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UN launches $2.66 billion appeal for emergency assistance in Sahel region

7 December – The United Nations and its partner non-governmental organizations today launched an appeal for $2.66 billion to provide emergency assistance across eight countries in the Sahel region, where “millions of people still live in conditions of deplorable human suffering.”

“The Sahel faces considerable challenges and will remain the site of one of the world’s major humanitarian operations in 2017,” stated UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator Toby Lanzer, in a news release on the appeal, which aims to cover the needs of 15 million people across Africa's Sahel region, which includes Chad, Mali, Niger, Cameroon, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal.

He said the lives and livelihoods of millions of suffering people in the region will be at stake unless the humanitarian community, governments and donors renew their engagement to assist and protect those in urgent need and help these communities become less vulnerable to shocks.
The UN Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that 4.9 million people in Sahel have fled from their homes, while one in every five families remains extremely vulnerable. In addition, Chad and parts of north-east Nigeria are experiencing critical levels of malnutrition, as high as 30 per cent, which is double the 'emergency' threshold.

Mr. Lanzer also stressed that nearly 11 million people in the Lake Chad basin area require emergency assistance and financial needs have almost tripled since year, adding that there is also half a million severely malnourished children in need of urgent help. He also highlighted a stable but worrying situation in Mali due to insecurity.

The Regional Humanitarian Coordinator stressed the commitment of UN agencies and their partners to providing urgent assistance to affected individuals, their families and communities, while also promising to continue strong collaboration with governments, development and stabilization actors.

“And we must, more than ever, shift 'from providing aid to ending needs' because extreme vulnerability in the Sahel is the most visible symptom of the triple crisis of governance, insecurity and climate change that affects this region. The demographic explosion, which will see the region's population double in the next twenty years, exacerbates the situation still further,” Mr. Lanzer underscored.

The Sahel regional appeal is part of the larger $22.2 billion funding request for 2017 launched by the United Nations Monday in Geneva, Switzerland.

'No safe place left' for children in war-ravaged Aleppo, says senior UNICEF official

7 December – Returning from a mission to Aleppo, a senior United Nations Children's Agency (UNICEF) official in Syria described “haunting images” of children killed by mortars and malnourishment, and said that the terrible situation “continues to plummet to even greater lows.”

“When I was there, nearly 100 mortars fell on west Aleppo in a couple of days [...] explosions lit up the night sky and the sounds of war reverberated across the city,” said Hannah Singer, the UNICEF Syria Representative, in a statement today.

“Even by Syrian standards, the recent bombardment and shelling have been the most intense in Aleppo,” she added.

She further said that some 31,500 people have been displaced from eastern Aleppo in recent days and that based on latest estimates, at least half of them seem to be children.

Painting a grave picture of the scene in eastern Aleppo's Hanano, a neighbourhood that was retaken by Government forces on 27 November, Ms. Singer said: “The destruction was massive. Unexploded ordnance scattered everywhere. Apartments were gutted, hospitals nearly destroyed and schools completely damaged except for two that could be rehabilitated.”

I will be forever haunted by the images of the bodies of two beautiful girls, Hanadi and Lamar, who left for school one morning with pink ribbons in their hair. They never made it.

'No safe place left in Aleppo'

Noting that, so far this year there had been 84 attacks on schools in Syria with at least 69 children killed and many others injured while at school, Ms. Singer underscored: “Even going to school can be a matter of life or death.”

“And I will be forever haunted by the images of the bodies of the two beautiful girls, Hanadi and Lamar, who left for school
one morning with pink ribbons in their hair. They never made it. Shrapnel from a mortar hit them on the way and they were killed. Hanadi's hand still grasped the remains of a chocolate bar,” she added.

500,000 children estimated trapped in 'sieges' across Syria

Ms. Singer added that while the world's attention is on Aleppo, eastern Aleppo is only one 16 besieged areas in the country, where an estimated half a million children remain trapped amid worsening conditions.

“Besiegement – a tactic of war from the Middle Ages – has been used by all sides. Where armed forces surround an area and try to starve the other into submission, whilst restricting the movement of persons, including the sick and wounded,” she noted.

She further noted extreme lack of food and medical services that are taking a toll on children with cases of extreme malnutrition resulting in deaths of children.

