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### Half of Central African Republic’s people need aid; Security Council discusses peace operations

16 March – Senior officials today called for strong political support and adequate resources for the United Nations peacekeeping force in the Central African Republic (CAR), where half of the population urgently needs aid, according to the latest United Nations figures.

Addressing the Security Council alongside CAR President Faustin Archange Touadera, Under-Secretary-General for UN Peacekeeping Operations Hervé Ladsous lauded the efforts of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) in helping to pave the way for the gradual stabilization and restoration of State authority.

“As MINUSCA illustrates, when peacekeeping has the right leadership and capabilities, it can play an irreplaceable role in supporting national efforts, and with international partners, promote and support reforms that are essential to the sustainable resolution of a country’s conflict.”

Mr. Ladsous noted the security and operational efforts in the city of Bambari have loosened the armed groups’ grip, and led all of the main 14 armed groups to join a national committee on disarmament.

The move is important for a nationwide disarmament programme, without which, Mr. Ladsous noted, MINUSCA peacekeepers will be unable to provide security by force in a territory the size of France.

To further such progress, the World Bank has said that it would provide $30 million for social reintegration of fighters in a...
Among other issues he raised, Mr. Ladsous called on the international community to follow through on $2.2 billion worth of pledges made at the Brussels conference hosted by the European Union in November.

**Supporting development to build peace**

In addition to peacekeeping efforts, the Council was briefed today on the peace building programs, including the work being coordinated by the UN, the European Union and the World Bank. These three organizations are working to, respectively, support peace, review the social contract between the population and the Government, and promote economic recovery.

In his address, Omar Hilale, the Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN, who briefed in his capacity as the Chair of the CAR Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, announced that he would visit CAR “soon” to discuss the main challenges and ways to optimize the international community’s support.

The Peacebuilding Commission works between the Security Council, the General Assembly, whose membership includes all 193 Member States, and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) which works with the 14 specialized UN agencies, to address root causes of conflict in a country and try to stabilize it before conflict breaks out or help it restabilize after fighting.

**Half of the country in dire need of aid**

CAR also faces an immediate humanitarian crisis. The upsurge in violence since last September has left roughly 2.2 million people – half of the population – in dire need of aid, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) today announced.

In addition, the fighting since the upsurge in fighting last September, one in five Central Africans are either displaced or a refugee in a neighbouring country.

“Let us not leave Central African Republic to become a forgotten or neglected crisis by the international community”, said the Acting Humanitarian Coordinator for CAR, Michel Yao, alongside the Minister of Humanitarian, Social Affairs and National Reconciliation, Virginie Baikoua, at a briefing session for donors yesterday in Yaoundé, Cameroon.

The UN and its humanitarian partners had appealed for $399.5 million to aid CAR as part of the 2017 Humanitarian Response Plan. To date, only five per cent of that amount – roughly $19 million – has been raised.

Mr. Yao warned that without adequate funding, the country risks plunging into an acute humanitarian crisis.

The situation is particularly concerning because aid workers deliver much of the basic social services. For example, more than half of the health infrastructure is managed by the humanitarian community.
UN announces formation of interagency coordination group on antimicrobial resistance

**16 March** – The United Nations today announced the establishment of an interagency coordination group on antimicrobial resistance, which will be co-chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed and World Health Organization WHO Director-General Margaret Chan.

“As we enter the era of sustainable development, I would like to emphasize that Antimicrobial resistance really does pose a formidable threat to the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly in our developing countries,” Ms. Mohammed told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York.

She said the creation of the UN coordination group to combat AMR and advise on the global effort, was a sign of how seriously UN Member States were taking the threat.

Last September, Member States adopted the Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Antimicrobial Resistance that contained a request for the UN Secretary-General to establish such a body.

She said that AMR was a “multi-sectoral problem” affecting human and animal health, agriculture, as well as the global environment and trade.

WHO chief Chan said antibiotic resistance is already prolonging illness worldwide, and the political declaration was a vital commitment to help tackle the scourge globally.

She said the inter-agency group would support governments across the world, as well as advising on the “use and abuse” of antibiotics for people, and livestock.

Ms. Chan promised that the group, appointed by the Secretary-General, would “get to work right away.”

The group will be comprised of high-level representatives from relevant UN agencies, other international organizations, and individual experts across different sectors, including animal health, agriculture, and environment.

