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Proposed humanitarian corridors in Aleppo must be guaranteed by all sides, says UN relief chief

28 July – Amid reports that Aleppo is ‘de facto besieged,’ as the war-battered city is now almost completely encircled by Syrian troops, the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator today reiterated his demand for safe, regular and sustained access to the quarter of a million people trapped behind the front lines, and stressed that “all options must be considered.”

“The situation for people trapped in eastern Aleppo remains of the gravest concern,” said Stephen O’Brien, noting that he is aware of the measures proposed today by the Russian Federation to set up humanitarian corridors.

Media reports suggest that Russia has proposed establishing several so-called “exit corridors” that would allow for the distribution of food, as well as provide an opportunity for civilians to flee the city.

While underscoring that the situation is so dire that all options must be considered, Mr. O’Brien stressed that it is critical that the security of any such corridors is guaranteed by all parties and that people are able to use them voluntarily.

“No one can be forced to flee, by any specific route or to any particular location. Protection must be guaranteed for all according to the principles of neutrality and impartiality,” he stated.
Mr. O’Brien said that his proposal for 48-hour humanitarian pauses to enable cross-line and cross-border operations is what humanitarian actors require. This would ensure that relief workers are able to see for themselves the dire situation of the people, assess their needs, adjust to logistical constraints and assist people where they are now with their life-saving and protection needs.

“In any event, all parties are required and obliged, under long-established and accepted international humanitarian law, to allow safe, unimpeded, impartial and immediate humanitarian access for civilians to leave and for aid to come in,” he said.

Earlier in the week, Mr. O’Brien, who is also the UN Under-Secretary-General for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, warned the Security Council that the clock is ticking and the parties, and those with influence, “must act now” to establish a weekly, 48-hour humanitarian pause so much-needed assistance could be provided to the people trapped in Aleppo.

“This must be a full United Nations call – not just from me as the UN’s humanitarian chief – this has to come from you, the Security Council,” he said.

Meanwhile, the UN Special Envoy for Syria, Staffan de Mistura, spoke to reporters in Geneva today and told them that fighting on the ground is impeding humanitarian aid in the country. Noting “serious concern” about the situation in Aleppo, saying that the city is “de facto besieged,” because it is almost completely encircled militarily.

“The clock is therefore ticking; there is no doubt about that. If Aleppo becomes a […] major besieged area – and we are very close to that – we would have a huge number of additional besieged – humanitarian wise- people in the country, when we were actually having a reduction,” he said.

On the humanitarian side, the Special Envoy is urging the two co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG), the Russian Federation and the United States, to expedite discussions on how to reduce the violence, along the lines of the meetings in Moscow and then in Laos, particularly between Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and United States Secretary of State John Kerry. Along with Russia and the US, the ISSG comprises the UN, the Arab League, the European Union and 16 other countries that have been working on a way forward since late last year.

Mr. de Mistura said that his Deputy Special Envoy, Ramzy Ezeldine Ramzy, will head to Damascus in the next few days to discuss with the Syrian authorities some ideas that the Office of the Special Envoy has developed in order to facilitate the launch in August of the intra-Syrian talks.

The Special Envoy in the meantime is proceeding to Tehran to talk to the Iranian authorities.

At Security Council, Ban cites shared responsibility to ‘nurture seeds of peace and prosperity’ in Africa

28 July – Citing persisting instability in number of African countries – from South Sudan to Mali and Libya, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today stressed that building peace and restoring institutions in post-conflict settings are long-term processes that must be rooted in a country’s historical, political, social, cultural and economic contexts.

“There are no one-size-fits-all solutions,” the UN chief told the Security Council’s open debate on peacebuilding in Africa. But “when institutions are weak, nations cannot thrive. Inclusive and accountable institutions are the cement that bonds States and citizens,” he stressed.

Institutions provide security, justice, and essential services, from sanitation and health care to an enabling environment for business to flourish. “They are the bedrock of peace and sustainable
development,” Mr. Ban said.

“Peace in Africa is a top priority. As we meet, South Sudan remains precariously poised on the brink of an abyss. The promises of the new State for peace, justice and opportunity have been squandered. I am appalled by the scale of sexual violence documented by our Human Rights teams,” said the Secretary-General, demanding accountability for all atrocities and that the leaders of South Sudan commit to the peace process.

And while he cited a number of other situations of “grave concern” on the continent, he said it is also important to emphasize that this is “not the full story of Africa.” Indeed there is another narrative, largely untold, of growing economies, improved living standards and expanding democratic space.

