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## Ban Ki-moon condemns suicide attacks in Sri Lanka

**28 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has voiced outrage at today's twin suicide attacks in the Sri Lankan capital, which have killed or wounded dozens of people, and yesterday's aerial assault on a United Nations aid office in the far north of the troubled country.



Ban Ki-moon

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban condemned the attacks in Colombo, which occurred outside the Ministry of Social Services building and in the Nugegoda district, and offered his condolences to the families and friends of the victims.

Media reports state that at least 16 people were killed in the Nugegoda blast and 37 others were injured, while one person was killed and two others hurt in the earlier bombing at the ministry building.

The statement from Mr. Ban's spokesperson noted that he was also concerned about yesterday's aerial attack in the town of Kilinochchi in which the office of the UN World Food Programme (WFP) was damaged.

"The Secretary-General appeals for an end to the destructive spiral of violence in Sri Lanka and calls on the parties to the conflict [Government forces and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE)] to return to the peace process while making every effort to ensure the protection of civilians," the statement said.

## New UN report spotlights critical link between hunger, health and HIV/AIDS



**28 November** - In a major report released today ahead of World AIDS Day, observed on 1 December, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has called for paying greater attention to the link between hunger and health, pointing out that food is often cited as the greatest need by people living with HIV/AIDS.

WFP's *World Hunger Series 2007 – Hunger and Health* explores the relationships between hunger and poor health with particular reference to HIV/AIDS. It notes that while countries invest billions into anti-retroviral treatment (ART) and other medicines to address the pandemic, they overlook the fact that people receiving life-saving drugs often lack food and clean water.

The agency points out that as with any drug, anti-retrovirals are more effective when people are adequately nourished, and food support can help ensure that people who lack food benefit fully from their treatment.

“It is irresponsible to ignore the issue of hunger and malnutrition particularly in the battle against AIDS,” said WFP Deputy Executive Director Sheila Sisulu. “Why should we write off the benefits of medical interventions simply because people are too undernourished to absorb and benefit from the drugs they desperately need?”

Studies show that people with HIV have special nutritional needs, the agency says, noting that even when a person consumes enough food, if they lack certain vitamins and minerals, their immune system is compromised, making them vulnerable to infections.

“Food is often cited by people living with and affected by HIV/AIDS as their greatest and most important need,” said Elizabeth Mataka, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for AIDS in Africa.

Speaking at a seminar in Rome, at which the report was presented, she added that “nutrition interventions for HIV programmes are often overlooked in the international HIV policy debate and they remain critically under-funded.”

In a related study, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) predicts that 900,000 people going onto ART in 2008 will require food assistance. It is estimated that the average cost of providing food support to a patient is \$0.66 per day – less than 2 per cent of the current cost of drug programmes.

WFP, one of the first organizations to provide food assistance alongside ART in poor areas, now supports ART programmes in 16 countries in Africa, benefiting over 182,000 people. With active HIV/AIDS interventions in 50 countries worldwide, the agency is providing food assistance in 21 of 25 nations with the highest HIV prevalence rates.

## Serge Brammertz appointed prosecutor for UN's Balkan war crimes tribunal



**28 November** - The Security Council today approved the appointment of Serge Brammertz, currently leading the independent probe of the 2005 killing of a former Lebanese prime minister, as the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for a four-year term starting on 1 January.

**Serge Brammertz** In a resolution adopted unanimously this morning, Council members noted that the ICTY completion strategy calls for the court – which is based in The Hague in the Netherlands – to do its best to complete all trials at first instance by the end of next year and all work, including appeals, by 2010.

The four-year term of Mr. Brammertz, who is Belgian, could therefore be terminated earlier by the Council if the ICTY is

able to complete all of its work.

Mr. Brammertz will replace Carla Del Ponte as ICTY Prosecutor. Ms. Del Ponte and ICTY President Judge Fausto Pocar issued a joint statement today welcoming the appointment and noting Mr. Brammertz's long experience as a lawyer in tackling organized crime, global terrorism, corruption and other issues. He becomes the Tribunal's fifth prosecutor, following Ms. Del Ponte (Switzerland), Louise Arbour (Canada), Richard Goldstone (South Africa) and Ramon Escovar Salem (Venezuela).

