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## **Ban calls for immediate end to hostilities in northern Mali amid surge in violence**



Chadian UN peacekeepers heading to their base in Tessalit, northern Mali.  
Photo MINUSMA/Marco Dormino

**29 April** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called for an immediate end to hostilities in northern Mali and expressed concern over ceasefire violations that have occurred in the country in recent days at a "critical moment" in the peace process to bring all parties to sign the draft peace agreement.

"The Secretary-General urges the parties to demonstrate their commitment to the peace process and adhere to their obligations under the ceasefire agreement of 23 May 2014, and the declarations of cessation of hostilities of 24 July 2014 and 19 February 2015," said a statement released by Mr. Ban's spokesperson.

According to the statement, on 27 April, Groupe Auto-défense Touareg Imghad et Alliés (GATIA) and Mouvement Arabe de l'Azawad – Plateforme (MAA-Platform) elements entered the town of Ménaka in the Gao region of Mali which, under ceasefire arrangements, is under the control of the Mouvement National de Libération de l'Azawad (MNLA).

Fighting continued in the vicinity of Ménaka yesterday and today, Coordination des Mouvements de l'Azawad (CMA) elements attacked Malian National Guard quarters in the Timbuktu region killing two National Guards and one child.

The Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Mali, Mongi Hamdi, and the UN Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) are said to be engaging with all parties to de-escalate tensions and encourage continued dialogue.



In recent years, Mali has been confronted by a crisis with serious political, security, socio-economic, humanitarian and human rights consequences. The crisis stems from long-standing structural conditions such as weak State institutions, ineffective governance, deep-seated feelings among communities in the north of being marginalized and the effects of environmental degradation, climate change and economic shocks.

## In Paris, Ban discusses Mediterranean crisis and climate change with President Hollande



Refugees and migrants rescued at sea by the Italian Coastguard ship Bettica arrive at Port Augusta. On the boat are four separate groups of people who were rescued. Many are women and children. Photo: UNHCR/F. Malavolta

**29 April** - During his visit to Paris, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Wednesday met with French President François Hollande, to discuss, among other issues the crisis in the Mediterranean, climate change and sustainable development.

With regard to the humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean Sea, Mr. Ban welcomed “with satisfaction the measures announced last week by the Heads of State and Government of the European countries,” on the Mediterranean crisis.

“They represent an important first step towards European collective action,” he added at a joint press conference with French President, François Hollande.

“This is a humanitarian crisis, not a safety issue. We need to defeat the criminals who are trafficking in human beings. But we must also concern ourselves with the root causes of migration, so that people are not forced to leave their homes,” the UN chief added.

“If there are so many migrants, it is because people fleeing war and persecution. Violent extremism is fuelled by conflict and poor governance.”

The Secretary-General said that to “confront this threat against global security; we must deploy comprehensive and complex solutions. In a few months, I will present to the General Assembly at its 70th session, a plan to fight against violent extremism.”

Mr. Ban also delivered a speech to students of the Institute of Political Studies in Paris, where he encouraged students to express themselves and become global citizens.

He urged them to take action on climate change and welcomed initiatives to organize momentum for the upcoming conference on the issue, which will be held later this year in Paris.

“Young people have more ideas and I really count on your commitment,” said the Secretary-General. “The world must find ways to adapt to the changes already underway.”

“We will need to do is considerable resources. Developed countries must clear path that will allow them to collect 100 billion by 2020 to finance climate action in developing countries. And the Green Climate Fund should start operating effectively and making payments before we meet in Paris,” he emphasized.

While he was in France, the Secretary General also announced the appointment of French national Jean Todt as his Special Envoy for Road Safety. Mr Todt is the President of the International Automobile Federation (FIA).

Each year about 1.3 million people are killed and nearly 50 million more injured on the roads worldwide. Half of the deaths are pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists, according to the UN.

## Draft political deal for Libyan parties is 'work in progress,' UN envoy tells Security Council

**29 April** - Announcing today that he had outlined for the Security Council his draft proposal for a political agreement among Libya's opposing factions, the United Nations envoy for the country warned that ongoing "chaos" there has sparked a series of dire events in the wider region – forcing thousands of desperate civilians to seek unsafe passage across the Mediterranean and a spate of recent bomb attacks against embassies in Tripoli.