“Our shared responsibility is to nourish these seeds of peace and prosperity. One way we can do that is to nurture inclusive, transparent, effective and accountable institutions and help the nations of Africa achieve the Sustainable Development Goals,” explained the UN chief.

The 15-member Council adopted a wide-ranging Presidential Statement as an outcome to the discussions that stressed, among others, “the importance of institution-building as a critical component of peacebuilding and sustaining peace in Africa, which requires comprehensive approaches bearing in mind African countries’ national development strategies.”

The debate follows the adoption of landmark resolutions by both the Council and UN General Assembly this past spring that expanded the understanding of peacebuilding as a process that occurs before, during and after conflict, which is embodied in a definition of “sustaining peace.”

According to a concept paper prepared ahead of the meeting by Japan, which holds the Council’s presidency for July, the debate aimed to identify best peacebuilding practices in Africa and discuss how the global community can enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of its support.

“He said that institution-building has to be rooted in national historical, political, social, cultural and economic contexts and that imposing an outside model on a post-conflict country can do more harm than good.

Institution-building also needs to be rooted in political agreement. National ownership and leadership are key, he said. That means broad, inclusive dialogue, encompassing central government, local authorities, communities, the private sector and civil society, especially youth and women and marginalized groups. Such dialogue enhances social cohesion, strengthens the legitimacy of the State, and increases the sustainability of reforms, he added.

Further, institution-building is a long-term process, sometimes taking decades, he said. Each country’s institutions should be allowed to develop incrementally, allowing for experimentation, learning and adaptation. Pressures from donor countries for instant results can be detrimental to long-term development objectives and – ultimately – peace, he said.

United Nations missions and humanitarian and development actors are committed to working closely as one to support institution rebuilding and strengthening in Africa, including in Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, he said.

The tool used to support the payment of civil servants in the Central African Republic in 2014 is currently being piloted in Libya, and would be deployed in Yemen and South Sudan, a country which Mr. Ban described as remaining “precariously poised on the brink of an abyss” and where “the promises of the new State for peace, justice and opportunity have been squandered.”

Peacekeeping operations and political missions have seen a significant increase in institution-building mandates from the Council in recent years, Mr. Ban said.

However, these have not always come with realistic timeframes, or the necessary resources and support, he added, calling on
Governments to support the Peacebuilding Fund, which faces a desperate funding shortfall. He also encouraged the Council to continue to strengthen its relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission.

**With planting season weeks away, millions in drought-hit southern Africa need support – UN**

28 July – Some 23 million people in southern Africa are in need of urgent support to be able to produce enough food to feed themselves and avoid being dependent on humanitarian assistance until mid-2018, the United Nations agricultural agency has warned.

According to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), if farmers are not able to plant by October, the result will be another reduced harvest early next year, severely affecting food and nutrition security as well as livelihoods in the region.

“The main way people are able to access food is through what they themselves produce. Assisting them to do this will provide lifesaving support in a region where at least 70 percent of people rely on agriculture for their livelihoods,” David Phiri, FAO Subregional Coordinator for Southern Africa, said in a news release issued by the agency.

“We must make the most of this small window of opportunity and make sure that farmers are ready to plant by October when the rains start,” he added.

To respond to this developing humanitarian situation, FAO aims to ensure that seeds, fertilizers, tools, and other inputs and services, including livestock support, are provided to small-holder farmers, agro-pastoralists and pastoralists to cope with the devastating impact of an El Niño-induced drought in the region.

The agency has estimated that at least $109 million is required to provide this urgently needed support.

The precarious situation has been brought on by the worst drought the region has witnessed in 35 years, with widespread crop failures exacerbating chronic malnutrition. Vulnerable families in rural areas have been hit hardest by the ensuing increase in prices of maize and other staple foods.

Furthermore, as the impact of El Niño continues to be felt in the region, FAO has projected that almost 40 million people could face food insecurity by the peak of the coming lean season, between January and March 2017, when the effects of the drought are expected to peak.

All countries in southern Africa are affected and more than 640,000 drought-related livestock deaths have been reported in Botswana, Swaziland, South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe alone due to lack of pasture and water as well as outbreak of diseases.

In the news release, FAO urged investments that equip communities with the ability to produce drought-tolerant seed and fodder, along with climate-smart agriculture technologies like conservation agriculture. The aim is to enable rural families to build resilience and prepare for future shocks.