Since early 2006, Mr. Brammertz has served as Commissioner of the International Independent Investigation Commission (IIIC) examining the February 2005 assassination of former Lebanese Prime Minister Rafiq Hariri and other killings in the country. Earlier this month Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced plans to appoint Daniel Bellemare of Canada to replace Mr. Brammertz.

In April 2005 the Council set up the IIIC after an earlier UN mission found that Lebanon's own inquiry into the Hariri assassination was seriously flawed and that Syria was primarily responsible for the political tensions that preceded the attack. Mr. Hariri died in a massive car bombing in Beirut in February 2005 that also took the lives of 22 others.

Mr. Brammertz told the Council last year that evidence obtained so far suggests that a young, male suicide bomber, probably non-Lebanese, detonated up to 1,800 kilograms of explosives inside a van to assassinate Mr. Hariri. The IIIC is also probing at least 17 other cases in Lebanon.

This year Mr. Ban began taking measures to formally establish a special tribunal of an "international character" to try the suspected killers of Mr. Hariri, and possibly those responsible for the subsequent assassinations in Lebanon as well.

Today Mr. Ban sent the latest report of the IIIC, in which it provides an overview of its most recent progress and details of measures taken to prepare for a handover to a special tribunal, to Council members.

## Security Council applauds efforts to consolidate peace in Burundi

**28 November** - The United Nations Security Council today welcomed efforts to bring lasting peace to Burundi, calling for a consolidation of progress in the country, which is rebuilding after being torn apart by 13 years of armed conflict.

In a statement to the press, Ambassador Marty Natalegawa of Indonesia, which holds the rotating Council presidency this month, called on the last major rebel hold-out group, the Palipehutu-FNL, "to return to the Joint Verification and Monitoring Mechanism (JVMM) without delay or preconditions and called on both parties to refrain from any action that might lead to a resumption of hostilities."



Ambassador Natalegawa

The statement followed a briefing to the Council by Charles Nqakula, South Africa's Minister of Safety and Security, who is the Facilitator of the peace process in Burundi.

Voicing its support for Mr. Nqakula's work, the Council also expressed its appreciation of the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, which was set up last year to help prevent countries emerging from conflict from slipping back into violence. Along with Sierra Leone, Burundi became the first focus of the Commission.

The Council also welcomed the Government's strides towards fostering dialogue, national reconciliation and social harmony in the small Great Lakes region nation.

The statement urged "all political stakeholders there to maintain the spirit of consensus-building and inclusiveness that had enabled them to achieve a successful transition in their country."

## In Timor-Leste, Security Council team joins independence commemoration

**28 November** - Members of a visiting Security Council delegation today joined senior Government officials in commemorating the anniversary of the Proclamation of the National Independence of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, which the United Nations helped shepherd to self-rule in 2002.

The seven-member delegation took part in an official ceremony in Dili which was also attended by President Jose Ramos Horta and Prime Minister Xanana Gusmão, among other officials, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters in New York.

During their 24 to 30 November visit, the delegation will examine the work of the UN mission in the country (UNMIT) and discuss how to help consolidate progress with the Timorese authorities.

In addition to taking part in today's celebration, the delegation also met with the Bishop of Dili and travelled to the western district of Liquica, where Council members met with local authorities, political party representatives, the national police and the UN police stationed in the area. Discussions focused on the needs of the people in the district, including food security, the general security situation and policing.

They also met with former Timorese Prime Ministers Mari Alkatiri and Estanislau da Silva.

The mission, lead by South African Ambassador Dumisani Kumalo, also includes Ambassador Liu Zhenmin from China, Luc Joseph Okio from the Republic of the Congo, Muhammad Anshor from Indonesia, Diana Eloeva from the Russian Federation, Ambassador Peter Burian from Slovakia and United States Ambassador Jackie Wolcott.

## Cameroon needs more help to care for Central African refugees – UN

**28 November** - The United Nations relief wing today called for greater international assistance so that it can help more than 45,000 Central African refugees living in eastern Cameroon after fleeing violence and insecurity in their neighbouring homeland.

