September triggered an 18 per cent increase in internally displaced persons (IDPs) to 447,500.

Hundreds of thousands more are estimated to have fled abroad in the fighting, which has killed thousands since it first erupted in early 2013.

MINUSCA, set up in April 2014 to help restore stability peace after a breakdown of governmental authority, currently maintains nearly 11,000 uniformed personnel in the country.

Also today MINUSCA announced that its Force Commander, Major General Martin Chuma Tumenta of Cameroon, passed away. He had been on medical leave for the past month back home.

Some 3.2 billion people now online, but number still falls short of Internet target – UN report



ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao addresses the 13th World Telecommunication/ICT Indicators Symposium (WTIS 2015) in Hiroshima, Japan. Photo: ITU/D. Woldu

30 November - Some 3.2 billion people are now online, representing 43.4 per cent of the global population, but the number still falls significantly short of reaching the anticipated goal of 60 per cent by 2020, according to a United Nations report released today.

While the proportion of households projected to have Internet access in 2020 will reach 56 per cent, exceeding the 'Connect 2020' target of 55 per cent, only 53 per cent of the global population will be online in 2020, the report found, ranking the Republic of Korea first in the information and communication technology (ICT) 2015 Development Index (IDI).

Africa ranks worst, with 29 of 37 countries in the IDI's bottom quarter, and 11 figuring last out of 167, illustrating the importance of addressing the digital divide between the continent and other regions, according to the UN International Telecommunications Union (ITU)

flagship annual *Measuring the Information Society Report*.

Although the 2020 goal is not on track to be achieved, the report, widely recognized as the repository of the world's most reliable and impartial global data and analysis on ICT development, notes that all 167 countries improved their IDI values between 2010 and 2015 – meaning that levels of ICT access, use and skills continue to improve worldwide.

It also showed that almost 7.1 billion people, over 95 per cent of the global population, are now covered by a mobile-cellular signal.

"ICTs will be essential in meeting each and every one of the 17 newly-agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and this report plays an important role in the SDG process," ITU Secretary-General Houlin Zhao said, referring to the ambitious economic, social and environmental targets that the UN has set for the year 2030.

"Without measurement and reporting, we cannot track the progress being made, and this is why ITU gathers data and publishes this important report each year."

ITU's Telecommunication Development Bureau Director Brahim Sanou called progress encouraging in many areas. "But more needs to be done – especially in the world's poorest and remotest regions, where ICTs can arguably make the biggest difference, and help bring people everywhere out of extreme poverty," he added.

By the end of this year, 46 per cent of households globally will have Internet access at home, up from 44 per cent last year and just 30 per cent in 2010. In the developed world, 81.3 per cent of households now have home Internet access, compared to 34.1 per cent in the developing world, and just 6.7 per cent in the 48 UN-designated least developed countries (LDCs).

Latest data show that growth in Internet use has slowed down, however, posting 6.9 per cent growth in 2015, after 7.4 per cent in 2014. Nonetheless, the number of Internet users in developing countries has almost doubled in the past five years, with two thirds of all people online now living in the developing world.

Fastest growth continues to be seen in mobile broadband, with the number of mobile-broadband subscriptions worldwide having grown more than four-fold in five years, from 800 million in 2010 to an estimated 3.5 billion now. The number of fixed-broadband subscriptions has risen much more slowly, to an estimated 800 million today.

"More action will also be needed to ensure that targets for growth and inclusiveness are not missed in developing countries, and in particular in LDCs," ITU stressed in a news release.

"The Connect 2020 Agenda aims to ensure that at least 50 per cent of households in developing countries and 15 per cent of

households in LDCs have access by 2020, but ITU estimates that only 45 per cent of households in developing countries and 11 per cent of LDC households will have Internet access by that date.”

In 2015, Republic of Korea ranked at the top of the IDI, which measures countries according to their level of ICT access, use and skills, closely followed by Denmark and Iceland.

The IDI top 30 ranking includes countries from Europe and other high-income nations, including Australia, Bahrain, Barbados, Canada, Hong Kong (China), Japan, Macao (China), New Zealand, Singapore and the United States.

Racism will not disappear from football stadiums ‘by magic,’ warns UNESCO report



UN Photo/David Mutua

30 November - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the professional Italian association football club Juventus have issued the first exhaustive overview of the effort to tackle and root out discrimination and racism in the world’s most popular spectator sport.