"This...chaos is what explains the dramas we have seen recently," Bernardino León, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, told reporters in New York following his closed-door briefing to the Council.

He said violence inside Libya was impacting the region in myriad ways: "death in the Mediterranean Sea, hundreds of migrants traveling to south Italy and other countries, the killing in the south of the country of 30 Ethiopian Christian by Daesh [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant], together with other crimes and attacks by Daesh as ones happened recently on some embassies in Tripoli."

In this context, Mr. León said the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL), which he heads and which has been facilitating a series of talks among the Libyan parties, had proposed some ideas in a draft agreement that has been sent to the stakeholders two days ago.

"We have already [had] reactions from both parties, some of them are critical, some of them are negative and, of course, it is something we can expect in such complex process as it is the one in Libya, he explained.

In an earlier press release, UNSMIL said the draft proposal seeks to create and develop middle ground on the more difficult and sensitive issues and outlines a vision for the remainder of the transitional period.

The draft agreement is anchored in a number of key principles, including that of the inviolability of the democratic process and a clear separation of powers between the executive and legislative authorities, the Mission continued, adding that this as key to the proper functioning of Government and State, and to providing the necessary political guarantees to safeguard a future government of national accord and sufficiently empower it to address the huge challenges confronting Libya.

"I explained to the Council that this is a draft so these negotiations are work in progress. We are in contact with the parties. We are listening to them, of course, and trying to understand how this draft can be improved and how we can reach this consensus we want as a political solution in Libya," Mr. León told reporters, underscoring that: "We all know very well and the actors involved in the dialogue know very well that there is no military solution."

He went on to stress that the current fighting in the country is mainly affecting the political dialogue and intended to hamper the talks. "This is what both of these actors are trying to do and this is why I explained to the Security Council that we need to start with the security track as soon as possible, we are trying to start first meeting as soon as next week."

Explaining that the security track was the area on which no work had yet begun, Mr. León said UNSMIL would like to have face to face meetings as soon as possible on that issue. The other track that needed work is that tribal leaders should also start to meet soon.

As for his talks with the Council, he said the 15-member body had expressed its concerns, first of all regarding the timing. "The international community would like to see an agreement in Libya before Ramadan. Ramadan as you know starts on 17 June. This is the ideal framework and this is what I heard today in the Council."

He said that given the international community's serious concerns about terrorism, about migration and other issues, "chaos in Libya is a huge problem for its own citizens but it is also a huge problem for the international community."



Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya, Bernardino León, speaks to reporters in New York following his closed-door briefing to the Security Council. UN Photo/Loey Felipe

## UN and partners launch \$415 million appeal to aid quake-stricken Nepal

**29 April** - The United Nations today launched a \$415 million emergency appeal to provide vital relief to people affected by the devastating 7.8 magnitude earthquake that struck the densely populated Kathmandu Valley in Nepal on Saturday, killing at least 5,000, injuring at least 10,000 more.

The joint action plan aims to support Government efforts in addressing the most critical needs of millions of people in need of shelter, water and sanitation, emergency health, food, and protection for the next three months, after the tremor and many powerful aftershocks destroyed around 70,000 houses and damaged another 530,000 across 39 of Nepal's 75 districts.



Rescuers at work in Kathmandu after Nepal's worst earthquake in 80 years. Photo: UNDP Nepal

“The timing of the intervention remains of the essence,” said UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Nepal Jamie McGoldrick in a press release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

“Although I am heartened and encouraged by the progress of the response to date, efforts need to be maintained and stepped up to ensure vital assistance reaches all the affected, especially those in the remote areas.”

The so-called Flash Appeal reflects both the scale of the needs and the significant logistical challenges linked to providing an effective large-scale humanitarian response in hard-to-reach, mountainous areas.

“As the monsoon season approaches, this is likely to become an added logistical challenge in providing humanitarian assistance,” said Mr. McGoldrick. “Funding is needed immediately to continue the relief operations.”

Under the Flash Appeal, which was jump-started with \$15 million made available through the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), partners will provide emergency shelter to 500,000 people who remain in the open, braving the damp and cold weather. Emergency health services and medical supplies and facilities, and safe drinking water and sanitation facilities are also urgently needed for up to 4.2 million people.