Unless more assistance is provided, local and national authorities in Cameroon may not be able to keep up with the needs of the rising number of refugees from the Central African Republic (CAR), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in a media statement.

Violence in the CAR, especially in the northwest and northeast of the impoverished country, has led many residents to flee to Cameroon or Chad in recent years, but the numbers entering Cameroon have picked up pace this year.

The Cameroon office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) registered some 23,000 Central Africans between May and October and expects another 7,000 to 10,000 ethnic Mbororos, a nomadic people, to also seek refuge in the near future.

“These new arrivals would seriously tax the host country's ability to provide humanitarian assistance and would also increase the risk of tension, because natural resources in the area, especially water, are running low and will soon be insufficient to sustain both the host populations and the displaced,” OCHA said in its statement.

The situation is particularly grim in the CAR as well: although the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the northeast has fallen recently, the numbers in the northwest keep rising because of ongoing kidnappings and other crimes and also continued clashes between the national army and rebels.



Local media reported that on Monday rebels killed one Government soldier and injured four others during an attack close to the border with Cameroon. Nomadic cattle farmers have started avoiding their usual trails and begun searching for safer routes near cities and towns.

In total, more than 300,000 Central Africans, or about 7 per cent of the national population, are either internally displaced across the north or live as refugees in other countries.

## UN works with Liberian Government to generate jobs



**28 November** - The United Nations Mission in Liberia is supporting efforts by the Government to create more than 1 million days of work for labourers from small communities in the country, where employment has been linked to stability since the end of the civil war returned thousands of former fighters to the civilian workforce.

The joint road rehabilitation initiative is being led by UNMIL with the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and aims to generate 1 million days of work for 50,000 locally recruited labourers by the end of June 2008, which marks the end of the dry season.

“We cannot over-emphasize the need for road reconstruction because it means security, jobs and investment,” said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative, Alan Doss. “These joint initiatives are a very good example of how we must come together as partners in support of projects that make a real difference to peoples lives.”

Workers hired through the scheme include ex-combatants, returnees, and young men and women who are recruited from communities along the various roads that are being rehabilitated. In addition to providing for many families in the area and reconnecting communities with each other by improving road conditions, the income workers receive also helps to boost economic revitalization in rural Liberia, UNMIL said.

During last year's dry season a similar initiative provided 700,000 working days.

## Rwanda: UN genocide tribunal reduces jail terms for three media executives

**28 November** - The United Nations tribunal dealing with the worst crimes committed during the 1994 Rwandan genocide today reduced the jail sentences of three former media executives convicted for inciting their compatriots to kill ethnic Tutsis.

A five-member appeal panel at the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), which sits in Arusha, Tanzania, upheld the convictions of Ferdinand Nahimana, Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza and Hassan Ngeze.

All three men, in what has been dubbed “the media case,” were found guilty in 2003 of committing genocide, incitement to genocide, conspiracy, crimes against humanity, extermination and persecution. They were the first cases of their kind since the Allied Tribunal at Nuremberg at 1946 sentenced Nazi publisher Julius Streicher to death for his anti-semitic publication *Der Stürmer*.

At their trial Mr. Nahimana, founder and ideologist of the Radio Télévision Libre des Mille Collines (RTLM), and Mr. Ngeze, chief editor of *Kangura* newspaper, were sentenced to life in prison. Mr. Barayagwiza, a high-ranking board member at RTLM and the founder of the Coalition for the Defence of Republic (CDR), a political party, received a 35-year jail term.

But the appeal judges today said that because of the cancellation of certain findings of culpability against the three men, their jail terms should be reduced: Mr. Nahimana must now serve 30 years, Mr. Ngeze 35 years and Mr. Barayagwiza 32 years.

About 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus were slaughtered, mainly by machete, in less than 100 days starting in April 1994. The Security Council set up the ICTR later that year to deal with the worst crimes.

In a broadcast on RTL M – which became known to some Rwandans as “Radio Machete” – in April 1994, Mr. Nahimana described a “war of media, words, newspapers and radio stations” to complement a war with bullets.

The trial also heard *Kangura* targeted Tutsis for persecution by regularly stereotyping them as liars, thieves or killers, and depicting Tutsi women as femme fatales who could not be trusted. One *Kangura* publication labelled any Hutu man who married a Tutsi woman as a traitor.

