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Large gender gaps remain across global labour market, UN agency reports

7 March - Despite some modest gains in some regions in the world, millions of women are losing ground in their quest for equality in the world of work, according to a new report prepared by the United Nations International Labour Organization (ILO) as part of its Women at Work Centenary Initiative.

“The report shows the enormous challenges women continue to face in finding and keeping decent jobs,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder in a press release.

“Our actions must be immediate, effective and far-reaching. There is no time to waste. The 2030 Agenda is an opportunity to pool our efforts and develop coherent, mutually supporting policies for gender equality,” he added.

The report, Women at Work: Trends 2016 examined data for up to 178 countries and concludes that inequality between women and men persists across a wide spectrum of the global labour market. What’s more, the report shows that over the last two decades, significant progress made by women in education has not translated into comparable improvements in their position at work.

Employment gender gap closed by 0.6 points since 1995

At the global level, the employment gender gap has closed by only 0.6 percentage points since 1995, with an employment-to-population ratio of 46 per cent for women and almost 72 per cent for men in 2015.
In 2015, 586 million women were working as own-account and contributing family workers across the world. As globally, the share of those who work in a family enterprise (contributing family workers) has decreased significantly among women (by 17 percentage points over the last 20 years) and to a lesser extent among men (by 8.1 percentage points), the global gender gap in contributing family work is reduced to 11 percentage points.

Although 52.1 per cent of women and 51.2 per cent of men in the labour market are wage and salaried workers, the report shows that this in itself constitutes no guarantee of higher job quality. Globally, 38 per cent of women and 36 per cent of men in wage employment do not contribute to social protection. The proportions for women reach 63.2 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa and 74.2 per cent in southern Asia where informal employment is the dominant form of employment.

The report also provides new data for up to 100 countries on paid and unpaid working hours and access to maternity protection and pensions.

**Women work longer hours**

Women continue to work longer hours per day than men in both paid and unpaid work. In both high and lower income countries, on average, women carry out at least two and a half times more unpaid household and care work than men.

In addition, across more than 100 countries surveyed, more than one third of employed men (35.5 per cent) and more than one fourth of employed women (25.7 per cent) work more than 48 hours a week. This also affects the unequal distribution of unpaid household and care work between women and men.

The cumulative disadvantage faced by women in the labour market has a significant impact in later years. In terms of pensions, coverage (both legal and effective) is lower for women than men, leaving an overall gender social protection coverage gap. Globally, the proportion of women above retirement age receiving a pension is on average 10.6 percentage points lower than that of men.

Globally, women represent nearly 65 per cent of people above retirement age (60-65 or older according to national legislation in the majority of countries) without any regular pension. This means some 200 million women in old age are living without any regular income from an old age or survivor’s pension, compared to 115 million men.

**On average, women earn 77 per cent less than men**

In terms of wages, the results in the report confirm previous ILO estimates that globally, women still earn on average 77 per cent of what men earn. The report notes that this wage gap cannot be explained solely by differences in education or age. The gap can be linked to the undervaluation of the work women undertake and of the skills required in female-dominated sectors or occupations, discrimination, and the need for women to take career breaks or reduce hours in paid work to attend to additional care responsibilities such as child care.

Though there has been some small improvement in reducing gender wage gaps, if current trends prevail, the report confirms estimates that it will take more than 70 years to close the gender wage gaps completely.

**Getting to Equal by 2030**

The ILO theme for International Women’s Day 2016, observed worldwide on 8 March, is “Getting to Equal by 2030: The Future is Now,” reflecting the urgency of addressing these gaps if the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are to be achieved. Nearly all of the agenda’s goals have a gender component.

“Achieving gender equality at work, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is an essential precondition for realizing sustainable development that leaves no one behind and ensures that the future of work is decent work for all women and men,” said Shauna Olney, Chief of the ILO’s Gender, Equality and Diversity Branch.

According to ILO, more jobs – and quality jobs – for women, universal social protection and measures to recognize, reduce
and redistribute unpaid care and household work are indispensable to delivering on the new transformative agenda.

