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## Security Council condemns latest missile tests by DPR Korea



Security Council in session

**6 July** - The Security Council today condemned the ballistic missile tests conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) over the weekend, saying they violate Council resolutions and pose a threat to regional and international security.

Ambassador Ruhakana Rugunda of Uganda, which holds the rotating Council presidency this month, read out a statement to journalists this evening saying that the 15-member panel had "expressed grave concerns" following the reported tests off the DPRK coast on 4 July.

Mr. Rugunda said Council members – which held consultations on the issue this afternoon – reiterated that the DPRK must comply with their obligations under all resolutions, including resolution 1874, which was adopted unanimously last month in response to a recent nuclear test by Pyongyang.

That resolution imposed a series of measures on the DPRK that include tougher inspections of cargo suspected of containing banned items related to the country's nuclear and ballistic missile activities, a tighter arms embargo with the exception of light weapons and new financial restrictions.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon had welcomed the resolution and called on Pyongyang to engage in dialogue, including through the Six-Party Talks that brings together the DPRK, the Republic of Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States.

Mr. Rugunda said Council members appealed to all parties to refrain from any actions that might escalate the situation, and reiterated their commitment to a peaceful, diplomatic solution to the issue.

## Economic and food crises threaten recent development gains – UN report

**6 July** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on rich and poor nations to boost efforts to fight poverty and hunger after a new United Nations report shows that recent advances are being threatened by the global economic and food crises.

The report, launched today in Geneva by Mr. Ban, warns that, despite many successes, overall progress has been too slow for most of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – the globally agreed targets to halve poverty, hunger and a host of other social and economic ills – to be achieved by the target date of 2015.



“This year’s Millennium Development Goals Report delivers a message that should not surprise us but which we must take to heart: the current economic environment makes achieving the goals even more difficult,” Mr. Ban told the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The Secretary-General noted that higher food prices in 2008 have reversed the nearly two-decade trend in reducing hunger. In addition, momentum to reduce overall poverty in the developing world is slowing; tens of millions of people have been pushed into joblessness and greater vulnerability; and some countries stand to miss their poverty reduction goals.

Further, the target for eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 has already been missed, he noted. Meanwhile, 1.4 billion people must gain access to improved sanitation by 2015 in order to achieve the sanitation target.

“We have been moving too slowly to meet our goals,” said Mr. Ban. “Yet the report also shows that when we have the right policies, backed by adequate funding and strong political commitment, actions can yield impressive results.”

The new publication, based on data from over 20 organizations both within and outside the UN system, is considered the most comprehensive global MDG assessment to date. It finds, among other things, that the number of people living on less than \$1.25 a day decreased from 1.8 billion to 1.4 billion in the period from 1990 to 2005.

However, major gains in the fight against extreme poverty are likely to stall, indicators show, although data are not yet available to reveal the full impact of the recent economic downturn. In

2009, an estimated 55 million to 90 million more people will be living in extreme poverty than anticipated before the crisis.

At the same time, the Secretary-General noted that the report does show some progress. Fewer people today are dying of AIDS and many countries are implementing proven strategies to combat malaria and measles, two major killers of children.

“We are edging closer to universal primary education. We are well on our way to meeting the safe drinking water target,” he said. “We can and must build on these foundations.

“In Africa and across the developing world, we have abundant evidence that aid can help transform lives. But delays in delivering aid, combined with the financial crisis and climate change, are slowing progress,” he stated.

Mr. Ban recalled that the Group of Eight (G8) and Group of 20 (G20) nations have made specific commitments to increase financial and technical support to developing countries by 2010 to achieve the MDGs.

“Those commitments include raising annual aid flows to Africa, yet aid remains at least \$20 billion below the Gleneagles targets,” he noted. “I urge the G8 to set out, country by country, how donors will scale up aid to Africa over the next year.”

