In the headlines:

- Paris, Beirut terror attacks must not be pretext for slamming shut doors to refugees – UN officials
- Indigenous peoples’ voices must be heard at Paris climate change conference, UN agency says
- Syria: UN envoy cites possibility of ceasefire, future political framework to end conflict
- Marking World Toilet Day, UN urges ‘open, frank’ discussion on importance of hygiene and sanitation
- Senior UN relief official warns health and education systems in war-torn Yemen ‘near collapse’
- Ahead of UN conference, Reykjavik and businesses sign declaration on climate change
- UN Millennium Development Goal target to reduce malaria burden achieved
- Sudan: for first time in four years, UN relief agencies visit areas in Central Darfur
- Security Council condemns ‘heinous, cowardly’ murders of Chinese, Norwegian citizens by ISIL
- In Kosovo, UN efforts focused on promoting stability and political progress
- Settling Israeli-Palestinian conflict would help curb terrorism, says UN Middle East envoy
- With Lebanon facing multiple challenges, Security Council reiterates support for country’s institutions

More stories inside

Paris, Beirut terror attacks must not be pretext for slamming shut doors to refugees – UN officials

19 November - The United Nations General Assembly met today on tackling the global refugee crisis in the shadow of last week’s terrorist attacks in Paris and Beirut, with top officials pleading that the door for genuine refuge not be slammed shut in the name of security.

“How are we to balance security needs and moral and legal obligations to protect refugees and others in need of protection?” Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson asked the informal meeting, which had been scheduled before last week’s attacks, to discuss ways to advance and finance a ‘Comprehensive Response to the Global Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis.’

“This balance must be found without giving in on our basic values and without closing the door to those who have already endured tremendous suffering,” he said.

“Those who flee this violence should not be punished twice – first by war or oppressive forces which persecute them at home. And, second, by unjust, dangerous stigma which even shockingly associate the refugees with their attackers. The refugees, if any, understand better than anyone the barbaric cruelty of violent extremism.”

General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft also addressed the security issue, which has seen calls after the attacks for limiting refugee access lest terrorist infiltrate among them.
“In no way do those attacks reduce the moral and legal obligations of the international community towards displaced people,” he stressed. “On the contrary, they serve to underline even further why so many people are risking their lives to secure international protection and why we – the international community – must not fail them, for a second time.”

Mr. Eliasson noted that not since the end of the Second World War have so many people – more than 60 million – been forcibly displaced around the world.

“We face the challenge of saving lives and protecting the persecuted and the vulnerable – the children, women and men who have fled bombardment and death and unbearable conditions at home as well as those who are now falling prey to unscrupulous criminal traffickers,” he said.

“The recent terrorist attacks are urgent reminders of the need for migration and refugee flows to be managed properly and with respect for humanitarian and refugee law as well as for human rights. Our most effective response to these attacks is to stand even firmer in our humanistic and humanitarian resolve and ensure openness and protection to those in desperate need.”

Turning to the meeting’s principal goal of dealing with the overall humanitarian and refugee crisis, Mr. Eliasson stressed the vital need for financing. “The gap between humanitarian needs and available funds has never been higher that it is today,” he stressed.

He praised the continued resilience of host communities to refugees – from Kenya, Ethiopia to Pakistan, from Iraq and Iran to Bangladesh, from Greece, Italy, Germany and Sweden to Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and beyond.

“These are some of the countries taking on more than their share of a global responsibility. It is time for the world to show greater solidarity and come together in a global compact to provide support, protection and asylum,” he declared.

“Let me admit that our current policies do not rise to the challenge before us. The challenge will not be met by sealing borders, building fences, or taking a strict security approach to the movement of refugees and migrants. Instead, we must expand safe and legal paths to safety that put middlemen and traffickers out of business.”

He called for better reception centres and claims processing, creative solutions to find sufficient places of refuge through resettlement, private sponsorship, humanitarian visas, family reunification and other means, and more opportunities for local integration and access for refugees to job markets.

History shows that migrants and refugees bring to their communities social, cultural and economic enrichment and play a key role in remittances sent home for development. “Raising awareness of these positive contributions and countering hateful and xenophobic speech is a moral duty, but also a matter of global economic and social growth,” he stressed.

He also called for more preventive measures, investing more in cooling tensions before they erupt into full-blown crises, and highlighted the urgency of developing a new global compact for human mobility based on fairly sharing responsibility, a call echoed by Mr. Lykketoft, who said the crisis requires short, medium and long-term action to tackle the root causes of displacement.

“Resolving conflicts, preventing violent extremism and supporting long-term development are central aspects of this comprehensive response,” he added, calling for additional steps to protect the displaced, predictable and adequate financing for humanitarian action, and support for those countries bearing the greatest burden in this global crisis.
Syria: UN envoy cites possibility of ceasefire, future political framework to end conflict

19 November - After briefing an informal session of the United Nations General Assembly about the “deliverables” that had come out of the recent international talks in Vienna on the Syria crisis, UN Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura today indicated the possibility of a ceasefire in the war-torn country, through continued discussions and with active inclusion of all parties involved in the conflict.

