As Rohingya crisis continues, UNICEF appeals for funds to reach 720,000 children in need

2 October – Amid the deepening refugee crisis in Bangladesh and its attendant toll on children, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) launched today an appeal for its emergency response to reach some 720,000 children – both in Rohingya refugee and host communities – with protection and assistance.

“Desperate, traumatized children and their families are fleeing the violence in Myanmar every day. We are scaling up our response as fast as we can, but the magnitude of need is immense and we must be able to do more to help them,” said Anthony Lake, the UNICEF Executive Director, who is visiting southern Bangladesh.

“These children are being denied a childhood. They need our help now and they need our help to have a future,” he added.

The UN agency's $76.1 million appeal, primarily focused on preventing outbreaks of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea, covers expansion of safe water and sanitation services, as well as improvements in hygiene systems for Rohingya children, many of whom are living in harsh and unsanitary conditions in makeshift camps and settlements.

It will also provide nutritional support to at least 60 per cent of an estimated caseload of 7,500 children suffering from

Minors make up at least 60 per cent of the Rohingya refugees who have crossed the border to Bangladesh over the past few weeks. Highly traumatized, they are arriving malnourished and injured after walking for days. Photo: UNICEF/Brown

For information media - not an official record
severe acute malnutrition and 70 per cent of children with micronutrient support, including Vitamin A.

Another key part of the response will be providing protection services, including psychosocial and recreational support to up to 180,000 children through structured activities at child friendly spaces and referrals for children who require specialized support. The UN agency will also expand the network of adolescent centres to provide life-skills training, recreational activities, and psychosocial support to an especially vulnerable group.

UNICEF will also initiate an oral cholera vaccination campaign, targeting all children over one, and 900,000 doses of the vaccine are expected to arrive in Bangladesh on 7 October, possibly earlier.

Refugee crisis a 'Level 3' emergency

In related news, the UN refugee agency also issued an supplementary appeal for its emergency response in for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Declaring the crisis a ‘Level 3 Emergency,’ the Appeal issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) seeks $83.7 million in urgent additional requirements from September 2017 through to February 2018 and is built on the respective elements of the Preliminary Response Plan for the Influx into Cox's Bazar.

The Preliminary Response Plan was initially drawn, in early September, up by the Inter-Sector Coordination Group. It had appealed for $77 million for the response and is presently under revision.

The UNHCR requirements presented in this Supplementary Appeal will be reflected in, and aligned with, the respective components of that revised appeal, the UN agency said.

'Nothing enduring can be built on violence,' UN Assembly President says, recalling words of Gandhi

2 October – Noting that in today's world, violence has become a “tool of choice” for many and new evidence, of destruction and suffering, every day resulting from this choice, the President of the United Nations General Assembly has called for greater efforts to prevent conflict and for the Organization to promote the use of non-violence across all three pillars of its work.

“Mediation is one of the most effective tools of non-violence. It can turn parties away from conflict, towards compromise,” said Miroslav Lajcak, speaking at an event to mark the International Day of Non-Violence.

“This means it can avert violence – which only leads to loss – and promote non-violence, resulting in benefits on all sides,” he said.

In his remarks, Mr. Lajcak recalled last week's 72nd annual general debate and noted the calls made by Member States for more support to local, national or regional actors to use non-violent ways to stop or prevent conflicts.

He also spoke of Secretary-General Guterres' prioritization of prevention in his mandate and underscored that the issue would be a main focus throughout the 72nd session of the General Assembly.

The President of the General Assembly said the Organization has entered an era of “UN reform,” and in that context urged everyone to remember its common aim: “A UN that is fit for purpose, which can offer non-violence solutions to global challenges.”
“The longer it takes to respond to a major development or crisis, the higher the chance of violence being seen as the only answer,” he stated.

Concluding his remarks, Mr. Lajčák recalled the words of Mahatma Gandhi, born this day 148 years ago, that “nothing enduring can be built on violence” and said that whether it be called sustainable development, transformative change or a better world to live in, none it is possible through violence.