**Syria: water restored in Aleppo after a 48-day shutdown, UNICEF reports**

*7 March* - A facility that provides drinking water to more than two million people in and around the Syrian city of Aleppo has resumed its operations over the weekend, following a 48-day deliberate shutdown, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported.

The al-Khafseh facility produces an average of 400 million litres of clean water daily. Drawing raw water from the Euphrates River, it is the sole source of drinking water for the entire city of Aleppo and eastern areas of the governorate.

“Getting clean water flowing again for the people of Aleppo is lifesaving” said Hanaa Singer, UNICEF Representative in Syria. “One million children rely on this facility for safe drinking water essential for preventing waterborne diseases which can be life-threatening and in extreme cases deadly for children.”

**Weapon of War**

Water has been used as a weapon of war by all sides to the conflict in Syria. Millions of civilians are being deprived of clean water for drinking and domestic use. Tactics include shutting water off at the source, airstrikes and ground attacks on water facilities and hindering access for civilian workers to maintain, repair and operate facilities. UNICEF has documented such tactics in areas including Aleppo, Damascus, Rural Damascus, Dar'a and Hama. In 2015 alone, over five million Syrians faced potentially life-threatening water shortages as a result.

“Parties to the conflict must stop attacking or deliberately interrupting water supply, which is indispensable for the survival of the population,” Ms. Singer said, stressing that they should protect the treatment, distribution systems, pipelines and personnel who repair water installations.

“Syria's children and their families have a right to safe drinking water and clean water for hygiene and health” she said.

The al-Khafseh facility was deliberately shutdown on 16 January. Over the past weeks, UNICEF has been working closely with the Syrian Arab Red Crescent and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to support water trucking, emergency repairs and rehabilitation so that water infrastructure systems are able to function to serve the entire population of Aleppo.
Ethiopian farmers need urgent assistance amid major drought, warns UN agency

7 March - The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) today announced that timely agricultural assistance for the upcoming rainy season is essential to help the drought-affected people of Ethiopia, as one of the strongest El Niño events on record continues to have devastating effects on the lives and livelihoods of farmers and herders.

"FAO urgently needs $13 million by the end of March to support more than 600,000 of the worst affected people," said FAO’s country representative, Amadou Allahoury Diallo, in a press release.

"We're expecting that needs will be particularly high during the next few weeks," he added, "so it's critical that we're able to respond quickly and robustly to reboot agriculture now before the drought further decimates the food security and livelihoods of millions."

Humanitarian needs have tripled

Humanitarian needs in Ethiopia have reportedly tripled since the beginning of 2015 as the drought has led to successive crop failures and widespread livestock deaths.

As a result, food insecurity and malnutrition rates are alarming in the Horn of Africa country, with FAO reporting that some 10.2 million people are now food insecure. In addition, one-quarter of all districts in Ethiopia are officially classified as facing a food security and nutrition crisis.

Meanwhile, the agency is highlighting that with planting for the country's first rainy season, known as the belg, which is already delayed, and the meher season – Ethiopia's main agricultural campaign – fast approaching, farmers need immediate support to help them produce food between now and September for millions facing hunger.

The meher produces up to 85 per cent of the nation's food supplies.

Recent estimates by Ethiopia's Bureau of Agriculture indicate that some 7.5 million farmers and herders need immediate agricultural support to produce staple crops like maize, sorghum, teff, wheat, and root crops, and livestock feed to keep their animals healthy and resume production.

Farming families are said to have either exhausted seed reserves through successive failed plantings, or to have consumed them as food. Animal feed stocks are also depleted, and support is needed to enable families to produce fodder. Hundreds of thousands of livestock have reportedly already died and the animals that remain are becoming weaker and thinner due to poor grazing resources, feed shortages and limited water availability, leading to sharp declines in milk and meat production.