The key deliverables reached by the so-called International Syria Support Group, which has thus far held two rounds of talks in the Austrian capital, Mr. de Mistura said, included a future political roadmap on a political process in Syria, and also on aspects related to a nationwide ceasefire connected to a political dialogue to take place in Geneva.

“This is an opportunity for the Syrian opposition to come and be as inclusive as possible and as prepared as possible,” he told reporters at the UN Headquarters on being asked about the list of participants in future talks.

Mr. de Mistura emphasized that while the possibility of establishing a ceasefire is not guaranteed, he was hopeful that certain countries who “have the capacity of influencing those who are fighting,” in Syria are part of the peace talks and added that these countries “have an interest in seeing a ceasefire taking place.”

“We already have the list from the Syrian Government. There are more than 40 people. We know who will be leading them at the Geneva discussions but it is extremely important to have a cohesive, comprehensive and well-inclusive opposition [group],” said Mr. de Mistura stressing the need to include the opposition parties in the discussions.

Speaking about the failure of local ceasefires, Mr. de Mistura said that without the influence of foreign sponsors, the ceasefires are unlikely to hold.

However, he added that while the ongoing peace talks aim to establish a ceasefire throughout the country, the regions now controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), such as Raqqa and Palmyra, will likely not be a part of the ceasefire.

When asked about the disagreements over President Bashar al-Assad’s role, Mr. de Mistura emphasized that the Vienna talks included plans of not only establishing a nationwide ceasefire in Syria, but also the formation of new non-sectarian governance structures, a new constitution, and conducting elections that go beyond parliamentary polls.

“That’s quite a package that even a disappointed opposition could look at with interest,” he said.

Lastly, the UN envoy dismissed the recent comments made by President Assad in an interview stating that no political process will be allowed unless Syria is liberated from terrorists.

“Every time there is a political process starting and the possibility of a ceasefire there are going to be a lot of statements which are in fact preparing, prepositioning [and] positioning the sides. What matters is what happens in Vienna meetings and the negotiations,” said Mr. de Mistura.

Just before Mr. de Mistura addressed the press, Mogens Lykketoft, President of the General Assembly said that in light of recent developments in Syria and the region, it is crucial that the United Nations enhances the level of its engagement and contributes to restoring sustainable peace and stability. “We are very hopeful that momentum can now be created.”
Senior UN relief official warns health and education systems in war-torn Yemen ‘near collapse’

19 November - Warning that “humanitarian agencies cannot be a substitute for [Yemen’s] basic services,” a senior United Nations relief official wrapped up a three-day visit to the country stressing that its health and education systems in the country are on the brink of collapse and stressed that “peace is the only solution to prevent a humanitarian disaster.”

“Eight months of conflict have had a devastating effect on all aspects of life in Yemen, with the health and education sectors the hardest hit,” said the Head of Operation for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), John Ging in a news release.

Mr. Ging also reported that a sharp reduction in imports and a ban on exports have reduced public and commercial revenues, resulting in collapsing services and livelihoods.

“Ministries are running out of money for supplies and salaries for health workers and teachers, and there are widespread shortages of medicines to treat chronic illnesses. MSF [Médecins Sans Frontières] is warning of a catastrophic situation for dialysis patients in particular,” he added.

On his visit, from 15 to 17 November, Mr. Ging met affected people, humanitarian partners, and representatives of the Government and the opposition and stressed that everyone “called for an immediate end to the conflict and the resumption of normal commercial activities.”

Mr. Ging commended the work of Yemeni civil society organizations, national and international non-governmental organizations, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent (ICRC) and UN organizations during the course of the crisis.

"There has been an impressive scale-up of aid operations thanks to the heroic efforts of humanitarian staff, but we must be clear that humanitarian agencies cannot substitute for a country's public services,” noted Mr. Ging.

OCHA reported that UN and its humanitarian partners are doing their utmost to deliver aid despite the challenging environment.

Agencies are distributing food to 2.4 million people on a monthly basis, providing medical supplies to improve health access for 2.6 million people, and treating 97,000 severely malnourished children, OCHA said adding that country-wide vaccination campaigns continue.

Further, the UN agency said that emergency water and sanitation support has reached 3.7 million people since April.

Mr. Ging stressed the need for all parties of the conflict to respect International Humanitarian Law saying that it is ‘unacceptable to prevent aid deliveries or to steal humanitarian supplies.’