## Creating decent work for all should be at the centre of policymaking – UN report

**28 November** - Governments should make the promotion of employment and decent work the cornerstone of their economic and social policies, according to a report launched today at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

“Employment and decent work need to be not a by-product but a central objective of development strategies,” said Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang at a press briefing to mark the launch of *Report of the World Social Situation 2007: The Employment Imperative*.

“We see a number of worrisome trends,” Mr. Sha said. “Globally, despite robust rates of economic growth, employment creation is lagging behind growth of the working-age population. From 1996 to 2006, global output expanded by 3.8 per cent per year, yet unemployment rates increased from 6 to 6.3 per cent. Economic growth and job growth are not trending together, to the detriment of our societies and citizens.”

Meanwhile, employment conditions are getting worse, he said. “There is a greater economic insecurity for most workers and greater levels of most forms of inequality in society. Workers with low education and low skills have been hit particularly hard,” and “macroeconomic and social policies have not been successful in lowering unemployment rates to desirable levels.”

Johan Schölvinck, Director of the Division for Social Policy and Development, said “the report finds employment increasingly dominated by the service sector, with a global trend towards informal and casual forms of employment.

“Economic liberalization has not necessarily stimulated economic growth, as policy-makers had hoped for,” he added. “Rather, volatility in macroeconomic performance and employment has increased as a result of economic reforms, especially those relating to international trade and financial liberalization.”

At the same time, emphasis on fiscal prudence led to general reductions in public expenditures aimed at promoting growth and employment, further exacerbating job insecurity.

Income distribution has shifted towards capital at the expense of labour, Mr. Schölvinck noted, creating wage differentials that contributed to raising inequality. Thus “redistributive policies should be implemented to expand access to productive assets and employment opportunities.”

With public health care on the retreat and pensions and social benefits under pressure, “a consensus is emerging that the state should take the responsibility to establish a universal minimal level of social protection.”

## UN's Côte d'Ivoire envoy holds talks on planned elections

**28 November** - The senior United Nations envoy to Côte d'Ivoire today held talks on elections planned for next year in the country, which has been divided since 2002 between the rebel-held north and Government-controlled south.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative for Côte d'Ivoire, Y.J. Choi, met the President of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), Robert Mambé, at the IEC office in Abidjan.



Choi Young-Jin

"We had a broad discussion on the electoral process," Mr. Choi said at the end of the meeting, which lasted about one hour, according to the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI).

A peace accord signed earlier this year by leaders of the Government and rebel Forces Nouvelles in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, paved the way for the elections planned for 2008.

Mr Choi, who arrived in Côte d'Ivoire on 20 November, has already met with diplomats, donors and key political players, including President Laurent Gbagbo and the leaders of the Democratic Party of Côte d'Ivoire, Henry Konan Bédié, and the Rally for Republicans, Alassane Dramane Ouattara.

## UN agency resumes repatriation of Sudanese refugees from Kenyan camp



Sudanese refugees in Kenya

**28 November** - The United Nations refugee agency has resumed its repatriation of Sudanese from a camp in the north-west of neighbouring Kenya after the operation had been suspended for three months because of poor weather and road conditions and insecurity in the return areas of southern Sudan.

Some 200 refugees from Kakuma camp were flown to the town of Bor, located in Jonglei state in southern Sudan, last week and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) reported today that many more are waiting to join them.

At least 8,000 of the estimated 50,000 Sudanese refugees living at Kakuma have registered to return to their homeland, despite recent tensions between the Sudanese Government and the former southern rebels over the implementation of the January 2005 peace accord that ended their long-running civil war.

UNHCR said it expects that about 3,000 people will return, either by land or by air, between now and the end of the year, joining the 4,000 who returned before the repatriation programme was halted in August. In total, the agency has supported the return of 70,000 people to southern Sudan since late 2005, while another 90,000 have returned on their own.

Returnees were given awareness courses about HIV and AIDS and about the dangers of landmines, while they were also informed about the rights and obligations in southern Sudan, where two decades of conflict have left the region lacking basic infrastructure and services.