It will produce a report to the Secretary-General for the UN General Assembly session starting in September 2018.
Relief operations in western Mosul reaching ‘breaking point’ as civilians flee hunger, fighting – UN

16 March – The United Nations and its humanitarian partners in Iraq are scrambling to get emergency sites ready amidst a mass exodus from West Mosul, with nearly 700,000 civilians still living in the city where Iraqi forces are fighting the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh), according to the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country.

“The number of people is higher than expected,” Lise Grande told journalist in New York via videoconference from Iraq. “If the pace accelerates further, it’s going to stretch us to the breaking point.”

She added that if 50,000 civilians flee in a single day, the current system would not work properly. The UN and its partners have already started to set up large warehouse size structures which will house the families as they await “the dignified support they deserve,” said Ms. Grande.

According to the latest figures she disclosed, there are still an estimated 650,000 to 680,000 civilians in Mosul’s Old City.

“We fear the civilians there might be trapped in an extremely difficult situation. Families that chose to stay are at risk, families that leave are also at risk,” said Ms. Grande, noting that ISIL is targeting people who try to flee what is expected to be a prolonged siege.

Meanwhile, people who stay are without food and water. No steady supplies have been able to reach the city since mid-November, Ms. Grande said.

Families with resources are trying to trade what they can to eat even one meal a day, according to stories from people who were able to flee, while some people go for days without meals.

“Whether you stay or whether you go there are significant risks to the civilians,” Ms. Grande noted. “The greatest problem is water.”

When the military operation to oust terrorists from the area began on 17 October 2016, some 1.5 million civilians were living in Mosul. In the eastern part of the city, some 345,000 were displaced – of whom about 70,000 returned home because “conditions are ready and safe to do so,” journalists were told today.

The western part of Mosul is more densely populated, however. There is hope that civilian casualties will be limited because the Iraqi forces adopted a so-called “humanitarian concept of operations” which prohibits artillery strikes, requires civilians to remain in their homes, and provides humanitarian exit corridors wherever necessary.

Those who do flee are screened at the Hammam al Alil site, with the men separated from the women and children. Once interrogated and cleared, the families are reunited.

The senior UN official said the Organization and its humanitarian partners are working “around the clock” in support of the Iraqi Government to quickly get sites ready for the displaced civilians. Aid workers receive the site, set up tents and mattresses, clear and construct sanitation areas, and then transfer the areas to Iraqi military, who move in civilians on
Ms. Grande said that there are concerns about water and sanitation at the screening sites, and that the Government has asked for additional support to help it correct those conditions.

The UN and its partners are supplying food, water and other services to the sites, with more than 1.4 million people reached.

Coordination between the UN, its partners and the Government is good, but “complicated,” Ms. Grande acknowledged, noting that the UN is part of 19 daily coordination forums, which include a range from local to national officials.

UN appeals for nearly $170 million to aid pastoralists in northern Kenya

16 March – The United Nations and its humanitarian partners today appealed for $166 million to aid Kenyan pastoralists and farmers whose livestock and crops are suffering amid what the Government declared a “national drought disaster.”

“With these funds, humanitarian actors will provide life-saving food, health, water and sanitation services to 2.6 million vulnerable Kenyans over the next ten months,” said Siddharth Chatterjee, UN Resident Coordinator in Kenya.

Half of the country is affected by the drought brought on by a third consecutive year of unreliable rains.

Below average rains are “causing thirst and hunger, decimating livestock, destroying livelihoods, spreading disease, and causing large movements of people,” according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The latest flash appeal is a complement to Kenya's ongoing nine-month response plan which faces a funding gap of $108 million, OCHA said.

Earlier this month, OCHA's head, Stephen O'Brien visited Kenya to highlight the risk of famine facing people there, as well as in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen.

Reporting his observations to the Security Council upon his return, the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator said the international community is “facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the UN.”
Somalia: UN-backed cholera vaccination campaign targets 450,000 people

16 March – The Government of Somalia has launched an oral cholera vaccination (OCV) campaign today with the support of the United Nations health agency, targeting over 450,000 people in seven high-risk areas around the country.

The first-ever OCV campaign to be conducted in the country comes at a critical time after Somalia announced the ongoing drought as a national disaster and faces the possibility of another famine, according to a news release issued yesterday by the World Health Organization (WHO).

“This is one of the largest oral cholera vaccination campaigns conducted in Africa,” said Ghulam Popal, WHO Representative in Somalia. “This vaccination campaign will contribute to the reduction in the number of new cholera cases, interrupt transmission and limit the spread of cholera,” he said.