Violence has to stop

Ms. Singer emphasized that for the situation to improve and humanitarian plight to be alleviated, the fighting must stop.

She said that while UNICEF has been distributing winter clothes, supplying water and fuel, and providing nutrition supplements immunizations, psychosocial support and mine-risk education.

Calling on all parties to the conflict to stop employing sieges, attacking civilians, schools and hospitals as well as to stop recruiting and using children in armed forces, she stressed that until that happened, efforts of humanitarian workers and agencies will not amount to much.

“We can make a difference but it's never enough. Let's be clear, as long as the violence continues, children in Syria will suffer,” she said.

Situation in eastern Aleppo 'very heart breaking' – UN chief

Also today, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told journalists in Vienna, Austria that the UN through Special Envoy Staffan de Mistura has been working very hard to resolve the Syrian crisis through an inclusive political solution.

“Unfortunately, during the last six years we have not been able to do that,” he added.

Noting that the ongoing fighting has made delivery of live-saving relief extremely difficult he underlined the need for a sustainable cessation of hostilities so that the organization is able to perform its humanitarian operations.

“I have been urging the Syrian authorities and the Syrian armed groups and also the coalition partners to keep their promise, so that we do our proper humanitarian role, in the absence of a political solution,” he emphasized.
UN aid agencies ramp up response amid the worst southern African drought in decades

7 December – Following the worst El Niño-induced drought in decades in southern Africa, United Nations humanitarian agencies and partners today launched a revised Action Plan to outlining their response to the needs of an estimated 13.8 million people as the region enters the peak of the lean season with largely depleted food stocks due to poor and failed harvests.

In a news release yesterday, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that the region is suffering “severe” food shortages, exasperating a multitude of existing and increasing vulnerabilities, including weak commodity prices, unfavourable exchange rates and slow economic growth.

“As we enter the critical period of the crisis during the lean season, many countries are struggling to stretch funds to cover the growing needs,” Timo Pakkala, El Niño Coordinator for the southern Africa at OCHA said in the release.

The situation in southern Madagascar, for instance, is particularly worrying as maize, cassava and rice productions fell by as much as 95 per cent this year, compared to 2015. An estimated 845,000 people on the island are in the “emergency” or “crisis” categories of food insecurity.

“It is essential that humanitarian assistance to the most vulnerable people is sustained through this period, and for farmers to be supported so they can resume agricultural production,” Mr. Pakkala stressed.

The release added that as of early December, some $757 million has been raised for Regional Inter-Agency Standing Committee (RIASCO) – comprising UN and non-governmental humanitarian agencies in the region – which has which has helped save lives, protect livelihoods and reduce human suffering.

UN entities, including the World Food Programme (WFP), UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) FAO have rolled out their response and are scaling up efforts to reach more with critical aid. However, despite efforts, funding gaps amounting to $550 million are yet to be met.

Without these funds, millions of the most vulnerable people will not receive full rations, and hundreds of thousands of children will remain at risk of irreparable damage from undernutrition and from dropping out of school and health centres will not be able to provide the most essential services, while farmers will not be able to resume full agricultural production.

“Further investments in these areas, combined with solid fiscal and other risk management instruments at national and regional level, are required to build resilience and achieve the goal of breaking the cycle of recurrent drought emergencies,” stressed the news release.

Alongside humanitarian assistance, the revised action plan also calls for stepping up efforts to end the cycle of drought-induced crises in southern Africa. To do so, development partners have called for sound national policies and strategies, expanding coverage and strengthening social safety nets, promoting climate-smart agriculture, reinforcing early warning systems and improving management of water and other natural resources, the release added.

El Niño is the term used to describe the warming of the central to eastern tropical Pacific that occurs, on average, every three to seven years. It raises sea surface temperatures and impacts weather systems around the globe so that some places receive more rain while others receive none at all, often in a reversal of their usual weather pattern.
New UN report urges action to end 'unimaginable suffering' for separated families on Korean peninsula

7 December – A new report from the United Nations human rights wing calls attention to more than 60 years of separation between families on the Korean peninsula, and urges action in order to alleviate the suffering of families.