“The United Nations must act as a constant reminder of this. It must not only work through non-violence – but it must inspire others to do so too,” he said.

The UN General Assembly, through a resolution in 2007, designated 2 October as the International Day of Non-Violence to coincide with the birthday of Gandhi, who led the country’s independence movement and pioneered the philosophy and strategy of non-violence.

UN human rights chief urges probe into violence during referendum in Catalonia

2 October – The top United Nations human rights official urged today the authorities in Spain to ensure thorough, independent and impartial investigations into all acts of violence that took place Sunday during a referendum on the independence of Catalonia.

“I am very disturbed by the violence in Catalonia on Sunday,” UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in a statement.

According to media reports, police raided polling stations, and hundreds of people were injured.

“Police responses must at all times be proportionate and necessary,” Mr. Zeid said, stressing that the current situation should be resolved through political dialogue, with full respect for democratic freedoms.

He called the Spanish Government to accept without delay the requests by relevant UN human rights experts to visit.

Amid 'critical' resource shortage, UN agency cuts food rations for refugees in Kenya

2 October – For 420,000 refugees living in northern Kenya, insufficient funding has forced the United Nations food relief agency to cut rations by 30 per cent, as it appeals for nearly $30 million for assistance.

“We are facing a critical shortage of resources, which has compelled us to reduce the amount of food given to the refugees only six months after we resumed full rations,” said World Food Programme (WFP) Representative and Country Director Annalisa Conte in a statement.

Overall, refugees living in Dadaab and Kakuma camps will receive a food ration equivalent to 70 per cent of their requirements.

“WeFP urgently needs $28.5 million to adequately cover the food
assistance needs for the refugees for the next six months,” she added.

The UN agency provides sustenance assistance to refugees in Kenya as a combination of dry food – including cereals, vegetable oil and nutrient-enriched flour – as well as mobile phone cash transfers to buy fresh food from local traders.

However, while keeping cash transfers unchanged, starting this month, WFP will provide through health clinics fortified flour only for pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers instead of the general population, which may lead to a rise in malnutrition levels among the refugees.

“Working closely with UNHCR [Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees] and other partners, WFP strives to meet urgent food and nutrition needs of refugees and other vulnerable groups, and calls upon all parties to take all necessary steps to end conflicts and create conditions for refugees to safely return home,” she continued.

In addition to the general food ration and cash transfers, WFP provides nutritious foods to young children, pregnant women and nursing mothers, to stave off malnutrition. Primary grade students receive porridge in school, which helps them concentrate on their classes and provides an incentive for families to send them to school. For the time being, WFP can maintain these critical safety nets for refugees.

“Cutting rations is a last resort and we hope that it is only a short-term measure as we continue to appeal to the international community to assist,” said Ms. Conte.

If new funds are received immediately, WFP can quickly mobilize food stocks from within the region, and/or increase the amount of cash transfers to the refugees allowing them to buy adequate food from the local markets.

“An abrupt halt to food assistance would be devastating for the refugees, most of whom rely fully on WFP for their daily meals,” she concluded.

**UNICEF urges child-centred budget decisions for rebuilding of quake-hit areas in Mexico**

2 October – The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has called for putting children at the heart of public and private investment in reconstruction of the areas devastated by two major earthquakes in September.

“The seven million children living in the worst affected areas of Chiapas, Mexico City, Morelos, Oaxaca and Puebla – especially the most vulnerable, who have lost their homes and schools – must be at the core of budgetary discussions in the country,” said Christian Skoog, UNICEF Representative in Mexico, in a press release.

UNICEF said that budgetary decisions linked to the reconstruction of areas affected by the recent earthquakes must guarantee full respect for the rights of children in health, education and housing for their affected families, without neglecting other fundamental rights such as the right to be protected against violence, abuse or exploitation.