As many as 1.4 million people will benefit from food assistance, including 750,000 in hard-to-reach areas. Some 2.1 million children and 525,000 women will benefit from protection assistance.

The Government of Nepal, along with humanitarian and international partners, launched a massive relief operation in the immediate aftermath of the disaster, with search and rescue and medical teams working tirelessly to find survivors and providing urgent medical care. Safe drinking water is also being provided to quake victims and food was dispatched for immediate distribution.

## UN envoy Gordon Brown welcomes release of 200 Nigerian girls held captive by Boko Haram

**29 April** - The United Nations Special Envoy for Global Education, Gordon Brown, has welcomed the release of 200 girls from captivity by Boko Haram and called for the immediate release of all abducted girls, ahead of his meeting tomorrow with Nigerian President-Elect.

“It is time to end the nightmare,” said Mr. Brown, who will have talks with Nigerian President-Elect Muhammadu Buhari tomorrow about the missing girls.

Some 276 girls were abducted by Boko Haram from their school in Chibok, located in Nigeria’s restive north-eastern Borno state, in April 2014, as the militant group ramped up brutal attacks targeting the African country’s children.

“I will talk to President-Elect Buhari tomorrow about how the international community can provide air and military help to free the girls. And I will also offer help for safe schools which allow girls to participate in education, free of fear,” he added.

“For a year families have not known whether their daughters are dead or alive, married off, sold off or violated as a result of their captivity,” the Global Education Envoy emphasized.

“Now that some girls have been released we want all girls released. And we want them home with their families in days - not months or years,” Mr. Brown urged.

Since Boko Haram began targeting schools and children, hundreds of thousands of children have been displaced from their homes and deprived of their rights to live and grow up in safety and peace.

“We need more secure, better prepared, safe schools to make girls and parents know everything is being done to protect them,” Mr. Brown emphasized.

“Today 10 million children don’t go to school in Nigeria,” Mr. Brown said. “By creating safe schools and communities where girls are free of fear we can get every child into school and learning.”

According to the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), more than 300 schools were damaged or destroyed and at least 196 teachers and 314 schoolchildren killed by the end of 2014 as a result of the conflict in northeast Nigeria between Boko Haram and military forces.



A woman and her children in a camp for internally displaced persons, in Yola, the capital of Adamawa, Nigeria, after members of the Boko Haram rebel group attacked their home. Photo: UNICEF/Abdrew Esiebo

## Systems to combat antibiotic resistance lacking globally, UN health agency warns

**29 April** - The United Nations World Health Organization today announced that only 34 countries, or a quarter of those surveyed, have national plans to fight growing resistance to antibiotics, warning that the trend posed as “the single greatest challenge in infectious diseases today” and appealing for all countries to do their part to tackle the global threat.

“All types of microbes – including many viruses and parasites – are becoming resistant to medicines. Of particularly urgent concern is the development of bacteria that are progressively less treatable by available antibiotics,” WHO quoted Dr. Keiji Fukuda, WHO’s Assistant Director-General for Health Security as saying in a press release.



Photo: WHO

“This is happening in all parts of the world, so all countries must do their part to tackle this global threat,” according to Dr. Fukuda.

According to the new report *Worldwide country situation analysis: Response to antimicrobial resistance* only 34 of 133 countries that responded to a WHO survey have comprehensive national plans to preserve antimicrobial medicines like antibiotics, but many more countries must also step up.

Another key finding is that “in many countries, poor laboratory capacity, infrastructure and data management are preventing effective surveillance, which can reveal patterns of resistance and identify trends and outbreaks.”

WHO also noted that the sales of antibiotics and other antimicrobial medicines without prescription remain widespread, with many countries lacking standard treatment guidelines, which increases the potential for overuse of antimicrobial medicines by the public and medical professionals.

And “public awareness of the issue is low in all regions, with many people still believing that antibiotics are effective against viral infections,” according to the report.

“This situation is alarming, particularly in countries where antimicrobial medicines are readily available without a prescription,” according to WHO. “Among professional groups, academics were generally more aware of the problem of antimicrobial resistance than others, including health care workers.”

WHO warned that “the general lack of awareness in these sectors would indicate that antimicrobial resistance is likely to spread further.”