UNHCR is also conducting programmes in Sudan aimed at easing the reintegration of returnees into their former communities. Activities include mine clearing and building or renovating schools, health centres and boreholes.

Mohammad Arif, the agency's senior repatriation officer in Kakuma, described the mood in the camp as upbeat after it was announced the return programme was resuming.

"The refugees are really keen to go back home," he said. "Some of them have been here for more than 15 years. That is such a long time to be in exile."



## Potential crisis in Ethiopia's Somali region can be averted, says UN relief official



John Holmes

**28 November** - Wrapping up his first official visit to Ethiopia, the United Nations humanitarian chief today called for prompt action to avert a serious crisis in the country's Somali region, where fighting has left hundreds of thousands of people in need of life-saving assistance.

The situation in the Somali region featured prominently in discussions between UN Emergency Relief Coordinator John Holmes and senior Ethiopian officials, including the Prime Minister, his Deputy and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, in the capital, Addis Ababa.

Humanitarian conditions have worsened in the region in the past several months due to fighting between the Ethiopian National Defence Forces and the Ogaden National Liberation Front.

Mr. Holmes, who visited the strife-torn region yesterday, shared his observations about the humanitarian situation there and expressed concerns of the aid community on the ground. He also discussed ways in which the UN could support the Government in its efforts to provide relief to affected populations.

The UN has dispatched more than 7,300 metric tonnes of food to the five military zones in the region, according to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Preparations are also being finalized to deploy 15 mobile health teams, including 10 in the area of conflict.

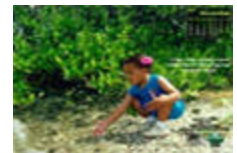
"There are grounds for concern regarding the potential for a very serious humanitarian crisis," Mr. Holmes said. "But we can avert this if we take all the necessary actions, working alongside the Government."

While in Addis Ababa, Mr. Holmes also met with representatives of the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), including the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Azouz Ennifar, with whom he discussed issues relating to the Ethiopia-Eritrea border situation.

In addition, the Emergency Relief Coordinator held talks with the African Union Commissioner for Peace and Security, Said Djint.

## UN-backed tree-planting drive hits 1 billion goal ahead of climate change talks

**28 November** - One billion trees have been planted under a drive backed by the United Nations and the World Agroforestry Centre, hitting the milestone as planned ahead of next month's international climate change conference in Bali.



Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the UN Environment Programme, said the achievement of the goal "is a further sign of the breathtaking momentum witnessed this year on the challenge for this generation – climate change."

The campaign, he said, proved that "given a focus and the chance to act, millions if not billions of people around this world want an end to pollution and environmental deterioration and have rolled up their sleeves and got their hands dirty to prove the point."

Nobel Peace Prize winner Wangari Maathai, the Kenyan Green Belt founder and co-patron of the campaign, welcomed the success of the drive and praised those who had participated in it while calling for continued vigilance. "Now we must keep the pressure on and continue the good work for the planet. Plant another tree today in celebration!"

Half of all those who participated were often private citizens or households planting one to three trees, according to UNEP,



while another 13 per cent were planted by the private sector.

The news comes as thousands of delegates across the world prepare to travel to the Indonesian island of Bali for the next and most crucial round of global warming negotiations under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), jointly established by UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization, this year concluded that the global impacts of climate change are likely to be in many cases devastating but cost effective solutions are available now to counter the worst.

The Billion Tree Campaign was launched at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi last November. The agency said it is expecting Guatemala, China and Spain to announce that several million more trees have been planted, and predicted that Indonesia will plant almost 80 million trees in one day in the run up to the Bali climate convention meeting next month.

While not all numbers are in, UNEP said the top-ranking countries appear to be Ethiopia, over 700 million trees planted; Mexico, 217 million trees; Turkey, 150 million; Kenya, 100 million; Cuba, 96.5 million; Rwanda, 50 million; Republic of Korea, 43 million; Tunisia, 21 million; Morocco, 20 million; Myanmar, 20 million and Brazil, 16 million. The Green Belt Movement planted 4.7 million trees, double the number of trees it had initially pledged.

## UN Population Fund receives €32,000 from European benefit

**28 November** - Activities of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) aimed at ending the debilitating birth injury known as fistula have received a €32,000 boost thanks to a European benefit event.