Meanwhile, El Niño's counter-phenomenon, La Niña, is likely to occur later this year and while it could bring good rains needed for agriculture, the agency noted that measures must be taken to mitigate the risk of floods which could destroy standing crops and threaten livestock. Such measures could include strengthening river banks and stockpiling of short-cycle crop varieties which can be planted after flooding subsides and still yield a decent crop.

Widespread crop failure has exacerbated chronic malnutrition in the Southern Africa region. Photo: FAO/Desmond Kwande
Separately, concluding a week-long visit to southern Africa, the Deputy UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Kyung-wha Kang called for increased efforts to help mitigate the impact of the La Niña weather phenomenon.

**Coordinated regional response**

Given the complexity and scale of the crisis, FAO is working closely with the Southern African Development Community (SADC) an inter-governmental organization that is working to promote socio-economic cooperation and integration as well as political and security cooperation among its fifteen southern African member countries. FAO is also collaborating with other UN agencies, humanitarian partners, regional authorities and national governments.

The agency's call for more funding comes on the heels of an SADC regional humanitarian appeal, launched in Gaborone on 26 July by the SADC Chairperson and President of Botswana, Seretse Khama Ian Khama.

The SADC appeal put the overall price tag of helping all sectors of the region's economy recover from the 2016 El Niño at $2.7 billion, of which $2.4 billion is yet to be funded.

**Despite positive trends, poaching of African elephants still 'unacceptably high' – UN-backed treaty**

**28 July** – Many African elephants continued to face serious threats to their survival in 2015 from the illegal trade in ivory and unacceptably high levels of poaching, although the sharp upward trends in poaching since 2006 have started to level off, according to the Secretariat of the United Nations-backed treaty regulating wildlife trade.

“There are some encouraging signs” but “much more remains to be done,” said John E. Scanlon, the Secretary-General of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in a press release.

“The momentum generated over the past five years is translating into deeper and stronger efforts to fight poaching and illicit trafficking on the front-lines, where it is needed most – from the rangers in the field, to police and customs at ports of entry and exit and across illicit markets,” he added.

The two CITES monitoring programmes – the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS) and the Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants (MIKE) – will present their reports, which contain these findings, to the conference of the treaty parties in September.

The reports indicate that the sharp upward trends in poaching, which started in 2006, have started to level off with continental levels of illegal killing of elephants stabilizing or slightly decreasing. However, the levels of poaching remain far too high to allow elephant populations to recover, with some populations facing risk of local extinction, the reports say.

The ETIS report shows that in 2012 and 2013, levels of illegal ivory trade reached their highest levels since CITES agreed to ban the commercial trade in raw ivory in 1989. The results for 2014, the most recent year with sufficient seizure data available for analysis, suggests that illicit trade in ivory began to level off at that point, and this mostly for transactions described as being in the small worked ivory weight class. Additional data in subsequent years is required to confirm a meaningful decline in the illicit ivory trade.

The ETIS report makes some specific suggestions, including greater and more focused commitment on the investigation of large-scale ivory seizures along the entire trade chain, scaled-up forensic examinations to source the origins of the ivory, and the establishment of itemized inventory lists of the contents of seizures.
The MIKE figures show that the steady increase in levels of illegal killing of elephants since 2006, which peaked in 2011, has been halted and stabilized, but that levels remain unacceptably high overall.

The report estimates that the number of elephants illegally killed annually in Africa between 2010 and 2015 ran into the tens of thousands. Although overall trends are moving in the right direction, elephant poaching in 2015 remains a cause for serious concern, it says.

**Illegal killings far exceeding natural deaths in Central and West Africa**

The figures show that Southern Africa is the only sub-region that has not seen illegal killings exceed natural deaths since MIKE monitoring began in the early 2000s. But for the first time, a spike in elephant poaching was observed in South Africa's Kruger National Park. The elephant population in the park is not in decline, but the situation could change if current trends continue.

Positive news comes from East Africa, where estimated poaching levels declined in 2015 for the fourth consecutive year. While poaching evidently increased in parts of the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya recorded lower levels of poaching.

The most serious levels of poaching were again recorded in Central and West Africa, where illegal killings continue to far exceed natural deaths.

“Governments must continue to strengthen their efforts right across the illegal ivory supply chain, while international bodies and civil society must further enhance their much-needed support if we are to reverse the devastating poaching trends of the past decade,” said Mr. Scanlon.