“The emotional, psychological, social, and economic toll of involuntary separation persists to this day, as people continue to search for the truth and for contact with their loved ones,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

The report, published today by the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), documents the experiences of families who have been separated since the 1950-1953 Korean War through displacement, forced disappearance and abductions, and as a result of those fleeing the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

This report looks at past and present-day forms of involuntary separation and outlines a practical and humane approach to family reunification. These people are not just statistics; they are not a faceless mass of victims caught up in the sweep of history. They are individuals with their own, unimaginable, stories of suffering – a suffering that remains as acute as ever despite the passing of years,” the High Commissioner explained.

Through interviews and research, the report finds that involuntary separation has not only been through the inevitable consequences of war, but also due to structural forms of exclusion and impunity. Women, in particular, have suffered long-lasting prejudice.

For example, Park Dong-yeol [name changed], now 85, fled North Korea in 1950. She was denied access to a boat leaving for the Republic of Korea due to a superstition about having women aboard. When she finally reached South Korea via foot, she was kept under close surveillance. Authorities were suspicious of a single woman, prompting her to marry once she “lost hope” of being reunited with her family who had remained in the DPRK.

While occasional but tightly controlled reunions for some 100 families on both sides of the peninsula began in 2000, such meetings often bring about more stress than reconciliation, sayd the report.

In 2015, Ji Eungyeong [name changed] met with her daughter who she left behind in North Korea 64 years ago.

“We could barely talk in the hall,” she shared. “There were journalists on one side and [guards] on the other. Then we had two hours of private time. Only then was my daughter able to cry.”

The report also shares the experiences of people in Republic of Korea whose family members were abducted. In 1950, Jeong Sun-ui’s father disappeared, leading the rest of the family to be treated with suspicion, fearing that they might be spies.

“There was always a sense of guilt by association,” he said.

Since 2008, due to more stringent border controls, the number of people who have escaped from DPRK to ROK has decreased. Those who do risk their lives – frequently women – are exposed to brutal treatment including labour sentences if caught. If they escape, their families are at risk for acts of retaliation and harassment by the authorities.

The report calls for unhindered contact for people in both countries, public and complete lists of all individuals who have been missing since the war and determining their whereabouts, and protecting those who leave DPRK.
OHCHR acknowledges that increases in political and military tensions in the region have generated extremely difficult obstacles, but nonetheless advocates action from DPRK in order to locate and return those who have been abducted, as well as removing restrictions that prevent citizens from travelling and communicating with the outside world.

**Recent violence in Central African Republic spotlights subregion's volatility, Security Council told**

*7 December* – Despite a peaceful and successful transition in the Central African Republic (CAR) earlier in 2016, the recent outbreak of violence there had demonstrated the extremely fragile situation in the country, the Secretary-General's Acting Special Representative and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA), told the Security Council today.

François Lounceny Fall noted that the violence, which resulted in high numbers of casualties, had occurred as CAR has embarked on recovery and efforts to consolidate peace. The eruption of fighting also demonstrated the threat that the continued presence of armed groups in the country posed to the entire subregion.

He went on to state that the Secretary-General's report presented the main threats to peace and security in Central Africa, as well as an update on UNOCA's activities in the last six months. Despite those challenges, however, the Government had made progress by engaging with armed groups and by adopting a national strategy on disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation which most of them supported.

However, the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) remains a threat to regional security, he said, adding that its attacks caused “unspeakable” suffering to civilians. The group was also linked to poaching and trafficking in wildlife. UNOCA, in cooperation with the African Union, would organize the next semi-annual meeting of focal points on the LRA, to be held in Entebbe, Uganda later this month.

He recalled that in August 2015, a team comprising UNOCA, as well as the African Union, UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) had visited the CAR to assess the LRA threat. In October 2015, a joint UNOCA-African Union mission had also visited the country to discuss measures to counter the group with civilian and military partners.

“However, the United Nations is concerned about Uganda's intention, announced on 31 December, to withdraw its troops from the African Union regional task force, he said, cautioning that such an action would lead to a security void that the LRA could exploit to attack populations,” he explained.

Further afield, Mr. Fall said that collective efforts by the Lake Chad basin countries had met with success in the fight against terrorism, while noting that Boko Haram remained a serious threat to regional stability as its asymmetric attacks targeted mainly civilians. Its activities had greatly undermined development and exacerbated economic hardship.