“The playing fields of football are built with the profound values of fair play, equality and mutual respect – they sometimes also display unacceptable racist, xenophobic and intolerant views,” said UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova said in the foreword the new report *Colour? What Colour?* released jointly with the Juventus Football Club over the weekend in Paris.

The report takes stock of what has been done and what is being done to combat racism and discrimination in the sport; it examines ways to assess actions undertaken and envisages other complementary actions, as well as offering examples of best practice.

Noting that “the existence of racism and discrimination in football is not a secret, but it is a shame on the game,” the 83-page report contains the fruit of research and surveys involving an international team of experts, researchers, football managers and officials, and concludes that “racism and discrimination will not disappear from the football stadium by magic.”

As the report has tried to show, they may be further reduced by systematic, coherent, and coordinated action by those who share the objective of promoting “a football of cultural diversity and social inclusion.”

All experts interviewed for this report agreed on the fact that eliminating racism and discrimination will not be a ‘walk in the park,’ but requires sustained and combined efforts from all sides, it said.

“Sometimes it is necessary to re-design the entire machine in order to achieve progress,” according to the report’s conclusion. “Sometimes re-adjusting or re-arranging some nuts and bolts is sufficient. From within the machine, it is difficult to judge, but from the outside, things may appear in a different light.”

In the foreword, Ms. Bokova argues that sport provides a unique platform to promote the values of intercultural dialogue and understanding, as well as gender equality, while reinforcing social inclusion. However, she cautions that it can also be exploited to divide and discriminate.

“We have seen the exchange of racial epithets between athletes, along with crowd taunts that are based on race, ethnic or cultural background – and these have occurred at all levels of sport,” she underscored.

“This report offers the first exhaustive overview of the challenge and proposes good practice that can be taken forward,” Ms. Bokova said, commending the Juventus Football Club for their political engagement against discrimination and racism in football.

“This report will allow UNESCO and other stakeholders to take this struggle to a higher level still,” she said.

To counter this challenge, UNESCO is acting across the board with all its partners to promoting the inclusion of anti-discrimination and anti-racism clauses in players' contracts.

According to the UNESCO chief, since 2009, in multiple partnerships with football clubs – including Barcelona and Malaga FC (Spain), Ruby Shenzhen (China), Al Hilal (Saudi Arabia) and recently with Juventus – UNESCO has placed emphasis on the role of clubs in propagating the essential messages of tolerance, respect and inclusion.

Human cost of Iraq crisis is 'devastating,' UN deputy relief chief warns, urging increased humanitarian aid



UN Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Kyung-wha Kang (left), visits the Harsham IDP camp in Erbil, Iraq. Photo: OCHA Iraq

30 November - Warning of a further “dramatic” worsening of the humanitarian situation in Iraq, a senior United Nations relief official today urged increased international support to assist millions in need and to rebuild areas retaken from the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) so people can return to their homes “voluntarily and safely.”

“The human cost of the crisis is devastating. We are extremely worried that all indicators point to a dramatically worsening situation in the months ahead,” said the UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Kyung-wha Kang in a news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

According to the news release, Ms. Kang visited Baghdad and Erbil to discuss the humanitarian crisis, where she spoke with women “who had lost virtually everything.” She is currently on a visit to the region, which will include stops in Jordan and Turkey before wrapping up on Sunday, 6 December.

Ms. Kang stressed that responding to the basic needs of these people will require increased capacity, as well as improved access and security is of utmost importance, adding that insecurity “puts the whole aid operation in Iraq at risk.”

Voicing concerns at the impact of economic crisis in the Kurdistan region and in Iraq, she urged the international community to step forward and provide urgent funding for lifesaving assistance, stating that “if this doesn’t happen, the impact will be terribly damaging.”

“Funding is needed to keep programmes open and to help rebuild areas retaken from ISIL so that people can return voluntarily and safely to their homes,” Ms. Kang explained at the end of her two-day mission in Iraq.

According to the UN, nearly 10 million people in Iraq are now in need of some form of humanitarian assistance and close to 3.2 million people are internally displaced since January 2014.

Further, OCHA estimates indicate that the aid response efforts in the country are critically underfunded, forcing humanitarian partners to close scores of lifesaving programmes.

Lastly, OCHA said that of the highly prioritized \$498 million plan launched in June to respond to the most acute needs in the second half of 2015, less than 50 percent has been received.

Nepal: millions of children at risk this winter due to severe shortage of essential supplies, UNICEF warns

30 November - Due to severe shortages of fuel, food, medicines and vaccines, more than three million children under the age of 5 are at risk of death or disease during the harsh winter months in Nepal, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned today.