The agency was the beneficiary of the 2007 'Europeans of the Year' awards gala held in Brussels on 27 November, which generated €32,000 for the UNFPA-led Campaign to End Fistula.

The awards, known as EV50, are conferred annually by European Voice, the European Union affairs newspaper, to ten individuals who have influenced the European agenda over the past 12 months. Winners were selected from among 50 nominees by European Voice editors and a distinguished panel of leading opinion makers and thinkers.

"UNFPA is delighted to be associated with the European of the Year award 2007," said Sietske Steneker, director of the UNFPA Brussels Office, at the gala ceremony.

"UNFPA works across the globe to ensure that women in developing countries can give birth as safely as they can in Europe, that all young people have equal access to the information and means to protect themselves from HIV and unwanted pregnancies, and that every girl and woman is treated with dignity and respect. Without the support of European individuals, campaigners, parliamentarians, businesses, governments and the EU, this work would simply not be possible."

Thanking EV50 for the generous contribution on behalf of the Campaign to End Fistula, Ms. Steneker presented the 'Campaigner of the Year' award to Arnold Schwarzenegger, who was nominated for taking action against climate change with the California Global Warming Solutions Act, and for plans to introduce an emissions trading scheme with other US states and possibly with the EU.

Obstetric fistula is a hole in the birth canal caused by prolonged labour without prompt medical intervention, usually a Caesarean section. The woman is left with chronic incontinence and, in most cases, a stillborn baby.

The Campaign to End Fistula, led by UNFPA, is an international effort to prevent and treat obstetric fistula in more than 40 countries. Since 2003, the Campaign has grown to include a wide range of non-governmental partners and foundations.

## Angola: UN independent expert voices concerns over religious freedom

**28 November** - Although the freedom of religion is enshrined in the Angolan constitution, an independent United Nations human rights expert today voiced concern that the right to practise religion or belief is infringed in the Southern African nation.

Asma Jahangir, the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, wrapped up a week-long visit with a statement in which she noted that the country only emerged from 27 years of armed conflict in 2002, and that many people can practise their religion freely due to “a measure of tolerance within Angolan society.”

But she pointed out that a law on “freedom of religion, consciousness and worship discriminates against religious minorities... It contains stringent requirements for registration including membership of 100,000 persons who are domiciled in Angola.”

Ms. Jahangir said several Christian groups and the Muslim community have yet to be recognized, even though they have submitted registration applications. “Other religious minorities have no chance of recognition,” she noted.

She urged the Government to reform the law, and said she had been encouraged by its openness to review the code’s provisions. The Rapporteur, who serves in a personal and unpaid capacity, acknowledged that the “Government’s invitation to me represents a commitment to transparency in the area I cover, and also allows outside scrutiny of its human rights record.”

In the north-western province of Cabinda, security forces continue to violate human rights, she observed. “These violations and the intra-religious conflict within the Catholic Church are inter-related and represent challenges to the full enjoyment by all of the right to freedom of religion or belief.”

Four men were arrested on 12 July for peacefully protesting against the newly-appointed bishop at a mass, and three of them were sentenced to suspended sentences “under a draconian Colonial Decree dating from 1911.”

In the course of her visit, Ms. Jahangir received several reports of violence, intimidation, harassment and arrests by State agents of those seen to be associated with the crisis in the Catholic Church, she said.

Angola is also affected by a “dominant global trend” linking Muslims to international terrorism, the Rapporteur said, with high-ranking Government officials reported to have stigmatized Islam’s followers in the media.

In addition, she expressed concern about the negative impact of witchcraft, which is widespread and has a long history in Angola, with reports that children are sometimes accused by their families of being witches.

Ms. Jahangir’s final report will be presented to the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva next March.

## New UN manual launched to help vulnerable rural youth in Africa

**28 November** - To help children who are made ever more vulnerable by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in sub-Saharan Africa, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN World Food Programme (WFP) has launched a new manual on how to establish farm schools to teach orphans crucial skills.



“Children and youth are charged with the heaviest burden of the AIDS crisis,” said Marcela Villarreal, Director of FAO’s Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division. “Without their parents, they become more vulnerable to

hunger and poverty, disease, conflict, sexual exploitation, forced migration and environmental degradation.”