Mexico has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has special legislation protecting the rights of children and adolescents and, as such, the country has made formal commitments to undertake all necessary legal and financial measures to guarantee the realization of those rights.

The Mexican Constitution also states that all Government decisions affecting children in the country must seek to protect their best interests in all circumstances.
In a post-disaster situation, accelerating and not just adjusting investment for children must be a priority if a country is to reach its long-term objectives for economic growth and social wellbeing, UNICEF said.

**Affordable housing key for development and social equality, UN says on World Habitat Day**

2 October – As 1.6 billion people today live in inadequate housing, one billion of whom reside in slums and informal settlements, the United Nations is spotlighting affordable home on today's World Habitat Day, which also marks the official start of Urban October – a month of worldwide celebrations and citizens' engagement in urban life worldwide.

“While millions of people lack suitable homes, the stock of vacant houses is gradually increasing,” said Dr. Joan Clos Executive Director of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in a commemorating the Day under the 2017 theme 'Housing Policies: Affordable Homes.'

“Ensuring housing affordability is therefore a complex issue of strategic importance for development, social peace and equality,” he added.

This year's celebrations are noteworthy as they coincide with the first anniversary of the New Urban Agenda,” adopted at the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development, better known as Habitat III, in Quito, Ecuador, which enshrines urbanization as an indispensable for development and a prerequisite for prosperity and growth.

“It is thanks to this paradigm shift that urbanization and development are indivisibly linked one to another,” Dr. Clos said.

*'Handing over housing to the market has proved a failure'*

An analysis of housing affordability over the last 20 years reveals that despite increasing demand, housing – including rentals – has been largely unaffordable for the majority of the world population.

“Handing over housing to the market has proved a failure in providing affordable and adequate housing for all,” Dr. Clos continued.

“We all remember well that housing was at the epicentre of the eruption of the global economic crisis of 2008, instead of being at the heart of the urban policy. Today, 1.6 billion people live in inadequate housing, of which one billion live in slums and informal settlements,” he underscored.

Dr. Clos emphasized that addressing the housing needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, especially women, youth and those who live in slums, must be a priority in the development agendas.

Promoting sound housing policies is also crucial for climate change, resilience, mobility and energy consumption.

Which is why, the Executive Director said: “we would like to remind on this Day the importance of locating housing at the physical – and holistic – centre of our cities.

“For housing to contribute to national socio-economic development and achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the New Urban Agenda calls for placing housing policies at the centre of national urban policies along with strategies to fight poverty, improve health and employment,” he stressed.
Each year, World Habitat Day takes on a new theme to promote sustainable development policies to ensure shelter for all – often promoting one of UN-Habitat's focal areas such as inclusive housing and social services; a safe and healthy living environment, with consideration for children, youth, women, elderly and disabled; affordable and sustainable transport and energy; and job creation.

“As we strive to create cities for all, an urgent action for achieving affordable homes requires a global commitment to effective and inclusive housing policies,” Dr. Clos concluded.

For Yemenis and migrants, protracted conflict an 'endless nightmare' – head of UN agency

2 October – Amid worsening famine and cholera in war-torn Yemen, the head of the United Nations migration agency has called for greater humanitarian access to enable relief workers reach those most in need and save lives.

“The authorities have a responsibility to give humanitarians more access, including reopening the airport for essential aid deliveries, and the world has an obligation to come to the aid of the Yemeni people,” said William Lacy Swing, the Director General of the UN International Organization for Migration (IOM), on a visit to the country.

Responding to the outbreak has been further complicated as the conflict in Yemen has left the country's water and sanitation systems in near-ruin and almost 80 per cent of the population – some 21 million people – as well as thousands of migrants dependent on humanitarian aid.

“The world's worst cholera outbreak is now part of this volatile mix and, as mind-numbing as it may seem, one million Yemenis are expected to contract the deadly disease by the end of this year,” added Mr. Swing.