Issued a year after WHO’s first report on the extent of antimicrobial resistance globally, which warned of a ‘post-antibiotic era,’ the new survey, carried out in 2013 and 2014, is the first to capture governments’ own assessments of their response to resistance to antimicrobial medicines used to treat conditions such as bloodstream infections, pneumonia, tuberculosis, malaria and HIV.

WHO, countries and partners have developed a draft *Global Action Plan to combat antimicrobial resistance*, including antibiotic resistance, which has been submitted to the 68th World Health Assembly, scheduled to take place next month.

“One essential step in implementing the Global Action Plan would be the development of comprehensive national plans in countries where they are now lacking and further develop and strengthen existing plans,” the UN health agency said.

## UN chief expresses 'deep regret' about executions of eight people in Indonesia

**29 April** - The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon today expressed his deep regret over executions carried out in Indonesia on April 29 despite numerous calls in the country and abroad for a reprieve.

In a statement released today by Mr. Ban's spokesperson in New York, the Secretary-General again urged the Government to exercise its authority and commute all death sentences, also reaffirming his belief that the death penalty has no places in the 21st century.



Photo: UNAIDS/D. Gutu

He said that the growing majority of the international community shared his conviction, demonstrating as much in a vote in the UN General Assembly in December 2014, when a record 117 States voted for a moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

The sentences were carried out despite an appeal by Mr. Ban on Saturday for Indonesia to refrain from executing those convicted. In a statement issued at the time, Mr. Ban recalled that under international law, if the death penalty is to be used at all, it should only be imposed for the most serious crimes, namely those involving intentional killing, and only with appropriate safeguards.

Drug-related offenses generally are not considered to fall under the category of "most serious crimes," and today's statement concluded with Mr. Ban urging all countries where the death penalty is still in place to join the movement and declare a moratorium on capital punishment with a view toward abolition.

Echoing that sentiment, the spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Rupert Coleville issued statement today underscoring that the High Commissioner, the Secretary-General, and other key UN entities had urged Indonesia time and time again not to proceed with these executions.

"We appeal once again most strenuously to Indonesia to reinstate its moratorium on the death penalty," he said, noting: "Indonesia appeals for clemency when its own nationals face execution in other countries, so it is incomprehensible why it absolutely refuses to grant clemency for lesser crimes on its own territory."

## Christiane Amanpour named UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador for Freedom of Expression

**29 April** - The United Nations agency mandated to promote and protect press freedom worldwide has named renowned journalist and CNN Chief International Correspondent Christiane Amanpour its Goodwill Ambassador for Freedom of Expression and Journalist Safety.

Ms. Amanpour received the honour during a ceremony at UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) headquarters in Paris.

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova praised Ms. Amanpour for "her efforts to promote free, independent and pluralistic media, having the right to work free from the threat of violence, and contributing through this to peace, sustainability, poverty eradication and human rights."



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (right) with Christiane Amanpour, newly named Goodwill Ambassador for Freedom of Expression and Journalist Safety. Photo: UNESCO

“In the most challenging situations, addressing the most demanding interlocutors” said the Director-General, “integrity and courage have always guided you, with the conviction that freedom of expression, media freedoms are essential for stronger societies, for healthier democracies, for peace and reconciliation as well as sustainable development –we need to defend these principles more than ever today, at a time when they are challenged across the world.”

In her acceptance speech, Ms. Amanpour stressed the important role of journalists as “pillars of reform, freedom and democracy” whose task is to “strengthen civil society.”

“We’re here to make the world a better place” she said. She also made an impassioned plea for the release of all imprisoned journalists, wherever they may be, and condemned the increasing number of attacks and assassinations of media professionals.

Ms. Amanpour has won every major television journalism award, including 11 News and Documentary Emmy Awards, four Peabody Awards, two George Polk Awards, three duPont-Columbia Awards and the Courage in Journalism Award.

She has also received nine honorary degrees, has been named a Commander in the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (CBE) and was this year inducted into the Cable Hall of Fame. She is a member of the board of directors of the Committee to Protect Journalists, one of UNESCO’s partners in its work for freedom of expression and journalists’ safety.

UNESCO Goodwill Ambassadors are a group of personalities who use their talent and status to help shine a light on the work of the Organization in education, science, culture and communication.