Lastly, he appealed for the immediate lifting of the siege on Taiz city and an end to the bureaucratic obstacles to aid delivery inside Yemen.
UN Millennium Development Goal target to reduce malaria burden achieved

19 November - With roughly six weeks left under the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – a set of eight universally-agreed goals adopted in 2000 to rid the world of extreme poverty and disease by 2015 – global leaders, diplomats and health experts are gathering at the UN today in New York to celebrate the progress made against one of the world’s leading killers: malaria.

“The world’s success in rolling back malaria shows just what can be achieved with the right kind of determination and partnerships,” said Mogens Lykketoft, the President of the UN General Assembly.

“It provides bold inspiration to all nations that seek to create a healthy environment for their children and adults. We can and we must eliminate malaria by 2030,” he added, noting that this will require full implementation of the new strategy developed by the Roll Back Malaria Partnership and the World Health Organization (WHO).

“In it, we have the path forward – I urge all member states to fully support implementation of this strategic plan,” Mr. Lykketoft stressed.

Thanks to collective efforts and increased financing, the UN is announcing that the world has met and surpassed MDG6 targets to halt and begin reversing malaria incidence by 2015. Progress in the fight against malaria since 2000 averted more than 6.2 million malaria deaths, some 97 per cent of which have been among young children.

In Africa alone – where some 90 per cent of all malaria-related deaths still occur – an estimated 69 per cent reduction in malaria mortality among children under the age of five over the past fifteen years has reportedly helped to improve overall child survival rates and has directly contributed to MDG4.

In addition, over 100 countries are already free of malaria, and at least 55 are on track to reduce malaria case incidence by 75 per cent by the end of the year. For the first time in history, fewer people than ever are getting infected with malaria in Africa, and many countries around the world are focusing on elimination targets, with new regional commitments announced in the Americas, Eastern Mediterranean, Asia Pacific, and Africa.

“This today, we celebrate major advances in our fight against malaria,” UN Secretary-General, Mr. Ban Ki-moon said in a message.

“With stronger coordination by the Roll Back Malaria Partnership and increased financing, global mortality rates have decreased by more than half since 2000, and the global MDG target for malaria has been achieved,” he stated.

Despite unprecedented advancements, WHO estimates approximately 214 million cases of malaria infection in 2015, claiming the lives of approximately 472,000 people, the majority of them African children under five years of age. With more than half of the world’s population at risk of malaria infection, the health agency warned that malaria remains a major cause and consequence of poverty and inequity worldwide, impeding economic development, undermining food security, stopping children from going to school, and absorbing the capacity of national systems to respond effectively to health security threats.

Meanwhile, lives saved from effective malaria interventions have been linked to a 20 per cent reduction in all-cause child mortality in sub-Saharan Africa since 2000, while efforts to prevent malaria in pregnancy have averted nearly 95,000 newborn deaths between 2009 and 2012.

As the world transitions to a new set of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) recently adopted by world leaders in
September – which will build on the MDGs – the Roll Back Malaria Partnership is also urging continued commitment to achieve malaria elimination by 2030 and help advance broader development efforts across sectors.

“Under the MDGs, we have seen what can be achieved when we join our efforts and come together in a coordinated fashion,” said Hervé Verhoosel, Representative of the Roll Back Malaria Partnership Secretariat in New York.

“As we set our sights on elimination, we stand to avert nearly 3 billion cases of infection and generate some $4 trillion in additional economic output over the next 15 years. But we must ensure political commitment and predictable financial resources necessary to carry us over the finish line,” he underlined.

**Security Council condemns ‘heinous, cowardly’ murders of Chinese, Norwegian citizens by ISIL**

19 November - Condemning in the strongest terms the ‘heinous and cowardly’ murder of Chinese citizen, Fan Jinghui, and Norwegian citizen, Ole Johan Grimsgaard-Ofstad, by the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant (ISIL), the members of the United Nations Security Council today emphasized that such continued acts of barbarism “do not intimidate them, but rather stiffen their resolve.”

“These crimes once again demonstrate the brutality of ISIL, which is responsible for thousands of crimes and abuses against people from all faiths, ethnicities and nationalities, and without regard to any basic value of humanity,” said a Council press statement in the wake of the murder of the two men, who had reportedly been held hostage by ISIL since September.

The members of the Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice and stressed that those responsible for the murders will be held accountable.

The Council urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with China, Norway and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

The members of the Security Council expressed their deep sympathy and condolences to the family of the victim, to the Government of China and Norway, as well as to the families of all victims of ISIL, said the statement.

Further, the Council reiterated that ISIL must be defeated and that the intolerance, violence and hatred it espouses must be stamped out and ‘stiffened’ its resolve to initiate a common effort amongst Governments and institutions, including those in the region most affected, to counter ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings and entities associated with Al-Qaida, in line with its resolution 2170(2014).

Additionally, the Council recalled that ISIL, included on Al-Qaida Sanctions List, is subject to the asset freeze and arms embargo in resolution 2161 (2014) and also emphasized that any individual or entity that provides financial or material support to the group, including the provision of arms or recruits, is eligible to be added to the Al-Qaida Sanctions List and subject to sanctions measures.