**UN warns of more heatwave deaths as climate change pushes up temperatures**

28 July – Warning of a possible rise in heatwave deaths due to climate change, the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) today called for measures to reduce mortality from this natural hazard.

The warning came days after the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced that global temperatures for the first six months of this year reached new highs, setting 2016 on track to be the hottest-ever on record, and the temperature hit 54 degrees Celsius in Kuwait last week.

“Millions of people around the world should be receiving heat-related warnings and advisories if we are to avoid a repeat of the thousands of deaths which occurred last year from heatwaves notably in Asia and Europe,” said Robert Glasser, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Disaster Risk Reduction.

From 2005 to 2014, an average of 25 major heatwaves were recorded each year resulting in an annual average death toll of 7,232. In 2015, the hottest year on record, there were 3,275 reported deaths from heatwaves in France, 2,248 in India, and 1,229 in Pakistan.

“Climate change is amplifying the impact of many extreme weather events including heatwaves,” he added, stressing the need for disaster risk management to focus more on extreme heat to reduce mortality from this particular natural hazard.

He called for greater effort to ensure that the poor and vulnerable including refugees, children, older persons and persons living with disabilities are reached with early warnings, and that they have access to water and adequate shelter and protection from the heat and the sun.
The theme of this year’s International Day for Disaster Reduction on 13 October is reducing mortality.

Global Goals ‘rallying call’ to tackle world’s challenges, says new President of main UN economic and social body

28 July – Opening the 2017 session of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the body’s new President, Frederick Musiiwa Makamure Shava, of Zimbabwe, said today that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a “rallying call” to address the complex challenges facing the world.

He called for cooperation among UN Member States and for concerted action, at all levels, for effectively implementing the SDGs, which would complete the unfinished tasks of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and realize the future we want.

“[The] spirit of cooperation and shared values has made it possible for us to envision a world where all challenges, however complex and resource intensive […] can be navigated successfully,” said Mr. Shava in his inaugural statement today, referring to poverty eradication, climate change, humanitarian crises and breaches of peace and security.

To better focus the work of the main UN economic and social body, the President proposed that as its first priority, it should dedicate enough time to discuss the question of infrastructure development and industrialization, especially in the context of support for African development and as a high priority for all the countries in special situations – the least developed countries, the landlocked developing countries, the small island developing States and those emerging from conflict.

“Funding for infrastructure projects is a challenge that has not yet been surmounted in Africa and most countries in special situations,” he said, emphasizing that infrastructure and industrialization is critical for the countries furthest behind.

Mr. Shava further added that the nexus between development, human rights, peace and security should be recognized.

“There can be no sustainable development without peace and no peace without sustainable development,” he said, expressing his intent, as the President of the Council, to explore options for enhancing the partnership between ECOSOC and relevant UN bodies such as the Peacebuilding Commission on the interlinkages between development, peace and security.

Recalling that Member States of the UN recognized the role of ECOSOC as crucial in breaking silos and bridging divides across thematic issues, work pillars and governance structures, he said the body could consider how it could promote a strategic and coherent direction for the UN development system in this new development era.

“We already have very clear guidance on these issues. What is needed is to ensure that they are being implemented fully,” he concluded.

Also speaking at the occasion, outgoing President Oh Joon, of Republic of Korea, recalled that the 2016 session was a landmark year for the Council that saw the initiation of actions to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other major global agreements of 2015.

Recalling, in particular, the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development held earlier in July, at the UN Headquarters in New York, on the theme ‘Ensuring that no one is left behind’, Mr. Oh said: “The national reviews of 22 volunteer countries have set an excellent stage for the follow-up and review of the SDGs for years to come.”
For further strengthening the work of ECOSOC, the outgoing President said that developing the structure of the ECOSOC system to make it fit for purpose, in the context of the entire UN development system, should be explored.

He further said that the agenda and the working methods of the Council should be reviewed in a systematic manner to ensure that no items remain “merely due to inertia, and added that a renewed spirit of cooperation is required to overcome the “outdated divide” between the groups of developed and developing countries.

Underscoring that the efforts and commitments of all Member States of the UN are critical to ensure win-win outcomes for the entire UN development system, let alone that of ECOSOC, Mr. Oh concluded, “The Council should by all means remain the central platform for collaboration of the global south and north.”

Mr. Oh served the ECOSOC Bureau for the past two and a half years, the first one and a half as Vice President and then for one year as its President.