## **Ban condemns attack on Yarmouk, as UN agency delivers 'critical' relief to displaced in camp**



A woman receives medical treatment from an UNRWA doctor. Photo: UNRWA

**29 April** - The Secretary-General has today strongly condemned the shelling and aerial bombardment of the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, which occurred despite assurances from the Syrian Government that the camp would not be targeted while civilians remained inside.

“Thousands of civilians in the camp are besieged by terrorist and other armed groups on the inside and Government forces on the outside,” said the Ban Ki-moon in a statement released today by his Spokesperson. “The Secretary-General calls on the Government to immediately end any military operation that could endanger the lives of civilians in Yarmouk camp and abide strictly by its obligations under international humanitarian and human rights law to protect civilians during armed conflict. He also calls on all parties to

stop the violence so as to grant secure and sustained humanitarian access to civilians inside the camp.”

The statement urged the Security Council and Member States with influence upon the parties on the ground, including the Syrian Government, to do all in their power to protect civilian lives, and it underlined the importance of the Syrian Government adhering to commitments it has already made in order to maintain its role as an interlocutor for the international community.

Meanwhile, humanitarian efforts aimed at delivering critical relief to thousands of conflict-affected civilians trapped in Syria are continuing despite the ongoing hostilities in the region, the United Nations agency tasked with supporting Palestine refugees confirmed today.

According to a situation report, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) participated in a large, inter-agency convoy bringing humanitarian assistance to civilians located in the areas of Yalda, Babila and Beit Saham. Among those receiving relief are many civilians displaced from the embattled Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmouk, the agency added.

“UNRWA has initiated a vaccine campaign for those temporarily displaced from Yarmouk to the nearby area of Yalda,” UNRWA spokesperson Christopher Gunness explained. “Our medical personnel established a mobile health point in Yalda,

treating 325 patients over the course of the day. The team vaccinated 28 children during the day.”

In addition to the medical assistance, UNRWA also noted that it had provided food supplies to two community kitchens sufficient to feed 900 individuals for one week and also delivered 1,200 packets of bread to civilians in the Yalda, Babila and Beit Saham areas.

Overall, UNRWA missions deliver a broad range of “critical” humanitarian materials to each of these families, including food, medical supplies, water purification treatments, mattresses, blankets, family kitchen sets and hygiene kits, and the agency also provides daily hot lunches for all civilians, complemented by regular distribution of canned food.

Against that backdrop, the UN agency warned that the vulnerability of those civilians still trapped in Yarmouk remained of “the highest severity” and voiced concern that without access, the most basic humanitarian needs of up to 18,000 Palestinian and Syrian civilians continue to be left unmet.

As violence continues to profoundly threaten the lives and safety of Palestine refugees throughout Syria, UNRWA is continuing its appeal for donors to increase their support to the agency's urgent Call for Funds, which seeks an immediate injection of \$30 million. The UNRWA Syria Crisis Appeal has received only 16 per cent of the funds it needs for 2015.

Chronic underfunding continues to undermine UNRWA's capacity to sustain life-saving emergency interventions, whilst responding immediately to urgent developments such as the one impacting Yarmouk since 1 April.

## UN rights experts welcome US review of lethal drone attacks, urge transparency and accountability

**29 April** - A group of United Nations independent experts today welcomed the announcement by the United States Government of a review of two counter-terrorism operations involving the use of drones, while stressing the need for transparency and accountability.

“We welcome President Obama's apology to the families. All innocent victims of drone attacks deserve such an apology, regardless of their nationality,” the experts said in a statement released today by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). “Authorities are often obliged to plan these sorts of counter-terrorism operations on the basis of factual hypotheses that cannot be adequately verified due to incomplete or conflicting information.”

They noted that the United States Government acknowledged the accidental killing of four individuals in counter-terrorism operations conducted in January in the border regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan involving the use of drones, following declassification of information related to the operations and disclosure to the public but added that it was important to go beyond that approach to such incidents.

“Purely ex post facto assessments into what has possibly gone wrong are important for the purposes of evaluating impact, identifying lessons learnt and putting in place operational arrangements to mitigate against repetition,” the experts noted. “However, they are not enough for a finding of State, as well as individual, responsibility.”