In its statement, the Security Council reaffirmed the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable, regardless of their motivation, wherever, whenever and by whomsoever committed.
Settling Israeli-Palestinian conflict would help curb terrorism, says UN Middle East envoy

19 November - Resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would help counter the extremism behind the “abhorrent terrorist attacks” in Paris, Beirut and the Sinai, a senior United Nations official on the Middle East peace process said today, referring to last week’s bloody attacks and the downing of a Russian plane in Egypt last month.

“These tragic events serve to reinforce the reality that the extremism and terrorism that has infected many parts of the Middle East is not constrained by borders,” Special Coordinator on the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov told the Security Council in the latest UN update on the situation.

“It can strike anywhere, anytime, and poses a grave threat to international peace and security. Against this backdrop we cannot separate the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from this global threat. Establishing a Palestinian state, while addressing Israel's substantial security concerns, would yield major dividends not only for Israelis and Palestinians alike, but for the entire region.”

Referring to the recent upsurge of violence in Israel and the West Bank, he noted that over the past month, there were 35 reported attacks, including stabbings or attempted stabbings, shootings, or car-rammings by Palestinians against Israelis, leaving six Israelis dead and 36 injured, while 25 suspected Palestinian assailants had been killed.

Mr. Mladenov, speaking to the Council via videoconference, called on all parties to implement steps to end the violence, including “immediate efforts by all political, religious and community leaders to stop the hate-fuelled incitement that glorifies the murder of Jews or that brands all Palestinians as terrorists.”

The status quo on the major religious site in Jerusalem that houses the El Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock, known as Haram-Al Sharif to Muslims and the Temple Mount to Jews, must be maintained, he said, and Israel must address the apparent impunity for settler violence against Palestinians.

He also called for bolstering security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority to prevent any further deterioration of the situation, and said the use of firearms by Israeli security forces should be employed only when less extreme means are insufficient to address an imminent threat of death or serious injury.

“Dealing with the threats that kill the prospect of a two-state solution is also critical,” Mr. Mladenov warned, voicing concern at the recent Israeli decision to issue tenders for 436 housing units in the East Jerusalem settlement of Ramat Shlomo, the first such announcement in over a year.

“The reality in which a settler state is emerging in the occupied West Bank must be reversed if hope is to be reignited.”

He called raid by Israeli forces on hospitals a “troubling development.”

“Based on developments on the ground, the current conditions make a return to negotiations a challenging prospect,” he said. “But time, as always, is not on our side. Trust must be rebuilt and, for that, bold and significant steps on the ground must be taken in order to tangibly improve lives and irreversibly move toward the end of occupation and the establishment of a Palestinian state.

“In the period before an eventual return to negotiations, the parties and their international partners must pursue measures
that will significantly improve the lives of Palestinians, including by strengthening their institutions, economic prospects and security. This will require substantial policy changes on the ground by Israel.”

He called on the Security Council to provide additional guidance on developing a new peace architecture for resolving the conflict.

“I refuse to be convinced that Israelis and Palestinians want to live ‘by the sword’ and in a state of perpetual violence,” he concluded. “We owe it to the many Palestinians and Israelis who, despite endless setbacks and disappointments, have continued to maintain hope that negotiated peace can be realised.

“I can assure you that the Secretary-General remains steadfast in his support of any effort to restore the hope that a two-state solution can be achieved through negotiations. But the long road ahead requires leadership. Leadership that has been glaringly absent to date.”

**Indigenous peoples’ voices must be heard at Paris climate change conference, UN agency says**

19 November - Indigenous peoples own, occupy or manage up to 65 per cent of the Earth’s land surface, yet they have largely been excluded from national plans prepared for next month’s United Nations climate change conference in Paris, according to the UN Development Programme (UNDP), which is working to address the issue.

Together with the International Indigenous Peoples’ Forum on Climate Change, UNDP is bringing indigenous leaders and high-level government officials together, often for the first time, to ensure that the priorities of indigenous peoples, whose lands are often seized for intensive greenhouse gas-emitting development, are embedded in national proposals for the conference, widely known as COP21.

“This pioneering initiative, underway in 21 countries around the world, aims to ensure that the global climate agreement reached in Paris recognizes indigenous land and natural resource rights, and the crucial role of indigenous peoples in climate change mitigation,” UNDP said in a news release.

It highlighted research showing that secure rights to indigenous and community-held land protect against deforestation, which with other land uses represents 11 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions blamed for climate change.

It noted that a review by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 119 national plans to combat the problem submitted as of last month makes no mention of indigenous peoples.

Forests owned and controlled by indigenous peoples and local communities contain about 37.7 billion tons of carbon, 29 times more than the annual emissions of the world’s passenger vehicles, according to estimates by the World Resources Institute and Rights and Resources Initiative.