According to estimates, more than 2,000 people have succumbed to the deadly disease since October last year and 750,000 have been hit with 5,000 additional people being infected every day.

Furthermore, more than three million Yemeni children under the age of 5 are at risk of severe acute malnutrition as an ever-present risk of famine looms larger.

“The internecine conflict, which has convulsed Yemen for over two years already, shows no sign of being resolved,” said the IOM Director General, noting that the situation of the nearly 6,000 migrants who continue to enter the country each month is of particular concern.

“They come in the hope that they can make their way through Yemen to the Gulf countries to find work.”

However, few realize the grave dangers they are likely to face along the route, including exploitation, abuse and abduction by criminal gangs for hefty ransoms.

“For Yemenis and migrants, the protracted conflict has become an endless nightmare,” said Mr. Swing.

During his visit, the head of IOM has met with authorities whom he called on to improve humanitarian access. He also met with persons displaced by fighting, whom the UN agency was only able to reach with aid a few weeks ago – the first time they received assistance since fleeing their homes more than a year back.

“More than two years of brutal conflict has turned this society upside down leaving a trail of needless devastation in its
wake,” noted Mr. Swing, adding: “I urge all parties to the conflict to make real efforts towards finding peace because aid alone is not a solution.”

'Winner-takes-all' dynamics in digital economy could widen income gap – UN report

2 October – The benefits of digitalization to people's lives are enormous, but 'winner-takes-all' dynamics in the digital economy creates a risk of widening income inequalities, says a report released today by a United Nations entity dealing with trade, investment and development.

The report acknowledges that information and communications technologies (ICT), electronic commerce and other digital applications are helping a growing number of small businesses and entrepreneurs in developing countries to connect with global markets and open up new ways of generating income.

“Effective national and international policies are needed to make sure the gains are spread evenly across as well as within countries,” said Mukhisa Kituyi, the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), which authored the Information Economy Report 2017: Digitalization, Trade and Development.

“We at UNCTAD are excited by the transformational power of digitalization, but we must recognize that the Internet is not a panacea,” Mr. Kituyi stated in a press release.

The world's top four companies by market capitalization are all closely linked to the digital economy: Apple, Alphabet (Google), Microsoft and Amazon.

The digital economy is expanding fast in developing economies. China and India accounted for nearly 90 per cent of the 750 million people who went online for the first time between 2012 and 2015, according to data from the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

The report says that productivity gains from digitalization, however, may accrue mainly to already wealthy and skilled individuals. Winner-takes-all dynamics are typical in Internet platform-based economies, where network effects benefit first movers and standard setters.

In countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, where the digital economy has evolved the most, growing use of ICT has been accompanied by an increasing income gap between the rich and poor.

The report also states that the policy challenge depends on countries' readiness to engage in and benefit from the digital economy, with the least developed countries the least prepared. To ensure that more people and enterprises in developing countries have the capacity to participate effectively, the international community will need to expand its support.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres stressed that harnessing the power of information and communications technologies can be one of the keys to the achievement of global development goals.

At the same time, large parts of the developing world remain disconnected from the Internet, and many people lack access to high-speed broadband connectivity.

“Policymaking at the national and international levels needs to mitigate the risk that digitalization could widen existing divides and create new gaps,” he said.
In Tokyo, UN deputy chief cites benefits of local-level social dialogue on sustainable development

2 October – United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, at an event in Tokyo today, stressed the need for social dialogue on sustainable development, expressing her expectations regarding the role of media in bringing different constituents together to reflect on difficult questions such as on sustainable life style.

“Every country should open up a social dialogue within its own communities. It is a marvelous opportunity which media can provide by asking tough questions,” she said at an event themed ‘Overcoming Divides for Our Future,’ which took place at the Asahi World Forum 2017. “The United Nations can help provide a space for dialogue to close the gap between reality and aspiration, with inclusiveness and representation,” she added.