The situation of refugees and the internally displaced, particularly women and children, remains a cause of serious concern as Boko Haram's activities continued to hinder humanitarian access to affected areas.

He went on to point out that the resources available to the Lake Chad basin countries were not enough to finance operations of the Multinational Joint Task Force, emphasizing the urgent need to ensure funding for early recovery and development in liberated areas, including through measures to reintegrate defectors and their families.

He voiced hope that the planned Joint Summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) on Boko Haram would develop a regional strategy to address
political, security, humanitarian and development challenges, underlining the readiness of the United Nations to support the region in that endeavour.

**On International Day, top UN aviation official recalls contributions of civil aviation**

7 December – In a message on the International Civil Aviation Day, celebrated annually on 7 December, the head of the United Nations civil aviation agency underlined the socio-economic importance and contribution of air travel and aviation.

“Many families [are] re-united, many tourists arrived in exotic destinations, many businesses and producers forged new access to global markets and trade flows, and many thousands of tonnes of goods reached distant consumers eager for their variety and affordability,” said Fang Liu, the Secretary-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

According to ICAO, aviation operations generate more than $2.7 trillion in global gross domestic product (GDP) and provide employment for more than 63.5 million people worldwide.

“Most of us of course only notice the pilots, flight crew and airport staff in the course of our journeys, but aviation's reach extends much further into the wide range of tourism and other supplier networks which directly and indirectly rely on its unique global connectivity.” Ms. Fang added and said that one of ICAO's important tasks is to bring together the diverse public and private sector partners who work closely together on virtually every civil aviation objective.

She explained that the Organization, in its 70 years of service, has supported the development of over 12,000 civil aviation Standards and Recommended Practices that have helped to align the regulations and operations of different countries and cultures around the world and enable air transport's “truly global reach.”

Ms. Fang further said that with the aviation sector's continuing growth, new challenges such as infrastructure and investment are also emerging and that air traffic management systems and approaches need to be modernized in order to accommodate more aircrafts in a finite airspace.

Noting ICAO's work in raising global awareness and engagement on such issues, she said: “More and more today, governments are becoming better aware of how fundamental air transport access is to a wide range of their socio-economic development objectives in the decades ahead.”

She also highlighted that air transport and systems are vital to the attainment of universal development goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and urged governments to keep this issue in mind when revising their development and infrastructure planning.

Recalling the progress made in civil aviation in 2016, she highlighted that the agreement on offsetting and reducing Carbon Dioxide (CO₂) emissions from international flights was the world first such agreement for any industry sector.

“We are very proud of our role at the heart of the global cooperation which aligns and optimizes this progress, and we will continue to work in the years ahead to keep our planet's skies safe and secure, and more liberalized and efficient, for the benefit of all,” she concluded.

In 1996, noting the contribution of international civil aviation in creating and preserving friendship and understanding among the nations and peoples of the world, the UN General Assembly designated December 7 as International Civil Aviation Day. The date also marks the anniversary of the 1944 signing of the Convention on International Civil
Recent gains made in Haiti cholera fight demonstrate additional resources can ensure 'cholera will go' – UN Adviser

7 December – A senior United Nations official has stressed that recent successes in the fight against cholera in Haiti demonstrate that when the UN and Haitian authorities receive the necessary funds, real progress can be made, and that eventually, "cholera will go."

In an interview with the UN News Service, Dr. David Nabarro, a UN Special Advisor, highlighted the recent massive recent vaccination campaign, backed by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/ UN World Health Organization (WHO), that reached 729,000 vulnerable Haitians and the increase in 'rapid response' teams, which has had a positive impact in stopping outbreaks of the disease in its tracks.

“I want enough cash in the bank so that we can be sure of being able to have this response capacity right through into 2018. Then, we can really get this outbreak right down, numbers really small, and then if we combine it [efforts to improve] water supplies and sanitation for every Haitian, cholera will go,” he underscored.

Dr. Nabarro noted that in August of this year, it became clear that the number of people with cholera in Haiti was actually larger than it had been last year. Because of shortages of funding, the number of teams that could respond rapidly when individuals were reported to have cholera-type symptoms had really dropped from about 70 to around 30.

“With a situation like that, where you can't respond quickly to a person who is sick, you get more people in the vicinity of the sick person also being ill with diarrhoeal disease and probably with cholera,” he said.