The Secretary-General also urged donor countries to meet existing pledges on aid for trade, a crucial component in improving trade competitiveness of developing country producers and exporters.

Speaking at the World Trade Organization (WTO) Second Global Review on Aid for Trade, also in Geneva, he noted that the aid for trade initiative has made good progress in the three years since its launch. The April G20 Summit pledge of \$250 billion for trade financing could lead to a significant increase in the \$25 billion that aid for trade received in 2007.

However, the global financial and economic crisis has had a severe impact on demand, and it is now widely predicted that global trade will decline by 10 per cent this year, he added. "Unless the direction of the crisis is reversed soon, it will further unravel the progress that developing countries have made over the past two decades in reducing poverty."

## Ban calls on regional bloc to find peaceful resolution to Honduran crisis



Skyline of the capital of Honduras, Tegucigalpa

**6 July** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today voiced his sadness at the deaths that have occurred in Honduras following the ouster of President José Manuel Zelaya Rosales, and called on the Organization of American States (OAS) to find a peaceful resolution to the ongoing crisis.

Mr. Zelaya was ousted by the military on 28 June, hours before a referendum was slated to be held on changing the Honduran constitution. He attempted to fly back to Honduras yesterday, accompanied by General Assembly President Miguel D'Escoto and several regional leaders, but was prevented from landing at the airport in the capital, Tegucigalpa.

At least two people were reportedly killed when soldiers clashed with supporters of the President over the weekend.

"I am very saddened by the loss of lives in the course of these demonstrations," Mr. Ban told a news conference in Geneva, where he is currently on an official visit.

He said the Honduran authorities "should refrain from using excessive force," and added that the country's citizens "should be allowed to express their free will, without being intimidated, without being threatened by physical force."

He stressed that any unconstitutional change of power is unacceptable, and welcomed the role and the measures taken by the OAS.

"I sincerely hope that [the] OAS at this time will take the necessary leadership role to find a peaceful solution to this issue, whereby the constitutional order can be restored."

The coup d'état has received widespread condemnation from both within and outside the UN. Last week the General Assembly adopted a resolution deploring the incident, which it stated has "interrupted the democratic and constitutional order and the legitimate exercise of power in Honduras."

Also last week, a group of independent UN human rights experts voiced serious concern over the situation in the Central American nation and called for the lifting of curbs on fundamental freedoms.

## Gaza: members of UN fact-finding mission hear testimonies during Geneva hearings

**6 July** - The fact-finding mission tasked by the United Nations Human Rights Council with probing rights violations committed during the recent Gaza conflict began the Geneva round of public hearings today, following a similar exercise held in the Gaza Strip last week.

“The purpose of today’s interviews was to hear from victims, witnesses and experts from southern Israel and the West Bank,” UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters.



The mission had wanted to hold hearings in the West Bank and in southern Israel, where the population had been on the receiving end of rocket attacks launched from Gaza, but that had not been possible since the Israeli Government has so far not cooperated with the mission.

Testimonies were given both in person and by videoconference to the four-member team, led by Justice Richard Goldstone. Among those who came in person to address the panel were the mayor of the Israeli town of Ashkelon and the father of missing Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

During the 28 and 29 June hearings in Gaza City, the team heard accounts from people who had been badly injured in attacks and from victims who had lost many members of their families, as well as from people who had lost their livelihoods.

Experts also gave testimonies on the psycho-social effects, particularly on health, children and education, of the fighting that took place between 27 December and 18 January.

The panel is expected to compile its report in August.

## Thai elected to another term as head of UN trade and development body



UNCTAD Secretary-General Supachai Panitchpakdi

**6 July** - Supachai Panitchpakdi will serve a second four-year term as the head of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) after the General Assembly confirmed the Thai official’s appointment by acclamation today.

Mr. Supachai, who took office as UNCTAD Secretary-General in September 2005, will now serve through at least the end of August 2013 in the Geneva-based body.