Addressing to the audience, half of which was university and high school students, the Deputy Secretary-General underscored the essence of “no one left behind” enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and importance to include youth in this dialogue to decide on their future. “Youth and women remain marginalized and must be empowered to close the inequality divide.”

Referring to the fast evolving 'fourth Industrial Revolution,' she emphasized the need of high-quality education for young people to be equipped with necessary skill sets.

She also stressed her expectation for Japan and Japanese businesses to show leadership in transforming the society in the direction of sustainability and inclusion, with the 2020 Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games as a momentous occasion to mobilize “whole-of-society” efforts.

In responding to a question raised by a high school student in the audience about leadership qualities essential to addressing SDGs, Ms. Mohammed responded “integrity, courage, and passion to make a difference” and encouraged the audience to think what they hope for and what actions they can take for their aspirations.

World must step up protection for refugees, do more to solve conflict – UN agency chief

2 October – The global community is letting down millions of refugees and internally displaced people, and needs to renew efforts to prevent and resolve conflicts, focusing on protection and solutions, the head of the United Nations refugee agency said today.

“Without the shared sense of purpose needed to prevent, stem and solve conflicts, the world will continue to face new refugee flows, and must reinforce its capacity to respond,” said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in his opening address to the annual meeting of the Executive Committee of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Drawing attention to crises from Bangladesh to Yemen, Mr. Grandi
presented a bleak picture of record numbers of people worldwide forcibly driven from their homes – 65.6 million at the end of 2016 – and he pointed out that the situation is getting worse.

“So far in 2017, more than two million people have fled their countries as refugees […] They often arrive sick, traumatized and hungry, in remote border locations, in communities affected by poverty and underdevelopment,” he continued.

UNHCR staff are working tirelessly to help them, often in circumstances where their own security is at risk, but the needs are immense.

“Many have urgent protection needs – children separated from their families, men, women, girls and boys exposed to sexual and gender-based violence, people with disabilities or facing other risks,” he stated.

Mr. Grandi stressed that refugee protection and security walk hand in hand and need to be tackled together.

“This is not only a matter of principles and values, but also of building regional and global stability. Refugee protection and security are complementary goals, and must be pursued in tandem,” he stressed.

Last week the UN refugee chief was in Bangladesh where he witnessed first-hand one of the fastest-growing humanitarian emergencies in living memory, noting that “in just five weeks, half a million Rohingya refugees have fled terrifying violence in Myanmar, their rights progressively eroded over decades.”

Even more distressing was that while this was happening, a further 50,000 refugees had fled South Sudan, where the dreams which had accompanied independence lay shattered, and another 18,000 people had tried to escape fresh fighting in Central African Republic.

“Ongoing crises are deepening. And for many refugees, the search for safety and protection has become more dangerous,” he declared.

Mr. Grandi praised what he termed as a groundswell of civil society solidarity with refugees, often reinforced through public figure leadership, including mayors. He welcomed the individual and collective acts of compassion as countering “widespread measures to deter and exclude.”

“The international character of refugee protection has taken on new forms – through networks of cities, civil society organisations, private sector associations, sport entities and other forms of collaboration stretching across borders, he added.

In a wide-ranging address, the UN refugee agency chief praised the generosity of “major refugee-hosting countries – some of whose leaders have their own experience of flight and exile,” but said it was time to take more action globally.

“Measures to shore up their efforts, strengthen protection, mitigate the impact of a large-scale refugee presence, and genuinely share responsibility remain essential. This is the fundamental challenge before us,” he concluded.
In Bangladesh, UN food relief agency chief urges support amid massive Rohingya influx

1 October – The head of the United Nations food relief agency called today for an end to the “horrors” driving Rohingyas by the tens of thousands from their homes in Myanmar into neighboring Bangladesh.

On a visit to the region to rally international support to help ease the humanitarian crisis, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), David Beasley, met refugee families in the new settlements in the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh, and reiterated the agency's commitment to supporting people fleeing violence in Myanmar.