The UN borrowed resources internally to increase the number of rapid response teams. As a result, the number increased from 32 in April to 88 today and the majority of people, who were reported as being sick with watery diarrhoea and suspected cholera, can now get treated within 48 hours of their illness being reported.

When Hurricane Matthew hit Haiti in early October, the UN became extremely concerned that there would be an upsurge in the number of people sick with cholera because the storm damaged sanitary facilities and sewage leaked into the places from which people obtained their drinking water. This prompted the urgent delivery to Haiti of 1 million doses of the cholera vaccine and the massive and efficiently executed vaccination campaign of vulnerable communities in the storm affected areas.

Although the vaccine is not a 100 per cent effective, it can have a dramatic impact on cholera if combined with other interventions, such as chlorination of water supplies and intensive education, he said, adding that the UN is looking to vaccinate everyone in the country, ideally with two doses.

The number of people with cholera is below the levels recorded during this period last year and the year before. “The way that's done is through having finance,” he explained. “You can't run an effective cholera response without dependable cash.”

“You can then provide the five different inputs necessary for controlling an outbreak: rapid response, effective treatment, vaccination, chlorination of water supplies, and really strong public education and involvement,” he concluded.

The Special Adviser's call for scaled-up funding comes just days after UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon apologized to the people of Haiti, expressing deep regret for the loss of life and suffering caused by the country's cholera epidemic, and drawing on his report A new approach to cholera in Haiti, outlined the way forward including immediate steps to stem
the outbreak and long-term support for those affected – while also highlighting the need for adequate funding of the proposal.

Haiti has been dealing with a cholera outbreak since October 2010, some nine months after it suffered a devastating earthquake. The outbreak has affected an estimated 788,000 people and claimed the lives of more than 9,000. Concerted national and international efforts, backed by the United Nations, have resulted in a 90 per cent reduction in the number of suspected cases.

While the number of those affected remains high, and recent outbreaks – partly heightened by the impact of Hurricane Matthew – show the continued vulnerability of the population to the disease, UN officials have said the challenge is not insurmountable.

In Vienna, Ban says UN and Austria will continue cooperation in promoting shared goals

7 December – Kicking off what is likely to be his final overseas trip before leaving office at the end of the month, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Austria today, meeting the President-elect, foreign ministry officials, and press in Vienna.

Offering congratulations to Alexander Van der Bellen, member of Austria's Green Party and winner of this past weekend's presidential election, Mr. Ban reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations to working with Austria and praised the country's efforts to achieve shared values and goals.

“I am happy to conclude my mandate as Secretary-General by visiting this great country, which I always regard as my second home,” announced Mr. Ban, who was first posted as the country's Korean ambassador in Vienna in 1998.

“I feel like an 'echter Wiener' [genuine Viennese].” he said.

The Secretary-General met today with President-elect Alexander Van der Bellen over a lunch hosted by Sebastian Kurz, Foreign Minister for Foreign Affairs and Integration and then later in the afternoon with Christian Kern, the incumbent Chancellor.

Mr. Ban said that during his meeting with Minister Kurz, they discussed the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on climate change, the New York Declaration on refugees and migrants, and recent developments in Syria, the Western Balkans, and Ukraine.

“Austria's chairmanship of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) next year is an opportunity to reinforce international cooperation and the partnership between the United Nations and the OSCE,” he announced to the press.

In response to a question about the country's role in preserving European stability, the Secretary-General referenced the country's important diplomatic and political roles as well as its continuation as a locale for ongoing international cooperation.

A member of Austrian Public Television also questioned him on Aleppo, both on best case scenarios and for confirmation of Russia's assertions about having created safe humanitarian corridors out of the city.

Mr. Ban acknowledged regret at being unable to arrive at an inclusive political solution over the past six years, and its
impact on the UN's ability to provide humanitarian aid to the people of Aleppo.

“We have been really trying to provide life-saving, life sustaining, humanitarian support to many people who have been stranded, who have been kept in the besieged areas or hard to reach areas,” he said.

'Dangerous funding gap' may lead to more cuts in food rations for refugees in Kenya – UN

7 December – Forced to make a new round of cuts in food rations for refugees in Kenya, the World Food Programme (WFP) has appealed urgently for nearly $14 million to feed the 434,000 refugees living in Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma camps and in the new Kalobeyei settlement.