‘Not just a food crisis’

"It's important to understand the current drought is not just a food crisis – it is above all a livelihood crisis," said Mr. Allahoury Diallo, who highlighted that last year's losses have severely diminished households' food security and purchasing power and forced many to sell their last remaining agricultural assets.

FAO is underlining that meeting immediate needs of farmers now is essential to longer-term recovery, as it helps farmers feed their country and keep their productive assets intact. Its call for $13 million by the end of March is part of the agency's larger $50 million appeal for its Ethiopia El Niño Response Plan but currently less than 10 per cent of the plan is funded.
**FAO's response to El Niño**

As part of the emergency response, FAO is already providing planting materials to help seed- and food-insecure households in the worst-affected regions plant in the *belg* and *meher* seasons. But it is warning that this support urgently needs to be scaled up.

In an effort to preserve livestock, FAO has been distributing nutrient blocks in pastoral and agropastoral areas meant to strengthen livestock and bolster the resilience of the cooperatives that produce them. FAO is also providing survival animal feed and support to help farmers produce fodder and improve access to water for livestock. Herds across the country have also benefited from vaccination and treatment campaigns to address their increasing vulnerability as a result of drought.

In Ethiopia's Somali Region, FAO is enhancing the financial stability of drought-affected households through the purchase of weak sheep and goats for immediate, local slaughter, and providing the meat – rich in protein – to nutritionally vulnerable drought-affected families. The intervention will help reduce stress on available feed, enable households to focus their resources on their remaining productive animals, and invest in productive assets.

In addition, FAO is closely working with the government to conduct seasonal assessments and develop preparedness and response plans, along with guidelines for emergency agriculture support.

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**UN atomic energy chief prioritizes verification, monitoring in Iran for 2016**

7 March - Noting that 2016 will be an important year for nuclear security, the head of the United Nations International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) today presented the Agency’s plan for the year, which includes verification and monitoring work in Iran among its top priorities.

Addressing the opening of the Agency’s Board of Governors meeting in Vienna, Austria, Director General Yukiya Amano said that the Agency “has found no indication of the diversion of declared material from peaceful nuclear activities in Iran.”

“Iran is now invited to participate in the full range of Agency activities, including technical meetings, conferences, training courses and workshops,” Mr. Amano said.

The decision was made in light of Security Council resolution 2231 (2015), which endorsed what is known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between the E3+3.

In July, Iran and a group of six countries – China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom and United States – reached the JCPOA, entrusting the IAEA with verifying and monitoring Iran's commitments. The Agency reports in parallel to the Board and the Security Council.

Mr. Amano noted that implementation of the JCPOA “has just started,” that Iran has to implement its commitments “for many years to come,” and that the IAEA has to verify, monitor and report on that implementation.

**Fighting Zika and other nuclear applications**

Among the nuclear applications in 2016, Mr. Amano highlighted the Agency’s response to the outbreak of the Zika virus in Latin America and the Caribbean.

He said the IAEA is providing portable equipment and its training that would allow for quick detection of the virus in the field, similar to nuclear-derived technology made available by the Agency in 2014 to respond to the Ebola virus outbreak in West Africa.
The Agency is also helping countries in those regions which seek to deploy a sterile insect technique against the Aedes mosquito that can transmit the Zika virus and other pathogens, Mr. Amano noted.

“The Agency will facilitate the transfer of a gamma cell irradiator to Brazil to enable the country to scale up production of sterile male mosquitoes for release in pilot areas,” he said in reference to international activities planned and carried out in close coordination with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO).

**Renovation of IAEA nuclear application laboratories**

The Board was told that IAEA nuclear application laboratories near Vienna, in Seibersdorf, play a vital role in research and in transferring technology such as the sterile insect technique to Member States, but are in urgent need of modernization.

“Without full renovation of the laboratories, our capacity to respond to Member States’ request for assistance, on Zika and in other areas, will be significantly limited,” said Mr. Amano.

The Director General appealed to all Member States to contribute to the renovation of the laboratories, which are in need of some 6.5 million Euros, and for the construction of additional facilities.