But more than 80 per cent of all lands utilized or occupied by indigenous peoples lack legal protection, and are highly vulnerable to being seized by private companies, individuals, and governments themselves, in a non-stop drive toward carbon-intensive investments in agriculture, logging, mining, oil and gas, dams and roads, and tourism.

“The same development that fuels climate change, continues to rob indigenous peoples of their human rights,” Victoria Tauli-Corputz, UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, said, stressing the need to protect those right and the traditional knowledge that has kept ecosystems healthy.
Marking World Toilet Day, UN urges ‘open, frank’ discussion on importance of hygiene and sanitation

19 November - On World Toilet Day, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon is urging broad action to renew efforts in providing access to adequate sanitation for all and work to comprehensively address the “vicious cycle” connecting poor sanitation and malnutrition, the theme of this year's observance of the Day.

“Sanitation is central to human and environmental health as well as to individual opportunity, development and dignity. Yet today, worldwide, one in every three people lacks improved sanitation, and one in every eight practices open defecation,” said Mr. Ban Ki-moon in his message on the Day.

The recently adopted 2030 Agenda recognizes the central role sanitation plays in sustainable development, the Secretary-General said, explaining that the integrated nature of the new agenda means the world needs to better understand the connections between the building blocks of development.

“In that spirit, this year’s observance of World Toilet Day focuses on the vicious cycle connecting poor sanitation and malnutrition,” he stressed.

Poor sanitation and hygiene are at the heart of disease and malnutrition. Every year too many children under the age of five have their lives cut short or altered forever as a result of poor sanitation: more than 800,000 children worldwide – or one every two minutes – die from diarrhoea, and almost half of all deaths of children under five are due to undernutrition.

The UN chief went on to say that a quarter of all children under five were stunted, and countless other children, as well as adults, are falling seriously ill, often suffering long-term, even lifelong, health and developmental consequences, due to poor sanitation and hygiene.

“Parents and guardians carry the cost of these consequences. Women in particular women bear the direct brunt,” Mr. Ban said.

Despite the compelling moral and economic case for action on sanitation, he noted that “progress is too little and too slow.”

“By many accounts, sanitation is the most-missed target of the Millennium Development Goals,” the Secretary-General said: “This is why the Call to Action on Sanitation was launched in 2013, and why we aim to end open defecation by 2025.”

“The 2030 Agenda calls on us to renew our efforts in providing access to adequate sanitation worldwide,” Mr. Ban underscored, adding: “We must continue to educate and protect communities at risk, and to change cultural perceptions and long-standing practices that hinder the quest for dignity.”

The Secretary-General urged the world to work together and have an open frank discussion on the importance of toilets and sanitation, so that “we can improve the health and well-being of one-third of the human family.”

Echoing some of those sentiments, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) pointed out that lack of access to toilets is endangering millions of the world’s poorest children.

A new report, Improving Nutrition Outcomes with Better Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, produced by UNICEF, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the World Health Organization (WHO), for the first time brings together years of research and case studies which demonstrate the link between sanitation and malnutrition. More
importantly, it provides guidance for action.

“We need to bring concrete and innovative solutions to the problem of where people go to the toilet, otherwise we are failing millions of our poorest and most vulnerable children,” said Sanjay Wijesekera, head of UNICEF’s global water, sanitation and hygiene programmes.

“The proven link with malnutrition is one more thread that reinforces how interconnected our responses to sanitation have to be if we are to succeed,” he added.

According to UNICEF, some countries, including Pakistan, Ethiopia, Mali, and Democratic Republic of the Congo have made significant progress in addressing both access to sanitation and the nutritional status of their children. Many have successfully used the agency’s Community-led Total Sanitation approach, in which affected populations themselves devise local solutions to the problem of open defecation.

“There are no excuses not to act on access to toilets, even in the poorest communities, or during emergencies,” said Mr. Wijesekera. “On the other hand, there are millions of reasons – each one a child who is stunted or wasted, or worse, who sickens and dies – to treat this with the urgency it deserves.”

The UN General Assembly, in a 2013 resolution on “Sanitation for All” designated 19 November as World Toilet Day. The Day is coordinated by UN-Water in collaboration with Governments and relevant stakeholders.

**Ahead of UN conference, Reykjavik and businesses sign declaration on climate change**

19 November - Ahead of the UN climate change conference starting on 30 November, a declaration on climate issues has been signed in Iceland by the city of Reykjavik and more than one hundred businesses and institutions, all pledging to take active measures to cut global warming by reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and cut waste.

According to the agreement, supported by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the progress will be monitored, and the companies will regularly publish information on their actions. This joint venture was launched by the City of Reykjavik and Festa – the Icelandic Centre for Corporate Social Responsibility.

The signing of the Declaration marks the formal commencement of the project and is intended to motivate businesses and institutions to reduce their emissions of greenhouse gases, thus actively taking responsibility towards global environmental concerns and their local community.