“The plight that children and their families are facing in the country has been worsening by the day and will deteriorate further in the winter months,” said UNICEF Regional Director of UNICEF for South Asia, Karin Hulshof in a news release.

Over the past 10 weeks, vital imports of essential commodities have been severely restricted at Nepal's southern border due to unrest over the country's new constitution.

According to UNICEF, the Government's regional medical stores have already run out of BCG vaccines against tuberculosis and stocks of other vaccines and antibiotics are critically low.

“The risks of hypothermia and malnutrition, and the shortfall in life-saving medicines and vaccines, could be a potentially deadly combination for children this winter,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake.

Nepal, still recovering from two major earthquakes in April and May, has over 200,000 families affected by the temblors still living in temporary shelters, at an altitude above 1,500 metres where weather conditions will be harshest this winter, explained UNICEF, adding that children could be the most affected.

“During my recent visit to Nepal, I witnessed first-hand the precarious living conditions of many of the earthquake survivors. They could now be facing a new disaster – without adequate food, protection from the cold, or healthcare,” added Mr. Lake.

Further, UNICEF noted growing fears that the rising dependence on firewood because of the fuel crisis is increasing indoor pollution, which in turn could lead to a spike in cases of pneumonia, as over 800,000 children under five suffer from the condition and around 5,000 children have already died in the last year.

Additionally, the 125,000 new-borns expected in Nepal in the next two months are also at particular risk, the agency warned.

UNICEF said that ambulance services across the country have been hit by the fuel shortage, resulting in a drop in births in hospitals and health centres and the lack of fuel for heating also increases the risk of hypothermia and death for new-born babies who are not fully capable of controlling their own body temperature.

“Children need to be protected from disease, cold and hunger. UNICEF urges all sides to address the restrictions on essential imports of supplies to Nepal. There is no time to lose,” urged Ms. Hulshof.



Ten year old Babu Kaji Tamang, who gets around by crawling on all fours, at his home in Sindhupalchok, Nepal, one of the most earthquake-affected districts. Photo: UNICEF/Narendra Shrestha

More than a million children need urgent assistance in conflict-torn Central African Republic – UNICEF

30 November - Nearly three years after the “devastating” conflict began in the Central African Republic (CAR), an estimated 1.2 million children are now in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, said the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

“The violence that has plagued this country has had a devastating impact on the lives of children,” said UNICEF's Representative in the Central African Republic, Mohamed Fall in a news release, adding that to meet the overwhelming humanitarian needs, access and greater international support are essential.

According to UNICEF estimates, more than two million children have been affected by the violence which first broke out in December 2012 and which reached crisis levels in December 2013 following clashes that led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands in the capital, Bangui.

About 400,000 people remain displaced within the country, and renewed clashes in September created an additional 39,000 internally displaced people in Bangui and a further half a million people are living as refugees in neighbouring countries, UNICEF said.

The agency said that insecurity and underfunding continue to put urgent lifesaving activities at risk, while attacks on humanitarian convoys threaten the deployment of relief supplies to the interior of the country.

According to UNICEF, Pope Francis was expected to visit the country on Sunday, for a two-day visit aimed at promoting reconciliation.

UNICEF said that a song for peace, written and sung by children, that calls for national unity and an end to the fighting has been playing on radio stations ahead of the Pope's arrival.

“We are hopeful that the voices of these children will be heard, and that the Pope's visit to CAR will promote reconciliation, in a country that is in desperate need of peace,” said Mr. Fall.

Further, UNICEF called on all parties to the conflict to grant unrestricted access to organizations seeking to aid those affected by the crisis.

The agency said that even in areas that are not affected by the conflict, communities continue to need support, with nearly one third of the population having no access to safe drinking water and 41 percent of children under five are chronically malnourished.

Of the required USD 70.9 million in funds to provide urgent lifesaving interventions for the most vulnerable in 2015, UNICEF has received only USD 37 million, just over 50 percent of the required amount, despite the scale of the emergency.



A child holds a package of ready-to-use therapeutic food at a malnutrition centre in Bangui Paediatric Hospital in the Central African Republic. Photo: UNICEF/Pierre Terdjman

COP21: on eve of UN climate conference, Ban says 'time for action is now'



UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks to the UN News Centre ahead of the UN climate change conference, COP21, in Paris, France. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

29 November - On the eve of the opening in Paris of the United Nations climate change conference, widely known as COP21, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is urging all countries and all sectors of society to act now to reach a new universal climate agreement.