**Fifth Anniversary of Fukushima incident**

The address today comes just days ahead of the anniversary of the tsunami that occurred on 11 March 2011 and disabled the Fukushima Daichi reactors, causing a nuclear accident.

Tens of thousands of people who had been evacuated from their homes have still not been able to return, Mr. Amano said.

“There is widespread recognition that everything humanly possible must be done to ensure that no such accident ever happens again,” he noted.

He invited countries to attend the IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security in December. The conference “will be a very important event which will help to set the agenda for our work in the next few years, underlining the Agency’s role as the global platform for improving nuclear security.”

**Central African Republic: UN chief ‘deeply troubled’ by scale, nature of harm to children**

**7 March** - Conflict and instability in the Central African Republic (CAR) have had a devastating impact on children, according to a new United Nations report that calls on all parties involved in the conflict in the country to immediately halt grave violations against children and abide by international humanitarian and human rights law.

“I am deeply troubled by the scale and nature of violations endured by children in the Central African Republic,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his latest report on children and armed conflict in CAR.

The UN documented the killing of 333 children and maiming of 589 others in brutal attacks targeting communities for reprisals or other motives between January 2011 and December 2015. The majority of these attacks were documented between 2013 and 2014, following the Government takeover by the Séléka and the rise of anti-Balaka self-defence militias.

The surge in violations included large-scale recruitment and use of children and the targeting of children based on their religious affiliations.

“At the height of conflict in 2013 and 2014, children were victims of relentless violence and appalling violations were
committed in a climate of total impunity, aggravated by the collapse and disintegration of most State institutions,” said Leila Zerrougui, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict.

The report called on CAR authorities to strengthen the country’s justice system and end impunity, including through the establishment and operationalization of a Special Criminal Court which would be funded by Member States.

**Recruitment and inscription**

Among other recommendations in the report, the Secretary-General called on the armed groups that had signed agreements at the National Forum of Bangui in May 2015 to respect and implement those agreements. The signatories had vowed to stop recruitment of children, as well as to end other grave violations.

In 2014, UNICEF estimated that between 6,000 and 10,000 children were associated with all parties to conflict.

According to the report, the children were used as combatants, looters and in various support roles, including as sex slaves.

**Sexual violations and exploitation**

More than 500 children were confirmed to have been raped or subjected to other forms of sexual violence during the time period covered by the report.

According to the report, “sexual violence was perpetrated by all parties to the conflict, with sexual violence against children by ex-Séléka and anti-Balaka forming part of a larger pattern of violations against civilians in areas under their control, particularly in 2014.”

The actual number is believed to be higher, as fear of stigmatization, shame and risk of reprisals by the suspects keeps victims and their families silent. Insecurity also prevents access to the victims.

The report also documented cases of violations such as rape and sexual violence against children committed by UN and non-UN forces.

Last December, the Secretary-General pledged to urgently review recommendations made by an independent panel which found that the UN did not act with the “speed, care or sensitivity required,” when it uncovered information about crimes committed against children by soldiers – not under UN command – sent to CAR.

As he continues to study those recommendations, the Secretary-General has released a new report calling for special protective measures, including pre-deployment training.

**Ban calls for more female police in UN peace operations to combat violence against women**

7 March - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on Member States to contribute more female police, especially French-speaking women, to serve in UN peace operations.

“They can put communities at ease and stand as inspiring role models for local women,” he said at the opening of the Fifth General Assembly of the Kigali International Conference on the role of security forces in combating violence against women, held in Algiers, the capital of Algeria.

He said that the deplorable problem of law enforcement personnel being implicated in the perpetration of violence against women and girls happens “too often,” and the UN remains
firmly committed to a zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

“Since I became Secretary-General almost a decade ago, I have been a staunch advocate for ending violence against women and girls,” he said, noting that in 2008, he launched the UNiTE campaign aimed at raising public awareness and increase political will and resources for preventing and ending all forms of violence against women and girls worldwide.

Today, scores of leaders and ministers, hundreds parliamentarians and millions of individuals have added their names to the action call, and their tireless efforts have put this struggle at the centre of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, he said.