Participants will reportedly be offered information about climate issues – both practical guidance and accounts of the experience of other businesses in reducing their greenhouse emissions. The businesses which are affiliated to Festa, the agencies and institutions of the City of Reykjavik, as well as 300 of the largest companies in Iceland, were invited to take part in the project.

The UNFCCC-backed declaration touches the lives of more than 70,000 people directly as the companies employ a total of more than 43,000 people in addition to over 30,000 students who attend the educational institutions which are participating.

Meanwhile, the services provided by these businesses and agencies are said to affect every person in Iceland, in one way or another. In addition to its leadership of the project, the City of Reykjavik will also participate in measures to reduce emissions.

“The policy of the City of Reykjavík is to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases by 35 per cent by 2020,” said its Mayor Dagur B. Eggertsson.

“This policy was first formulated in 2009, and it now forms a part of the Reykjavik Municipal Plan. The City administration
is also developing strategies to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases arising from its own activities. The City of Reykjavik will certainly make its own contribution in this collaborative project, and we will also be able to learn much from our collaboration with businesses," he added.

The Declaration, which was signed in Reykjavik’s Höfði House says “the nations of the world now face the consequences of climate change,” and that “the United Nations play a leading role in analysing the problem, addressing it, and adjusting to altered conditions.”

It also highlights that “cities and towns, together with businesses of all sizes, have a growing role to play with respect to reducing emissions of greenhouse gases, and meeting targets regarding emissions.”

Meanwhile, Ketill Berg Magnússon, the CEO of Festa, said that many managers of businesses relate environmental issues to the long-term prospects of their companies.

“They have realized that the operations of businesses must be in harmony with the society in which they operate,” Mr. Magnússon said, adding that businesses around the world have increasingly been taking a stand on environmental issues.

**Sudan: for first time in four years, UN relief agencies visit areas in Central Darfur**

*Residents of Fanga Suk village in East Jebel Marra, Sudan. Photo: UNAMID/Albert González Farran*

**19 November** - Insufficient food, shelter, health services are among the top challenges displaced people are facing in Central Darfur, the United Nations relief wing has warned in a latest humanitarian update on the situation in Sudan.

For the first time since 2011 and after months of planning, an inter-agency mission visited Fanga Suk in Central Darfur’s Northern Jebel Marra locality, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), and found that 7,875 displaced people and 10,000 people from the host community are in need of food, emergency shelter and household supplies, as well as water, health, education and protection services.

In this regard, the mission indicated that food, emergency shelter and household supplies will be soon provided to the displaced people in Fanga Suk.

Meanwhile, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) is in contact with the Government to accelerate water and sanitation access in the area.

Noting that communities in West Darfur have difficulties to manage water facilities, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UNICEF, along with partners, is beefing up trainings on veterinary services and water management, said the report.

With the mosquito-borne dengue fever being epidemic in 21 localities and causing about one third of the fatalities among the 392 cases in Darfur, the World Health Organization (WHO) has helped implementing about one third vector control activities by providing trainings to medical staff and activating additional surveillance sites, according to the report.

Turning to the Blue Nile state, despite the ongoing conflict, UNICEF is working with partners to offer child protection services to some 13,700 children, while confronting travel delay and insecurity challenges, according to the report.

Moreover, intensified fighting in South Sudan has led to a new influx refugees into Sudan. The United Nations refugee agency, in response, has boosted humanitarian assistance while addressing water and sanitation needs by funding to build 2,000 more latrines.
In Kosovo, UN efforts focused on promoting stability and political progress

19 November - Calling for continued support from the Security Council, the top United Nations official in Kosovo today said the UN Mission there (UNMIK) is continuing to focus its efforts on promoting stability, political progress and respect for human rights.

“I arrived amid renewed political turbulence in Kosovo, and developments during the past week have produced additional potential setbacks in the implementation of the EU-led Belgrade-Pristina dialogue,” Zahir Tanin, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo and Head of UNMIK told the Council, briefing them for the first time since taking up his post in October.

He said he met with the top leadership in both Pristina and Belgrade, as well as with the UN’s international partners and political, community, and religious leaders on the ground.

“It is clear to me that strong leadership from both Pristina and Belgrade, and equally, cohesive actions among the international presences are required if progress is to be sustained,” Mr. Tanin noted, adding that genuine progress was achieved in the EU-facilitated meeting in Brussels on 25 August which led to a package of agreements.

“Leaders in Pristina and Belgrade continue to demonstrate a far-sighted commitment to putting the interests of the people first,” he stressed. “Regardless of shorter term political posturing and problems, I perceive on both sides an underlying resolve to overcome some of the most difficult issues affecting mutual relations through the dialogue. The gains, however, face continuous challenges which affect full and timely implementation of agreements, as demonstrated during the most recent days.”