The experts, known as Special Rapporteurs, are part of the 'Special Procedures' of the Human Rights Council, which is the general name of the Council's independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world.

Their statement expressed hope that the commitment made by the US Government will provide new impetus towards a concerted response by the international community to the unresolved controversies surrounding the use of armed drones.

“Any plausible allegation of killing of or serious injury to civilians triggers the obligation to investigate,” said the experts' statement. “This is an obligation that is imposed by international human rights law and international humanitarian law on



A US Air Force RQ-1 Predator unmanned aerial vehicle. Photo: US Department of Defense/James L. Harper Jr.

States using drones as well as on States on whose territory such technology is used.”

The experts added that whenever civilian casualties are suspected, a proper procedure should be in place to ascertain the facts and make them public with a view to securing accountability and reparations for the victims.

Among the experts, who work on an individual, voluntary, unpaid basis and are not UN staff, were the Special Rapporteurs on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism; on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; and on independence of judges and lawyers.

They stressed that, subject to redactions on the grounds of legitimate national security, their results must be open to public scrutiny, and, where appropriate, adequate reparation to victims and their families must be offered.

“According to internationally recognized legal standards, investigations must be prompt, impartial, independent and exhaustive,” said Juan Mendez, the Special Rapporteur on torture.

“Ultimately, the lawfulness of Government action should be subject to independent and effective judicial review, both at the domestic, and at the international level,” said Gabriela Knaul, the Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers.

“The legal framework for maintaining international peace and the protection of the right to life is a coherent and well-established system,” said Christof Heyns, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions. “States using drones have an obligation to respect international standards and prevent violations.”

Mr. Heyns cautioned against broad and permissive interpretations of the current international rules and standards, while Ben Emerson, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, pointed to the need for global unanimity.

“There are a number of legal questions on which there is either no clear international consensus, or where current practices and interpretations appear to need further discussion,” he said. “Only a legitimate consensus across the international community can pave the way to a sound, ethical and legal response to these questions.”

The experts' statement also stressed that armed drones should be used in a manner that is compatible with international law.

## New UN special envoy on Ebola response makes first visit to Sierra Leone



Ebola caregivers in Guinea. Photo: UNMEER/Simon Ruf

**29 April** - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) today said that surveillance and community engagement still require improvement in some areas of Guinea and Sierra Leone where new cases continued to surface, a day after the new Special Representative for UN Ebola Response, Peter Graff, was informed of a continued transmission epicentre on the border between those two countries.

Mr. Graff joined outgoing Special Representative Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, and the Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Ebola, David Nabarro, on a visit to Freetown, Sierra Leone, during which they were briefed by the National Ebola response Centre (NERC) on efforts to achieve zero transmission.

“They were informed that Kambia District was still a transmission epicentre due in part to it neighbouring Forécariah in Guinea, which continues to record a high number of Ebola cases,” the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) reported.

UNMEER also reported that efforts were underway to strengthen collaboration with Guinea in different areas, including in sharing information as well as making use of the laboratory in Kambia for Ebola testing of suspected cases in Guinean

border towns.

Meanwhile, WHO issued its weekly update today, stating that 33 confirmed cases of Ebola virus disease (EVD) were reported in West Africa in the week that ended on 26 April. Two areas, Forécariah in Guinea and Kambia in Sierra Leone, accounted for 25 or 76 percent of all confirmed cases reported.

“In both Guinea and Sierra Leone, the fact that cases continue to be identified after post-mortem testing, together with the fact that around half of all cases arise in people not identified as contacts of previous cases, suggest that surveillance and community engagement still require improvement in some areas,” WHO reported.

Liberia reported no confirmed cases for the fifth consecutive week, according to WHO. Of 55 districts in Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone that have reported at least one confirmed case of Ebola since the start of the outbreak, 39 have not reported a case for over six weeks.

To date, more than 26,000 people have been affected by Ebola in West Africa, including more than 10,000 deaths.

## World has learned ‘too little’ from past, says Ban on Day of Remembrance for chemical warfare victims

**29 April** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has marked the Day of Remembrance for All Victims of Chemical Warfare with a strong appeal for a new future without such weapons, saying ‘the world has learned too little from the past – at the expense of innocent people whose lives have been destroyed by chemical attacks.’