Police play an essential role in fighting abuse, Mr. Ban said. They work with judicial counterparts, investigate allegations, identify alleged perpetrators, promote accountability and ensure access to remedies for victims. These are important conditions for effective prevention.

**Bringing Security Council resolution 1325 to life**

Through community policing, they empower societies, manage criminality, deter violence, help rebuild safety and promote public trust, he continued. They bring to life Security Council resolution 1325 and subsequent resolutions on women, peace and security.

Stressing the need for strong laws to end violence against women, including female genital mutilation, he said that UN and African Union police in peace operations help prevent and address sexual violence in conflict, which disproportionally affects women and girls.

The UN will hold a Chiefs of Police Summit, or UN Cops, in New York this June, Mr. Ban noted, encouraging all to participate in this valuable opportunity to exchange views on how to address the pressing security and rule of law challenges and how police personnel in the field can gain skills that they can bring home to their national services.

**Visit to Elementary School**

Mr. Ban also visited Primary School Mohamed Maazouzi, together with Nouria Benghabrit-Remaoun, Minister of National Education of Algeria, and chatted with five-year-old and 11-year-old students.

In Algeria, the net school enrolment rate for children six to 16 years old rose from 88.3 per cent in 2006 to above 96 per cent in 2015 with full parity between boys and girls, according to the UN. From 1996 to 2013, the illiteracy rate for all Algerians over 10 years old dropped from 75 per cent to 20 per cent.

In 2014, Algeria spent 16 per cent of the national budget in education, the second highest allocation after national defense. In 2015, the Ministry of Education’s budget reached approximately $8 million, for the benefit of 8.5 million children and students representing 22 per cent of the total population learning in more than 25,000 schools.

Amid the impressive achievements, the UN points out that there are 330,000 children under 16 years old who are out of school and 500,000 at risk of dropping out.

Mr. Ban also met with the survivors and the families of the victims of the 2007 bombing of the UN House in Algiers as well as UN staff before he left for Germany.

**Refugee influx into Europe**

Upon receiving the German Media Award while in Baden-Baden, Mr. Ban highlighted the plight of refugees fleeing war and persecution and arriving in great numbers in Germany and other European nations.

While lauding the generosity shown to the refugees in many places across Germany and Europe, he noted that the border
restrictions being put in place by Governments along the Balkan land route are not a solution.

“I call on all countries to keep their borders open, to expand legal pathways to asylum, and act in a spirit of solidarity,” said the Secretary-General, while adding that there is a need for greater sharing of responsibility among all States, not just those in Europe.

On Tuesday, he will be in Berlin, where he will meet with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and other officials.

UN chief deplores terrorist attacks against security forces in Tunisia

7 March - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the terrorist attacks carried out today on police and army posts in the town of Ben Guerdane in Tunisia.

“He expresses his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the people and Government of Tunisia and wishes a speedy recovery to those injured,” his spokesperson said in a statement.

“The Secretary-General reiterates the commitment of the United Nations to stand with the people of Tunisia as they confront the scourge of terrorism and work to preserve the gains of the revolution.”

Media reports say several dozen people were killed in the attacks in Ben Guerdane, which is located near the Libyan border.

Ban highlights Algeria's 'great progress' while raising alarm on situation in Libya

6 March - Visiting Algeria for the second time as United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon today said great progress has been made in the country since terrorist attacks in 2007 devastated UN Headquarters in Algiers, while underlining “alarming” developments in Libya that could amount to war crimes.

“My first visit to Algeria was very painful,” the UN chief told reporters at a press conference in the capital, alongside the country's Minister of State and Minister for Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Ramtane Lamamra.

In December 2007, a car bomb destroyed UN offices in Algiers, killing 17 UN personnel as well as many Algerian citizens. More than nine years later, Mr. Ban praised the country's President, Abdelaziz Bouteflika, for progress made under his direction, and noted that what he has learned about “rahma” politics, meaning “pity,” has impressed him.