“I’m reasonably optimistic and convinced that world leaders will adopt a very ambitious universal climate change agreement at this COP21,” Mr. Ban told the UN News Centre in an interview on Sunday at the Parisian headquarters of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“We’ve been working very hard, very long – the time for action is now. I have seen growing political momentum among Member States. They know that they have to take action.”

Ahead of COP21, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the UN entity organizing the conference – has already received some 180 voluntary climate action plans from countries. Formally called Intended Nationally Determined Contributions, or INDCs, these will form the basis of the agreement expected to be reached.

As more and more INDCs were submitted, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said this shows nations are prepared to take meaningful action to address climate change. Many countries have also indicated they would like to see a mechanism in the agreement that will allow them to ramp up their ambition to reach the goal of limiting a global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius.

According to experts, a temperature rise beyond this level will cause irreversible damage to the planet by exacerbating droughts, floods, food and water shortages, affecting the most vulnerable countries first. Despite the scientific community acknowledging that the national pledges submitted so far will not limit global temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius, Mr. Ban has underscored that a successful outcome at COP21 would allow the world to ultimately achieve this target.

Tomorrow, around 150 Heads of State and Government are expected at the opening event at the Paris-Le Bourget site, an 18 hectare conference centre north-east of the capital. This space will be the main venue for the two-week meeting, with 32 “negotiating rooms,” working areas for delegations, civil society and journalists, as well as many venues dedicated to side events.

Simultaneously, within the city borders, special events will be held – such as “an afternoon with Robert Redford” at UNESCO on 6 December, and the awarding of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Equator prize – often referred to as the Academy Awards of sustainable development – taking place at the renowned Théâtre Mogador.

At the conference, the interconnectivity between sustainable development and climate issues will be one of the overarching themes. In September, world leaders adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is composed of 17 goals – the SDGs – to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

Asked how a new climate deal and these SDGs are linked, the UN Secretary-General said a strong climate agreement backed by action on the ground will help the world achieve the global goals “to make the world better and safer.”

“Goal number 13 [focuses on] climate change but if we do not implement the climate change agreement, then all the remaining 16 goals will be affected. Not a single goal can be implemented in isolation,” Mr. Ban explained.

“Science has made it plainly clear – that this climate change phenomenon is caused by human behaviour,” he continued. “It’s only natural that we human beings should change our behaviour in a sustainable way. We have to do it. We don’t have any time to lose. That’s why I am urging world leaders to demonstrate their moral and political leadership for humanity.”



The *UN News Centre* asked the Secretary-General what makes him optimistic that, in a world full of disease, war and famine, world leaders can work together instead of in their own self-interest.

“[Climate change] doesn't care about national boundaries,” he stated. “This is a global phenomenon and [leaders] understand that investing wisely in climate change will help their national economy boost. There are many countries who are investing in sustainable energy including solar energy. It's skyrocketing.”

The UN climate conference will officially open Monday when the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Laurent Fabius, is elected President of COP21. Negotiations towards a final agreement are expected to conclude on 11 December.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General today met with French President François Hollande to discuss the status of negotiations and identify key issues still under discussion. A readout issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson said they agreed that “failure to reach an agreement was not an option and would have disastrous consequences.”

The two leaders also exchanged views on the issue of counter-terrorism and shared their concern of a growing influence of Da'esh beyond Syria and Iraq.

In addition, Mr. Ban stood in solidarity today with the people of Paris who were unable to join a climate march, after it was cancelled last week due to security concerns.

Alongside scores of other people, he donated a pair of his "marching shoes" to be placed at the city's Place de la République near the scene of 20 November's terror attack, and where the climate march was due to start.

“As the world gathers in Paris to stand up for climate action, let us also stand in the shoes of all victims of terrorism, war and persecution – and respond with compassion,” said a note he wrote and left at the scene.

Following the event, the thousands of shoes contributed were donated to a non-governmental organization working with Syrian refugees.

Burkina Faso: with elections under way, Ban calls on all parties to ensure peaceful polls



Billboard promoting peace in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso. Photo: IRIN/Chris Simpson

29 November - With presidential and legislative elections under way in Burkina Faso, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on all national stakeholders to uphold their commitments throughout the process and urged them to ensure the polls are conducted peacefully.

On the occasion of the presidential and legislative elections which will mark the end of the transition period in Burkina Faso, Mr. Ban, in a statement issued by his spokesperson, called on all national stakeholders to ensure that the polls are conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner that respects the will of the people of Burkina Faso.