Recalling that the 100th anniversary of the first time chemical weapons were used on a large scale on a Belgian battlefield, Mr. Ban said “the events in Ypres in 1915 should be a distant memory – but the frightening truth is we are still grappling with the inhumane and indiscriminate effects of chemical weapons today.”

The UN Secretary-General reminded the world about the reported use of chemical weapons in Syria that served as a shocking wake-up call to the international community about the continuing threat posed by these inhumane weapons.

“The horrific images of the victims of chemical weapons in Syria should continue to haunt us all,” Mr. Ban said in this year’s message, marking the annual Day of Remembrance, observed on 29 April each year – the date in 1997 on which the Chemical Weapons Convention entered into force.

The Secretary-General declared it “an outrage that 90 years after the 1925 Geneva Protocol and nearly 20 years after the entry into force of the Chemical Weapons Convention the list of those we mourn on this Day only grows longer.”

As such, there is no more meaningful way to collectively honour the victims of chemical warfare and make sure that humankind is forever liberated from the ominous threat of the use of chemical weapons, he said.

“On this Day of Remembrance, let us do more than recall the past,” he said. “Let us shape a new future by renewing our common pledge to rid the world of chemical weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction.”

He spoke of the importance of the Chemical Weapons Convention, strongly urging those few countries that still remain outside this framework to adhere to it “without further delay,” and reminded the world how the multinational effort to rid Syria of its chemical weapons programme clearly demonstrated what can be achieved when the international community unites.



Minute of silence being observed at the annual Day of Remembrance for all Victims of Chemical Warfare held at the Headquarters of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) in The Hague. Photo: OPCW

## Somalia registers record export of livestock in 2014 due to trade boost with Gulf States



Livestock herders on the outskirts of a small market in Belet Weyne, Somalia. Photo: AU-UN IST/Stuart Price

**29 April** - Somalia in 2014 exported a record five million livestock to markets in the Gulf of Arabia thanks to heavy investments in animal disease prevention backed by the European Union and the United Kingdom, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said today.

This is the highest number of live animals exported from Somalia in the last 20 years.

The FAO data indicates that Somalia exported 4.6 million goats and sheep, 340,000 cattle and 77,000 camels in 2014, worth an estimated \$360 million. Livestock is the mainstay of the Somali economy, contributing 40 per cent to the country's gross domestic product (GDP).

“This shows that despite the challenges, the Somali people are successfully working to improve their economy and food security,” said Richard Trenchard, head of FAO's office for Somalia. “FAO and our partners are committed to remaining engaged and involved in supporting those efforts.”

Buyers from Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, Qatar and United Arab Emirates have all taken advantage of Somalia's thriving livestock scene and its improved disease surveillance and control mechanisms. Saudi Arabia, in particular, has contributed to steadily rising exports over the last six years, following a move to lift a nine-year ban on the import of livestock from Somalia.

Transboundary animal diseases have been a major concern because they can kill large numbers of animals, resulting in food shortages, market disruptions and trade and export barriers.

Every year, FAO vaccinates an average of 12 million animals in Somalia against *peste des petits ruminants* (PPR) – a highly contagious and often deadly viral disease of goats. Another 12 million goats are treated and vaccinated every year against Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia (CCPP), a source of major losses among Somali livestock producers.

In addition to animal health campaigns, four modern slaughterhouses, four meat markets and three livestock markets are also boosting local livestock trade across Somalia.

“There is no doubt that livestock is, and will remain for a long time, central to the Somali economy,” said Mr. Trenchard.

Continued investment in building Somali livestock institutions is key to boosting incomes, reducing the vulnerability of rural households, and steering the future growth of the sector, according to Mr. Trenchard, who says the livestock sector is at a tipping point.

“An investment in livestock means an investment in economic growth for the whole of Somalia,” he said.

In May 2015, FAO will start training 150 Somalis in curing leather, a potentially lucrative opportunity for the entire livestock sector, while an EU-funded programme is underway to improve milk quality in northwestern Somalia, one of the country's main milk production regions.

The 2014 figures represent an optimum level of live animal export for Somalia, according to FAO experts, who urge producers to shift focus towards export of meat and other by-products.

A livestock certification system developed by FAO along the Galkayo-Bossaso livestock corridor will further help to ensure high quality livestock for local consumption and export.