UN appeals for halting imminent execution of prisoners in Indonesia

UN appeals for halting imminent execution of prisoners in Indonesia

28 July – United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon and a group of UN rights experts today appealed to the Government of Indonesia to stop the reportedly imminent execution of a number of prisoners for alleged drug-related crimes.

“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,” said Mr Ban in a statement issued by his office.

“Drug crimes are generally not considered to meet this threshold,” he added.

Before the end of the week, 14 people who have been sentenced to death for drug related offences are scheduled to be executed by firing squad.

Noting that the UN opposes the use of capital punishment in all circumstances, the Secretary-General urged Indonesian President Joko Widodo to consider declaring a moratorium on the use of the death penalty and to move towards its abolition.

The Secretary-General’s appeal follows yesterday’s call by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, on the authorities in the South-East Asian country to immediately reinstate a moratorium on the death penalty.

A similar call was also made by three UN human rights experts.

In a joint statement, the UN Special Rapporteurs on extrajudicial executions, Christof Heyns; on torture, Juan E. Méndez; and on the independence of the judiciary, Mónica Pinto urged the Indonesia Government to halt executions to retry the 14 persons in compliance with international standards.

“Such death sentences are unlawful and tantamount to an arbitrary execution as they are undertaken in contravention of Indonesia’s international human rights obligations,” warned the Special Rapporteurs in the statement issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

“Resorting to this type of punishment to prevent drug trafficking is not only illegal, it is also futile,” they added, stressing that is a lack of persuasive evidence that the death penalty contributes more than any other punishment to eradicating drug trafficking.
The joint statement also noted that most of the persons scheduled for execution did not get a fair trial or had exhausted their appeal avenues. Of the 14, ten are foreign nationals who generally have no adequate interpreting services, the right to a translator or a lawyer at all stages of trial and appeal.

The experts also expressed alarm at reports that at least four of those scheduled for execution were tortured and forced to incriminate themselves. They called on the authorities to urgently investigate, prosecute and sanction those abuses.

“Confessions extracted under torture are impermissible in a court of law,” the experts emphasized.

The statement added that Indonesia has rapidly become region’s ‘most prolific executioner State’, with 19 executions in the last three years. The Government resumed executions in March 2013, after a four-year de facto moratorium, in a decision that was heavily criticised by the international community as running counter to the international trend towards the abolition of the death penalty.

Resorting to this type of punishment to prevent drug trafficking is not only illegal, it is also futile

It further added that according to reports, the Indonesian authorities are actively pursuing the policy of executing drug offenders sentenced to death, and exercise a blanket refusal to consider clemency applications in all such cases.

The experts reiterated that they had, from time to time, urged the Indonesian authorities to reconsider the death penalty for drug related offences or following judicial proceedings which fall short of international standards of fair trial and due process.

“We urge once again the Government of Indonesia to establish a moratorium on execution with a view of its complete abolition,” they concluded, urging the authorities to adopt all necessary measures to avoid further unlawful executions, including granting clemency.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

**Racism in US casts ‘dark shadow’ over rights to free assembly, association – UN expert**

28 July – The United States is struggling to live up to its ideals in the area of racial, social and economic inequality, which is negatively affecting the exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, a United Nations human rights expert said today at the end of his first official fact-finding mission to the country.

“People have good reason to be angry and frustrated at the moment,” said Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in a statement.

“And it is at times like these when robust promotion of assembly and association rights are needed most. These rights give people a peaceful avenue to speak out, engage in dialogue with their fellow citizens and authorities, air their grievances and hopefully settle them,” he added.

He noted that understanding racism means looking back at 400 years of slavery and post-civil war Jim Crow laws, which “enforced segregation and marginalized the African-American community to a life of misery, poverty and persecution.”

He singled out race as a particularly pernicious issue, emphasizing that while his mandate does not cover racial
discrimination, it was impossible carry out his mission “without issues of racism pervading the discussions.”

In more recent times, the Special Rapporteur noted, “old philosophies of exclusion and discrimination were reborn, cloaked in new and euphemistic terms,” such as the so-called “War on Drugs” and “three strikes” sentencing policies.

The effects of harsh law-and-order policies often snowball, he added, with a minor criminal conviction – or even an arrest at a protest without substantiated charges – making it difficult to find a job, secure a student loan or find a place to live.

“There is justifiable and palpable anger in the black community over these injustices, which needs to be expressed,” he stressed, explaining that this is the context that gave birth to the non-violent ‘Black Lives Matter’ protest movement.