“He further calls on them to resolve disputes that may arise from the electoral process through established legal channels,” the statement continued, reiterating the commitment of the United Nations to support the efforts of the democratically-elected authorities of Burkina Faso to consolidate peace and stability and to advance democratic governance.

This past October, on the margins of the UN General Assembly's annual high-level segment, the Secretary-General met with Michel Kafando, the Transitional President of Burkina Faso, and expressed his sympathy for the lives lost and the many injured during the coup d'état that took place on 16 September 2015.

According to a readout issued at the time, the Secretary-General also reiterated his call on all national stakeholders to act responsibly, exercise restraint and work in the best interests of the country, while reaffirming the UN's commitment to supporting national efforts, including for the organization of the elections. Mr. Ban stressed that it would be essential to

ensure the early holding of peaceful and credible presidential and legislative elections to allow for the swift return of constitutional order in Burkina Faso.

UN strongly condemns attack on base in northern Mali that kills two 'blue helmets' and a civilian contractor



Senegalese police officers serving with the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), patrol the streets of the city of Gao, in Mali. UN Photo/Marco Dormino

28 November - The United Nations has strongly condemned a mortar attack on a UN camp in restive northern Mali earlier today, which left two peacekeepers and a civilian contractor dead, and 20 others injured, with the Security Council calling on the Malian Government to swiftly investigate the incident and bring the perpetrators to justice.

“The Secretary-General is outraged by the deadly attack against a camp of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) in Kidal that claimed the lives of two United Nations peacekeepers and one civilian contractor,” said a statement issued in the wake of the incident by Mr. Ban's spokesperson.

According to the Security Council, which condemned the attack in a separate statement, the two UN “blue helmets” were from Guinea and the contractor was from Burkina Faso.

The statement from Mr. Ban's spokesperson added that 20 peacekeepers and civilian personnel were injured, including four seriously. MINUSMA, it continued, has taken immediate steps to assist the wounded and continues to strengthen the safety and security of its personnel.

He conveyed his sincere condolences to the bereaved families and to the Governments of Burkina Faso and Guinea and expressed his profound sympathy and support to those wounded and wishes them a speedy recovery.

“The Secretary-General reiterates that these asymmetric attacks against the Mission will not impede the determination of the United Nations to support the Malian Government, the signatory parties to the peace agreement, and the people of Mali, in their efforts to achieve lasting peace and stability,” said the statement.

Stressing the urgent need to bring the perpetrators of the attack to justice, the UN chief also reiterated that attacks targeting UN peacekeepers may constitute war crimes under international law.

In a statement to the press, the members of the Security Council also called on the Government to swiftly investigate the attack and bring the perpetrators, and they also underscored such targeting peacekeepers may constitute war crimes.

The members of the Security Council reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the UN Charter, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts.

Reiterating their full support for MINUSMA and the French forces that support it, the Council members also reiterated their strong support for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mongi Hamdi, and for MINUSMA to assist the Malian authorities and people in their efforts to bring lasting peace and stability to their country, including through MINUSMA's support to the implementation of the peace and reconciliation agreement.

Earlier in the day, Mr. Hamdi, who is also the Head of MINUSMA, strongly condemned the attack and said the Mission was conducting medical evacuations while strengthening its security apparatus.

"I wish to reaffirm that these attacks will not deter the United Nations to support the Malian people and the peace process, including through assistance to the implementation of the Peace Agreement and reconciliation in Mali," he said.

MINUSMA, Mr. Hamdi stated, continues to strengthen measures against such threats in Mali for the Malians and protection of UN personnel. “I express my solidarity with and salute the brave men and women serving in MINUSMA [across] the country for their efforts to bring lasting peace to Malians in these difficult conditions,” he said.

In Malta, Ban urges Commonwealth leaders to join UN in 'final push' to wipe out polio

28 November - A world that may have once seemed unimaginable is within reach – a polio-free world, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, urging leaders gathered in Malta for the Commonwealth Summit to build on the momentum that has been generated in recent years and join the United Nations in making “the final push to wipe out polio forever.”

“Polio struck down many of my generation. Now we are on the verge of striking down polio,” Mr. Ban told participants, including senior Government officials and polio survivors at an event on the margins of the Commonwealth Summit, which opened yesterday in Valletta, the capital of the island nation.