According to the UN, more than 500,000 Rohingya refugees have poured into Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar since 25 August, having fled their homes after violence erupted in Myanmar's northern Rakhine province. United Nations relief agencies and partner aid organizations are rushing to help cope with the influx.

“I have heard heart-breaking stories today, speaking to people who ran for their lives and saw loved ones killed before their eyes. These horrors must stop,” said Mr. Beasley.

Noting that many of these people were receiving WFP food assistance in Myanmar, he stressed that they will receive WFP food assistance in Bangladesh, until they are able to return home safely.

This is Mr. Beasley's first visit to Bangladesh since his assuming office in April. Having been in the region since Thursday, 29 September, he saw a WFP food distribution in an area adjacent to Kutupalong refugee camp, where hundreds of thousands of people have settled in makeshift shelters over the past month.

The WP chief also toured the 2,000-acre area that has been allocated by the Bangladesh Government to accommodate the new arrivals. He also saw a WFP e-voucher shop, where registered refugees redeem monthly electronic food vouchers.

“WFP started distributing food as soon as the influx began, and has scaled up operations to reach almost half a million refugees in the past month with life-saving assistance,” said Mr. Beasley, adding: “We are grateful for the generous support of the donor community that has made this possible.”

WFP reported today that it has so far distributed rice to some 460,000 refugees, and has also been providing high energy biscuits to more than 200,000 people as a one-off emergency measure when they arrive in the settlements and at border crossing points.

As the situation stabilizes, WFP plans to transition to more sophisticated programmes, especially with a view to supporting the nutritional needs of women and children and developing electronic voucher programmes that integrate with markets.
Tapping into talents of older persons can boost Global Goals, says UN on International Day

1 October – On the International Day of Older Persons, the United Nations is urging the world to tap into the often overlooked contributions of older persons, and calling for integrated care to improve well being and ensure they have the opportunity to contribute to development.

"By the year 2050, one in five people in the world will be aged 60 and older. It's our goal to ensure that all older people can obtain the health services they need, whoever they are, wherever they live," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) in a news release.

Older adults are more likely to experience chronic conditions and often multiple conditions at the same time. Yet today's health systems generally focus on the detection and treatment of individual acute diseases.

WHO's new Guidelines on Integrated Care for Older People require health and social care providers to coordinate their services around the needs of older people through approaches such as comprehensive assessment and care plans.

Yet, even in the rich world, people may not be getting the integrated services they need. In a survey of 11 high-income countries, up to 41 per cent of adults aged 65 or older reported care coordination problems in the past two years.

"The world's health systems aren't ready for older populations," said John Beard, Director of the Department of Ageing and Life course at WHO, adding that WHO's new guidelines provide the evidence for primary care workers to put the comprehensive needs of older people, not just the diseases they come in to discuss, at the centre of the way they provide care.

The International Day of Older Persons is annually observed on 1 October to encourage efforts to counter negative stereotypes and misconceptions about older persons and ageing.

Younger generations must act now to stamp out human rights denials in old age – UN expert

Also marking the Day, the UN Independent Expert on older people's rights, Rosa Kornfeld-Matte, urged those in power today to provide decent futures for older people – noting that they themselves will be affected by the issue in years to come.

"Unlike action on climate change, which will be our legacy for future generations, young people in positions of power today will themselves not escape ageism, discrimination and the denial of human rights in older age unless we recognize now that there is a need for concrete action," she explained.

With this in mind, she called on States to step up their efforts to determine the best way to strengthen the protection of the human rights of older people and to consider the various proposals that have been made, including the elaboration of a dedicated instrument on the rights of older people.

This year's theme, 'Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society,' is about enabling and expanding the contributions of older people in their families, communities and societies at large.

The theme underscores the link between tapping the talents and contributions of older persons and achieving the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, which is currently undergoing its third review and appraisal process.