On several occasions between July and October, violent tactics and disruptive behaviour impeded the proceedings of the Assembly of Kosovo – the institution at the core of the democratic process – Mr. Tanin said. Members of the political opposition reportedly used tear gas and other objects in the Assembly chamber.

Meanwhile, he said reconciliation also requires enhanced effort to determine the fate of persons missing from the conflict, with more than 1,600 persons still unaccounted for. He echoed the Secretary-General’s message on the importance of continued progress in the process of the establishment of the Specialist Court, as agreed between the European Union and Kosovo.

Updating on the number of returns to Kosovo of persons displaced as a result of the conflict and its aftermath, he said the current trend indicates that the number of returnees in 2015 will be the lowest since the year 2000.

Turning to the present influx of refugees and migrants transiting through the Western Balkans in unprecedented numbers, the Head of UNMIK underlined that while Kosovo has been less directly affected so far, the authorities and the international presences are working together to prepare contingencies.

Finally, on the issue of terrorism, he insisted that it demands close cooperation among regional and international stakeholders, and in this light Kosovo’s recent adoption of a strategy for the prevention of violent extremism and radicalisation is one important element.
With Lebanon facing multiple challenges, Security Council reiterates support for country’s institutions

19 November - In the wake of last week’s deadly terrorist bombing in Beirut and the ongoing negative impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon’s stability, the United Nations Security Council today reiterated “in these challenging circumstances” its strong support for Lebanon’s State institutions, including the Armed Forces and security services, in their efforts to safeguard the country.

In a statement to the press, the Security Council reiterated its strong condemnation of the terrorist attack carried out by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), also known as Da’esh, on 12 November 2015 in Beirut, killing at least 43 and injuring more than 200 people.

The Council underlined the need to bring the perpetrators of these terrorist attacks to justice.

Further to the statement, the members of the Security Council reiterated in these challenging circumstances their strong support for Lebanon’s state institutions, including the Lebanese Armed Forces and security services, in their efforts to safeguard the security and stability of the country.

Expressing continuing concern at the negative impact of the Syrian crisis on Lebanon’s stability and the immediate threat to its security, the Council reiterated the importance of Lebanon’s policy of disassociation and called on all Lebanese parties to cease any involvement in the Syrian crisis, consistent with their commitment in the Ministerial declaration of the current Government and in the Baabda Declaration of 12 June 2012.

On other matters, the members of the Security Council expressed deep concern over the 18-month vacancy in the Presidency of the Republic, which seriously impairs Lebanon’s ability to address the security, economic, social, and humanitarian challenges facing the country.

As such, they called on all Lebanese leaders to adhere to Lebanon’s Constitution and to the Taef Agreement and National Pact, to put Lebanon’s stability and national interests ahead of partisan politics, and act responsibly and with leadership and flexibility to urgently convene a parliamentary session and proceed to the election of a President.

The members of the Security Council noted with concern the deep socio-economic impact of the refugee crisis on Lebanon and urged Members States to increase assistance to Lebanon.

Reiterating its full support for the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), the Council renewed its call on all parties to abide scrupulously by their obligation to respect the safety of UNIFIL and other United Nations personnel.

The members of the Security Council expressed appreciation for the outcome of the latest ministerial meeting of the International Support Group for Lebanon (ISG) convened by the Secretary-General on September 30, 2015 and urged the ISG to continue its work in coordination with the Special Coordinator to seek opportunities to help address rising challenges to Lebanon’s security and stability.

The Council also noted that it was briefed on 18 November 2015 by UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag on the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1701, which ended the month-long 2006 war between Israel and Hizbollah in Lebanon.

The members of the Security Council recalled all of the Council’s previous resolutions and the statements of its President on...
the situation in Lebanon, and they reaffirmed their strong support for the territorial integrity, sovereignty, and political independence of Lebanon.

**In call to Myanmar’s President, Ban urges cooperation following opposition election win**

**19 November** - In a telephone conversation with Myanmar’s President Thein Sein today, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all sides to cooperate in addressing the South-East Asian country’s major challenges following the opposition’s election victory this month.

He stressed that future generations would benefit from the foundations of democracy established by President Thein Sein's administration and pledged continuing UN support for Myanmar’s progress along the path toward a peaceful, inclusive multi-ethnic and multi-religious democracy, according to areadout on the call.

He noted that as discussions proceed for the formation of a new government, all major stakeholders must work in a spirit of unity, reconciliation and cooperation to address the major challenges confronting the nation, including those of national reconstruction, stability and development.

They must also tackle the issues of communal polarization, marginalization of minorities and advancing the peace process, voicing concern at the recent escalation of tensions in Shan and Kachin states and their impact in loss of civilian lives, as well as on the peace process. He encouraged all parties to resolve their differences at the negotiating table.