“We are appealing to donors to quickly come to the aid of the refugees, who rely on WFP food assistance for survival,” Annalisa Conte, WFP's Representative and Country Director for Kenya, said in a news release.

WFP currently provides food relief to refugees in Kenya's Dadaab and Kakuma camps, as well as the newly established Kalobeyei settlement. This assistance comes as cash transfers and food distributions. For those most vulnerable, the agency also offers specialized fortified foods to prevent malnutrition.

“We immediately require $13.7 million to cover the food and cash needs for the refugees between December and April,” stressed Ms. Conte.

Beginning this month, the UN agency was forced to reduce food ration by half for the refugees' monthly entitlement, which will only last until the end of February if no further funding received.

While cash transfers have not yet been cut, they are due to be exhausted by the end of January. If the agency is forced to discontinue the cash transfers, however, it will specifically affect 7,500 refugees in the recently launched Kalobeyei settlement, as the only form of food assistance they receive is cash.

“A generous and critically important $22 million shipment of food from the United States is en route to Dadaab and Kakuma and should be available for distribution by May,” Ms. Conte said, while warning: “But we have a dangerous gap in funding until then.”

She further reiterated that without an urgent response from other donors, WFP will completely run out of food for more than 400,000 people in Dadaab and Kakuma at the end of February.
UN rights expert urges Australians to stand up against country's 'alarming' hate speech and racism

7 December – The United Nations human rights expert on contemporary forms of racism today urged all Australians – from the Government to the media and civil society – to stand up against “alarming” hate speech and racism racial discrimination in the country, especially against indigenous people, refugees, migrants, and Muslims.

“The elimination of racism, xenophobia and discrimination will not happen unless it is led by the most senior political leadership and unless institutions such as the media play a constructive role,” Mutuma Ruteere said in a news release at the end of a visit to the country.

Mr. Ruteere urged the authorities and the government to respect and support diversity in Australia, where every second person is either born overseas or has a parent born outside the country. He also encouraged the Australian Human Rights Commission to continue their efforts towards equality.

“Indigenous people are disproportionately targeted by the criminal justice system, with high rates of juvenile incarceration and police profiling. The current policing of indigenous communities is too punitive and need an urgent change as its consequences can only lead to even further devastation of these communities,” said Mr. Ruteere about the many challenges that these groups face.

“Indigenous peoples are three times more likely to experience unemployment, they remain at the margin of economic progress and prosperity,” he added.

The expert also encouraged moving forward with the current debate on Section 18 C) of the Racial Discrimination Act, prohibiting hate speech, adding that this sets n optimistic ground for an inclusive and multicultural Australia. “I call upon the Government to maintain this section as a mean to protect discriminated groups against bigots and extremists.”

“It is alarming to see that xenophobic hate speech, including by elected politicians, has been on the rise in Australia and cheered by sections of the mainstream media, contributing to reinforcing the negative perception of migrants, particularly Muslims and persons of African descent,” the expert added.

Mr. Ruteere requested the Australian Government to consider a broader Human Rights Bill, to ensure protection against racism and other forms of discrimination in the form of a Constitutional Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
Ban urges peaceful resolution of impasse in DR Congo

7 December – Welcoming the announcement of the continuation of the mediation led by the Conférence épiscopale des églises du Congo (Catholic Church - CENCO) to achieve a more inclusive consensus on the upcoming elections in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on all political actors in the country to recommit themselves to this dialogue.

According to a statement issued by his office, Mr. Ban “underlined the need to pursue, in earnest, this Congolese-owned process to reach a consensual and peaceful solution to the current impasse.”

Further in the statement, Mr. Ban took note of President Joseph Kabila’s expressed support and encouragement to the CENCO mediation as well as the stated readiness of The Rassemblement opposition platform to remain engaged in dialogue.

The UN chief also expressed his own his support for the CENCO-led mediation.

President Kabila's second and final term in office ends in less than two weeks.

Earlier this week, the UN Security Council had also welcomed the ongoing mediation efforts by the CENCO and had called on all stakeholders to ensure that the polls are conducted in a free, fair, credible, inclusive and transparent environment.