“Instead of letting themselves be divided by terrorists, Algeria united in solidarity,” he highlighted. “History has shown many times that any violent strategy against terrorism that isn't based on the respect for human rights is doomed to fail. Respect for human rights is both a moral obligation and a tactical advantage.”

The Secretary-General also noted that he and Minister Lamamra discussed their “deep concern” regarding the situation in Libya.

“There is alarming information coming from Libya about grave acts that could amount to war crimes,” Mr. Ban warned. “All external actors need to use their influence to appease the situation. If things don't improve on the political front, the humanitarian crisis will worsen and threats to people's security, including attacks by Daech [ISIL], will multiply and expand.”
In addition to thanking Algeria for hosting UN-led talks on Libya, he also welcomed the country's engagement towards Mali, for its role as one of the main mediators of the peace process.

Turning to the issue of Western Sahara, Mr. Ban recalled his visit yesterday to the town of Tindouf where he met with refugees who have been suffering for generations due to the ongoing regional conflict. He reiterated that no real progress has been made in negotiations towards a “just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution, based on the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara.”

“I am deeply saddened by this humanitarian tragedy,” Mr. Ban said. “The world cannot continue to neglect Sahrawi refugees. They're hoping for the support of the region, the UN, and the international community. We must act.”

Meanwhile, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Algeria, the UN chief today planted a tree of peace. He also spoke at a foreign ministry symposium after meeting with President Bouteflika. Speaking at a press conference following the encounter, Mr. Ban said he was encouraged by the adoption of a revised constitution on 7 February, and insisted on the importance of investing in Algeria's “dynamic and determined” youth.

He is expected to visit the headquarters of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) located in Laayoune, Western Sahara.

Iraq: senior UN official condemns Hilla bombing, deplores continuing loss of life

6 March - The most senior United Nations official in Iraq has strongly condemned the terrorist bombing near the city of Hilla in the Governorate of Babylon in the south of the country, which today caused scores of casualties, including women and children.

“This latest atrocity committed by a suicide attacker driving a vehicle packed with explosives targeted a busy roadblock near Hilla as cars queued for security checks. It was clearly intended to exact maximum casualties among civilians,” he added.

Mr. Kubiš further stressed that he deeply deplorer the continuing loss of life and property in yet another terrorist bombing and calls on Iraqis not to be cowed by the terrorists' murderous campaign.

“This horrifying attack adds to the terrorists' long record of brutality that we and all Iraqis of different affiliations strongly condemn and totally reject,” he underlined.

The UN envoy also expressed his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims as well as to the Government and people of Iraq, and wished a speedy recovery to those injured.

Meanwhile, he reiterated his appeal to Iraqis not to fall into the trap of the terrorists who seek to undermine the country's unity and fuel sectarian strife.

In this connection, he applauded the restraint shown, for example, by the relatives of the victims and their communities of similar terrorist outrage on 29 February at a funeral ceremony in Muqdadiya. He called on the Government of Iraq to make sure that the perpetrators of these crimes and those behind them are swiftly brought to justice.

“Sooner or later justice avails those terrorists committing crimes against civilians, crimes against humanity”, Mr. Kubiš declared.
In Algeria, the United Nations chief calls to ease 'unacceptable' plight of Sahrawi refugees

5 March - Calling to alleviate the plight of Sahrawi refugees in Algeria who are dealing with an “unacceptable situation,” United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today said the parties to the Western Sahara conflict have not made any real progress in the negotiations towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution.

“What really moved and, even, saddened me was the anger. Many people expressed their anger –people who for more than forty years have lived in the harshest conditions and who feel their plight and their cause have been forgotten by the world,” Mr. Ban told the press after meeting with refugees and youth representatives at Smara camp, and later with the Polisario Front's Secretary-General Mohamed Abdelaziz.

Fighting broke out between Morocco and the Polisario Front following the end of Spain's colonial administration of Western Sahara in 1976. A ceasefire was reached in September 1991, and a UN mission—known as MINURSO—has been tasked with monitoring this ceasefire and organizing a referendum on self-determination in Western Sahara, which the Security Council has been requesting since 2004.