The new manual advises on how to create a Junior Farmer Field and Life School to educate children on how to create sustainable livelihoods and long-term food security.

“The schools are an attempt to give orphans the means and confidence to survive in an often very difficult environment,” Ms. Villarreal noted.

In sub-Saharan Africa, there are over 40 million orphans, with some 11.4 million of them having lost their parents due to AIDS.

The programme has targeted several thousand youth in 11 African countries – Cameroon, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Sudan, Swaziland, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe – since 2004.

The initiative aims to teach children practical skills such as local agricultural skills that may not have been passed down due to their parents’ deaths, but also how to protect themselves against HIV/AIDS and other diseases.

WFP supplies key food support and forms an essential part of the initiative.

“Providing a nutritional meal to children in the schools is both an incentive for them to attend lessons and gives them an energy boost to participate actively,” said Robin Jackson, Chief of WFP’s HIV/AIDS service.

## UN supports creation of first ‘closed’ juvenile rehabilitation centre in Afghanistan



**28 November** - The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has created a new “closed” juvenile rehabilitation centre in Afghanistan – the first of its kind in the war-torn nation – to provide young offenders with the training and counselling they need to make better lives for themselves once they complete their sentences.

Located in the capital, Kabul, the Centre “aims to reduce re-offending and to promote rehabilitation in a more appropriate and effective way than traditional punitive measures,” according to a press release issued by UNODC.

The Centre is a pilot project that the agency has begun in Kabul and hopes to expand throughout Afghanistan, which is seeking to rebuild a functioning juvenile justice system following decades of conflict.

While essentially a correctional facility for serious offenders – both boys and girls – under the age of 18, the Centre represents an “innovative system” in that it also provides educational and vocational training, as well as psychosocial counselling, Matteo Pasquali from UNODC’s Country Office for Afghanistan, told the UN News Service.

The Centre provides a place to rehabilitate children in conflict with the law – as offenders under 18 are referred to under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Afghanistan is a party – rather than just punish them, Mr. Pasquali stated.

Prior to the opening of the new facility, juvenile offenders served their sentences in “open centres,” which allowed the children to go home at the end of each day, he added.

The newly inaugurated Centre, constructed by UNODC with financial assistance from the Italian Government, is part of the agency’s larger criminal justice reform programme in Afghanistan.

During the past three years, UNODC has also supported the establishment of a Juvenile Justice Department within the Ministry of Justice, set up new premises for the Juvenile Court of Kabul and provided training on juvenile justice and rehabilitation.

## UNICEF launches teacher resource centres to improve education in Maldives



**28 November** - Using technology to bridge distance, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government of the Maldives have opened 20 broadband-enabled teacher resource centres to help provide quality education to a population spread across 200 small islands.

Many teachers in the Maldives – an Indian Ocean archipelago made of 1,200 small islands – remain untrained because up to 80 per cent of teacher-training costs are related to transportation.

The high transport costs meant that qualified trainers have previously only been available in the capital, Male. Even though some 70 per cent of the population live on islands far from the capital, the new centres – equipped with state-of-the-art technology – will make it possible for them to connect remotely.

“It's down to basics. Transport is costly, making it expensive and often dangerous for children to travel between islands to get a better education and for teachers to upgrade their skills,” said UNICEF Representative in the Maldives Ken Maskall.

UNICEF estimates that more than 30 per cent of teachers in the Maldives are untrained, with many islands having up to 100 students per trained primary school teacher. The centres are part of a broader programme with the Ministry of Education to provide every Maldivian child with quality education.

“All children should have access to the same opportunities, regardless of where they live,” said Mr. Maskall. “A good quality education will help Maldivian children to make more valuable contributions to their communities.”

The teacher resource centres also facilitate the establishment of one learning community in the Maldives – for the first time linking administrators and teachers all across the country to a common network.

Through the Educational Development Centre Teacher Resource website, teachers can sit in front of a computer in a resource centre in their atoll, search for materials for their next lessons, download syllabi, and share their own ideas with colleagues in other islands.

In addition, up to 400 teachers can simultaneously receive training by participating in an online course and interacting with one another.