Mr. Ban’s call followed a similar one he made two days ago to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD) which scored a resounding success at the polls.

He congratulated the President and the people of Myanmar for the successful conduct of the elections, the high voter turnout, and the peaceful, orderly, open and dignified manner in which it unfolded, calling it a tribute to the organization and leadership of the President and Government, as well as the professionalism of the Union Election Commission.

The UN has long been involved in Myanmar’s transition after more than 50 years of military rule, appointing a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the issue. In 2007 Mr. Ban set up the “Group of Friends of the Secretary-General on Myanmar,” a consultative forum of 14 countries to assist him in his efforts to spur change in the South-East Asian nation.

Over the years, he has welcomed the release of political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi herself. In 2010 he voiced concern over the decision to dissolve 10 political parties, including the NLD, ahead of the previous elections that November.

**On World Day, UNESCO hails philosophy as ‘force for individual and collective emancipation’**

**19 November** - Marking World Philosophy Day, the head of the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO) has stressed that sustainability calls for new ways of thinking about ourselves and the planet and as such, “philosophy and all the humanities will be essential.”

“The conviction that philosophy can make an essential contribution to human well-being, to addressing complexity, to advancing peace stands at the heart of World Philosophy Day,” UNESCO’s Director-General, Irina Bokova, said in her message for this year’s celebration.

Ms. Bokova pointed out that UNESCO puts philosophy forward as a force for individual and collective emancipation: “For to think, while reflecting on what it is to think, is to
philosophize, and all of us do it constantly, driven by the truest motor of all human ingenuity – wonder.”

World Philosophy Day has been observed every third Thursday of November since 2002. According to UNESCO, philosophy is dialogue of wonder, across the ages, with art and literature, in social debates, on political questions, practiced by all, without specialized training, far beyond the classroom.

“We must raise the flag for philosophy as high as possible, to engage every woman and man, and especially every girl and boy. We need to share the wonder of philosophy more widely and differently,” the UNESCO chief said.

Ms. Bokova also noted that the agency was continuing its long-standing cooperation with the networks of philosophy teachers. “We are working to make philosophy, the most ancient of disciplines, reach broader audiences thanks to cutting-edge technologies,” she said. “For instance, through online teaching tools based on the 2015 UNESCO South-South Philosophical Manual.”

According to UNESCO, all activities celebrating this year’s World Philosophy Day will emphasize the use of new communication technologies to engage global audiences. To celebrate the Day, many events will be hold in Paris, where UNESCO is headquartered, as well as in Dakar, Brasilia, and a number of other cities on all continents.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, agreed by UN Member States in September, created a new vision for people, prosperity, peace, and the planet for the next 15 years. Taking this to fruition, Ms. Bokova said, requires all the skills philosophy can hone, including rigour, creativity and critical thinking.

“Sustainability calls for new ways of thinking about ourselves and the planet. It requires new ways of acting, producing and behaving. Here again, philosophy and all the humanities will be essential,” she added.

**With new ratification, UN protocol on ending modern slavery edges closer to entry into force**

19 November - With the ratification by Norway, following a similar action by Niger, of the International Labour Organization (ILO) protocol on forced labour, a significant step has been taken towards ending the scourge, as the agency’s binding instruments generally provide that an adopted protocol only comes into force 12 months after being ratified by two member States.

“Norway’s ratification will help millions of children, women and men reclaim their freedom and dignity. It represents a strong call to other member States to renew their commitment to protect forced labourers, where ever they may be,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder in a news release.

Following the Norwegian Government’s action, the new framework will come into force on 9 November 2016, the news release said.

According to ILO, the Forced Labour Convention was supplemented when government, employer and worker delegates at the International Labour Conference (ILC) voted overwhelmingly to adopt a Protocol and Recommendation in 2014.

Further, the Organization said that the new Protocol added new measures to the existing Forced Labour Convention (1930), such as provisions on prevention, protection and access to justice, as well as requiring public and private employers to exercise “due diligence” to avoid modern slavery in their business practices and supply chains.

“It is important for all countries to recognize the issue of modern slavery and that it must be a top priority on their agendas to eradicate it once and for all,” said Norway’s Ambassador to the United Nations and other international organizations Steffen Kongstad.

Approximately 21 million people are victims of forced labour around the world, generating approximately $150 billion a
year in illicit profits, according to ILO evaluations.

ILO explained that the victims are exploited in agriculture, fishing, domestic work, construction, manufacturing, mining and other economic activities and women and girls, in particular, are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation.

According ILO research, forced labour is not an issue only in developing countries as profits from the forced labour industry are higher in developed economies and the European Union than they are anywhere else in the world.

ILO recently launched a new global campaign in partnership with the International Organization of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), to promote ratification of the Protocol in an effort to end modern slavery.

The campaign 50 for Freedom aims to mobilize public support and influence in at least 50 countries to ratify the Forced Labour Protocol by 2018.