Secretary-General at Polio Eradication event on margins of 2015 Commonwealth Summit, Valletta, Malta. UN Photo/Rick Bajornas

Recalling his recent visit to Nigeria, the Secretary-General told the gathering that has been witnessing the progress himself, and that indeed, for the first time in history, Nigeria and the African continent reported a full year without one case of polio.

“These and other achievements are testaments to the power of global partnership and concerted leadership. They are a tribute to millions of dedicated health workers on the frontlines,” said the UN chief, while warning: “We must stay vigilant.”

He went on to outline what he sees as at least three keys to achieving a polio-free world: the full engagement of all sectors of society, including religious and traditional leaders, youth and women's groups and other partners such as Rotary International; ensuring that in areas of conflict and insecurity, that warring parties must allow safe passage for health workers to access and vaccinate children; and the commitment of the global community to fill the funding gaps and keep this promise to the world's children.

“We know when children are protected from polio, they are better protected against all diseases,” he emphasized, thanking all the Commonwealth leaders here for their resolve. “Together, let us make the final push – and wipe out polio forever. With your support, I know we will succeed,” he concluded.

'Hidden epidemic' of HIV hitting adolescents in Asia-Pacific region, UN agencies warn



Adolescents in Chiang-Mai, Thailand, learning about HIV/AIDS. Photo: UNICEF/Thailand/2015/HIV

30 November - The Asia-Pacific region is facing a ‘hidden epidemic’ of HIV among adolescents, with an

estimated 50,000 new infections in 2014 among those aged 15 to 19, United Nations agencies reported today, calling on Governments to develop specifically targeted prevention strategies.

“Adolescence is a time of transition and risk-taking, as children navigate the difficult journey to adulthood,” UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) East Asia and Pacific Director Daniel Toole said of the report, which is being released ahead of tomorrow’s World AIDS Day, showed that those at highest risk include gay men and other men who have sex with men, transgender people, injecting drug users, and people who buy and sell sex.

The 2014 figure accounts for almost 15 per cent of all new cases in the region. Although new infections are falling overall, they are rising among adolescents, coinciding with an increase in risky behaviour, such as multiple sexual partners and inconsistent condom use.

Titled *Adolescents: Under the Radar in the Asia-Pacific AIDS Response* and published by the Asia-Pacific Inter-Agency Task Team on Young Key Populations, which includes UNICEF and the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS),

the report warned that the AIDS epidemic cannot be ended as a public health threat by 2030 without tackling the issue of adolescents.

It called on Governments to provide access to adolescent-sensitive HIV testing and treatment and develop better data and adolescent-specific laws and policies, including comprehensive sex education in schools and through social media, information on where to get an HIV test, and condom use.

“It is vital for adolescents to know their HIV status, and get treatment if they need it, but in many countries they are turned away from HIV testing centres,” it stressed.

Ten countries account for 98 per cent of those aged 10 to 19 living with HIV in the region – Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, the

Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam. There are now some 220,000 adolescents in the region living with HIV, with large cities like Bangkok, Hanoi and Jakarta hubs of new infections.

“In Asia and the Pacific – as worldwide – adolescents have been largely neglected as a distinct group in focused efforts to prevent HIV transmission and prolong the life of people living with the virus,” Mr. Toole and UNAIDS Regional Director Steven J. Kraus wrote in a joint foreword to the report.

“The result is rising infections among 10-19 year-olds at risk of HIV, and an increase in the number of AIDS-related deaths. These are preventable deaths. As parents, teachers and leaders – as societies – we ask that children in their second decade of life assume ever-growing responsibilities as they approach adulthood.

“And yet, we have responsibilities towards them – to ensure their right to health care, to education, to protection, and to development. Failure to prioritize adolescents in the HIV response leads to injustice at many levels,” they stressed, calling for new action from the highest levels of Government, and new ways of reaching adolescents at risk of and living with HIV.

Ban welcomes peaceful elections in Burkina Faso, salutes strong participation of women at polls

30 November - The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the peaceful conduct of the presidential and legislative elections in Burkina Faso over the weekend and congratulated the people of Burkina Faso for their enthusiastic participation, “which shows their strong commitment to the democratic process.”

Mr. Ban, in particular, saluted the “strong participation of women in the electoral process,” according to a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

“As Burkina Faso awaits the results, the Secretary-General encourages all political leaders and national stakeholders to maintain the peaceful atmosphere that prevailed on Election Day. He calls on all parties to resolve any dispute that might arise through established legal procedures,” the statement concluded.



UN Photo/Staton Winter