The situation of migrant workers throughout the United States is characterized by the precariousness and exploitation of their employment situation, retaliation for drawing attention to adverse working conditions and a fear of taking action to seek improvement of the violations, he said.

The independent expert further noted the lack of robust labour rights protections as a major hurdle to exercising the right to freedom of association in the workplace, noting that he was “shocked” to see that in states such as Mississippi, the lack of unionization and ability to exploit workers is touted as a great benefit for employers.

But the Special Rapporteur called the United States a “nation of struggle and resilience,” and had high praise the civil society sector, calling it one of the country’s greatest strengths.

During his 17-day visit, Mr. Kiai met numerous officials at the federal, state and local levels and members of civil society. A final report on the visit will be presented to the Human Rights Council in June 2017.

Special Rapporteurs are appointed by the Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a specific human rights theme or a country situation. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

**UN and OSCE experts condemn Turkey’s crackdown on media**

28 July – Two top media freedom experts of the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) today condemned the ongoing crackdown on journalists and the media by the Government of Turkey in the wake of the recent attempted coup.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), reports indicate that the Government ordered the closure of three news agencies, 16 TV channels, 23 radio channels, 45 papers and 15 magazines. Since the 15 July attempted coup, authorities have issued arrest warrants against 89 journalists and have already arrested several of them, blocked access to more than 20 news websites, revoked the licenses of 29 publishing houses, and cancelled a number of press accreditations.

“The simultaneous arrests of independent journalists and shutdowns of print and broadcast media strike a major blow against public debate and government accountability,” said the experts – David Kaye, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to freedom of opinion and expression, and Dunja Mijatovic, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media – in a statement.

“We strongly urge the Turkish authorities to reconsider these decisions and confirm their obligations to media freedom,” they said.

Numerous academic institutions, schools, civil society organizations were also ordered to close down by decrees issued after
the adoption of the measures that could be taken under a state of emergency on 23 July.

“The attempted coup cannot justify such a broad attack against almost all voices, not just critical ones but analytic and journalistic,” Mr. Kaye said. “The widespread and abrupt nature of the measures, lacking even the basic elements of due process, is shocking and unprecedented in recent times in Turkey.”

“It is quite clear that this wave of restrictions against media groups does not meet the basic international standards concerning restrictive measures even in times of emergency,” Ms. Mijatovic said.

Both experts expressed their continued willingness to discuss their concerns with Turkish authorities.

Security Council welcomes leadership by countries in West Africa and the Sahel on efforts to tackle region’s security challenges

28 July – While welcoming recent political developments recently observed in West Africa, the United Nations Security Council today stressed the need to increase military cooperation between the States in the region and Sahel to fight against the terrorist group Boko Haram.

In a Presidential Statement approved by the body, the Council’s 15 members welcomed political developments including, the holding of elections "free and peaceful" in Niger, Benin and Cabo Verde. At the same time, they stressed the importance of ensuring the forthcoming elections in Ghana and Gambia are also "free, fair, peaceful, inclusive and credible."

The Council, however, expressed specific concern over recent political events in Guinea-Bissau and called on national actors "to respect the Constitution and the rule of law, while trying to find a political solution to the crisis."

Regarding the promotion of stability in West Africa and the Sahel in general, the Council welcomed the merger of the Office of the Special Envoy for the Sahel and the UN Office for West Africa (UNOWA). It also welcomed the increased cooperation between the new UN Office for West Africa and the Sahel (UNOWAS) and sub-regional and regional organizations, including the African Union (AU), the Community economic of West African States (ECOWAS), the group of five Sahel countries (G-5 Sahel), the Lake Chad basin Commission and the Mano River Union.

The Council 15 members “strongly condemned” all attacks perpetrated by the terrorist group Boko Haram, particularly in the Lake Chad Basin, and in Mali, Côte d’Ivoire, Burkina Faso and in the Sahel region.

However, they noted the progress made in the implementation of the Joint Multinational Force (FMM) and urged Member States participating in that Force to “improve cooperation and military coordination in the region,” to “refuse harbouring Boko Haram,” to “facilitate the restoration of the rule of law” in areas liberated form Boko Haram and to "allow humanitarian access."

Specifically, the Council reiterated its grave concern at the “dire humanitarian situation” caused by the activities of Boko Haram in the Lake Chad Basin area.
In this regard, the Council urged the international community to “immediately support the provision of urgent humanitarian assistance” to those most affected by the crisis in Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Chad, including by fulfilling the appeal for the Lake Chad Basin region launched by the UN.