Meanwhile, Morocco has presented a plan for autonomy, while the Polisario Front's position is that the Territory's final status should be decided in a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option.

“My first objective in visiting the region is to make my own assessment and contribution to the search for a settlement,” said the UN chief. “My second objective was to visit the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara. I will visit the team site in Bir Lahlou, as well as personnel performing vital demining activities.”

Mr. Ban added that he saw the “remarkable and demanding” work the Mission is doing in harsh conditions of the Hammada. He is also expected to visit the headquarters of MINURSO in Laayoune, Western Sahara.

“Third, I wanted to bear witness to one of the forgotten humanitarian tragedies of our times. The Sahrawi refugee camps near Tindouf are some of the oldest in the world. It is heartbreaking to see these families separated for so long,” he stressed, adding that the situation is “unacceptable” and must be addressed independently from the political process.

The UN chief further noted that his fourth objective is “to finalize the security situation,” as the UN is concerned about increasing criminality, drug trafficking and the possibility of extremists and terrorists coming to the region.

“At the same time, I am calling on the donor countries to increase their assistance to this overlooked population to provide life-saving humanitarian aid,” he added. “We must show that the world remembers the Sahrawi people. To that end, I will soon convene a meeting of donors and assistance providers in Geneva.”

Finally, the Secretary-General noted that the World Humanitarian Summit this May in Istanbul will be another opportunity to mobilize global solidarity.

“I have been heartened by the faith Sahrawis put in the UN, its principles, and international law. Let us match this with determination to alleviate their plight and resolve this longstanding conflict for the future of all Sahrawis,” he concluded.
UN Security Council arrives in Mali, vows to support country during 'key moment' in history

5 March - The United Nations Security Council is in Mali today, the first stop of its visit to the African continent, where it underlined that the 15-member body is united in supporting the country's peace and reconciliation efforts.

“We are here—the whole Council is here with its entire weight, with one voice, and with the same wish to see Mali reconciled, Malians united to build peace and to continue building the great country you have,” Ismael Abraão Gaspar Martins, the Permanent Representative of Angola and Security Council President for the month of March, told reporters at a press conference in the capital, Bamako.

“It's the main message we're bringing with us,” he added. “During this visit, we will meet with Malians, we will be close to them instead of just listening from afar and reading the reports. We will let them know directly that our main objective is to see the rebirth of Mali.”

The Malian Government has been seeking to restore stability and rebuild following a series of setbacks since early 2012, including a military coup d'état, renewed fighting between Government forces and Tuareg rebels, and the seizure of its northern territory by radical extremists. The country has also been wracked by a series of humanitarian crises.

Echoing the Angolan Ambassador's message was France's Permanent Representative François Delattre, who said the road travelled by the West African country during these past years has been “spectacular.” Building on this progress, he explained that the Security Council is putting all its weight on three items in particular.

“First, it is important to give renewed impulse to the implementation of the peace accords. These mark a historic step, they mark the coming together of all Malian stakeholders and of the whole international community supporting the agreement,” he underlined, referring to the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation, signed by the Government, the Coordination of Movements of Azawad, and the Platform coalition of armed groups.

“The second objective is to put all the Security Council's weight on the fight against terrorism which counters the peace agreement,” Mr. Delattre continued. “It is the reason why are honoring the Malian security forces which are at the forefront of this battle. We are also honoring the UN Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) which works alongside the country's people and authorities.”

Finally, he said the Security Council's third message is to promote reconciliation. “It's the key word I think,” the Ambassador stressed. “To move forward with reconciliation between all Malians, no matter where they are, so they feel includes in this dynamic I have described.”

“We are at your side. You have, dear Malian friends, the destiny of your country in your hands. We are at a key moment in the history of your country. We will support your efforts especially in the implementation of the peace agreement. You have a historic chance, so cease it,” he concluded.