Somalia is currently experiencing a large-scale outbreak of cholera with roughly 11,000 cases and 268 deaths reported in 11 regions since the beginning of 2017. This is more than half the number of cases reported for 2016.

Somalia has long experienced a humanitarian emergency due to conflict, insecurity, displacement of people and limited access to health system. This situation is further compounded by drought, malnutrition and lack of access to clean water and sanitation facilities. If the current drought and food insecurity continue, the number of cholera cases is likely to increase. Preventative measures such as oral cholera vaccine can mitigate these numbers, and save lives.

The campaign is being held in select communities in Mogadishu, Kismayo and Beledweyne through a combination of fixed and mobile sites for maximum accessibility by the communities. The vaccines, which will be administered to at-risk persons aged one year or older, are being delivered in 2 rounds. The first round of the campaign has commenced today and will continue until 19 March, and the second round of the campaign will be held from 18 to 22 April.

The response efforts by the Ministry of Health, WHO, UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and health partners have included active case search, effective case management, intensive household chlorination campaign, and community awareness.
Employers must address all aspects of gender-based violence in workplace – UN Women chief

16 March – Tolerating violence against women in the workplace will have a huge cost to employers, including lost productivity, legal expenses, high turnover, sick leaves and harm to corporate reputation, panellists today told a United Nations-hosted discussion, urging Governments and institutions alike to take responsibility for putting in place adequate standards and measures to prevent such practices.

“Violence against women has long-term consequences,” UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said, explaining that children who watched their mothers and sisters beaten up at home could become perpetrators themselves or unhappy persons when they grow up.

She also said that women could die from violence and experience various forms of suffering, including physical and emotional damage, trauma, stigma, and limited access to the labour market. Employers will also have to pay the heavy price in the form of lost productivity, legal cost, high turnover, sick leaves and damaged reputation.

To prevent violence against women, institutions must take responsibility for addressing the issue at the macro-level by setting standards and putting in place preventive measures, she stressed.

The panel discussion, titled ‘Ending Violence against Women: Prevention and response in the world of work,’ was sponsored by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UN Women, formally known as the UN Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women.

The event was held on the sidelines of the 61st Commission on the Status of Women, known as the largest intergovernmental forum on women’s rights and gender equality. The theme this year is on women’s economic empowerment in the changing world of work.

Manuela Tomei, Director of ILO’s Working Conditions and Equality Department, said that violence against women is a violation of human rights, a threat to women’s security and health, and a threat to women’s empowerment.

She said that a survey conducted by ILO and Gallop found that one of the top three challenges women find in workplace is “abuse and harassment.”

The world of work goes beyond the physical workplace to include commutes, social events and home, she said, stressing the importance of addressing the issue through an integrated approach that includes prevention, protection and assistance to victims.

She said ILO is leading efforts to set a new global standard by 2019 or 2020 against violence and harassment in workplace.
Guterres grateful for US support as largest UN contributor; will work with Member States on reform

16 March – Secretary-General António Guterres is committed reforming the United Nations and stands ready to discuss with the United States and any other Member State how best to create a more cost-effective Organization that can tackle the enormous challenges facing the international community, his spokesman said today.

A statement from Spokesman Stéphane Dujarric said the UN has seen the blueprint of the 2018 budget released by the White House and notes that the budgetary process in the US is complex and lengthy and it needs to be completed.

Media reports suggest that the proposed budget would seek major cuts in US diplomacy and foreign aid, among other areas.

“The Secretary-General is grateful for the support the United States has given to the United Nations over the years as the Organization’s largest financial contributor,” said that statement.

The statement goes on to say that the Mr. Guterres is totally committed to reforming the United Nations and ensuring that it is fit for purpose and delivers results in the most efficient and cost-effective manner.

However, abrupt funding cuts can force the adoption of ad hoc measures that will undermine the impact of longer-term reform efforts, it adds.

“The Secretary-General stands ready to discuss with the United States and any other Member State how best we can create a more cost-effective Organization to pursue our shared goals and values,” underscored the statement.

It goes on to note that the UN chief fully subscribes to the necessity to effectively combat terrorism, but believes that it requires more than military spending.

“There is also a need to address the underlying drivers of terrorism through continuing investments in conflict prevention, conflict resolution, countering violent extremism, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, sustainable and inclusive development, the enhancement and respect of human rights, and timely responses to humanitarian crises,” it states.

“The international community is facing enormous global challenges that can only be addressed by a strong and effective multilateral system, of which the United Nations remains the fundamental pillar,” the statement concludes.