“I am honoured to continue with the important work of this organization, especially at such a critical time for the economies of developing countries,” he said following the extension of his appointment.

UNCTAD was set up in 1964 to promote the development-friendly integration of poorer countries into the global economy. It serves as a forum for intergovernmental deliberations, undertakes policy research and analysis and provides technical assistance to developing countries.

Mr. Supachai, 63, is the author of a number of books on trade, globalization and education, and he has a doctorate in economic planning and development from Erasmus University in Rotterdam. He was also Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) between 2002 and 2005.

## UN mission helps fix up prison in western DR Congo

**6 July** - Prisoners in the west of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) are now living in better conditions, thanks to the help of the United Nations peacekeeping mission, known as MONUC, in the vast African nation.

Dozens of two-man cells were rehabilitated and disciplinary and toilets were built during MONUC's three-month Quick Impact Project (QIP) at the central prison in Mbandaka, the capital of Equateur province.

Built during the Belgian colonial era in the 1930s, the prison also was equipped by the UN mission with bicycles, office tables and chairs, as well as other supplies.

This project is part of MONUC's efforts to restructure the DRC's prison system, having also recently held a workshop with the Ministry of Justice to consider how to restructure prison administration.

A 10-day workshop which ended last week in the capital, Kinshasa, brought together 50 representatives of Government, academia and civil society, as well as one dozen UN experts.

Harriet Solloway, who heads MONUC's Rule of Law section, said that escapes and mutinies, as well as illness and death, occur regularly, owing to insufficient and often unqualified personnel.

"It is rare for prisons to have a maintenance and operational budget for the prisoners," she said, with prisons themselves dilapidated.

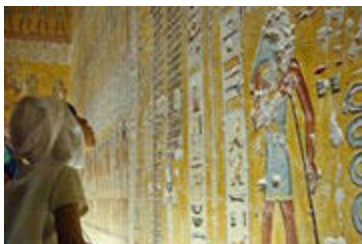
Late last month, nearly two dozen female inmates were raped during an attempted prison break in the North Kivu capital of Goma.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said that incident "is a grim example of both the prison conditions and the level of sexual violence that plagues the DRC," appealing to the Government "to bring to justice those who have committed these crimes and, more generally, to renew efforts to bring an end to the impunity too often enjoyed by perpetrators of sexual violence."

Earlier in July, inmates attempted to escape from the Aru Central Prison in Ituri province, the second prison break in the DRC in less than one month.

Underscoring how prison conditions at Aru and throughout the DRC are well below international standards, MONUC reiterated its call on Congolese authorities to both improve conditions and bolster security in penitentiaries.

## UN nuclear agency helps unlock secrets buried with Egyptian mummies



Inside an ancient Egyptian tomb

**6 July** - The United Nations nuclear agency is using its expertise to help archaeologists unearth millennia-old secrets, from the supposed murder of King Tutankhamun to the mysterious death of Great Pharaoh Ramesses II, from Egyptian mummies.

Paleoradiology is a type of science using nuclear technologies – including x-rays and neutron activation analysis – to study artifacts, skeletons, mummies and fossils.

Rethy Chhem, Director of the Division of Human Health at the UN International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), is an expert in that field and said that science allows radiologists to uncover details about mummies, such as their sex, age of death and illnesses.

X-rays found that Pharaoh Ramesses II did not, contrary to popular belief, have arthritis of the spine, which Mr. Chhem said



Conditions in DRC prisons are generally poor

is in line with his depiction as a great warrior.

The IAEA is helping countries apply nuclear technologies to archaeological study and cultural preservation.

The technologies can also be applied to monitoring pesticides in milk and finding answers to a series of sudden deaths of males in north-eastern Thailand, the IAEA said in a press release.

## UN commission on global food standards takes action against dangerous bacteria

**6 July** - Dozens of new international standards, including measures to curb dangerous bacteria in food, have been adopted by the United Nations commission on international food standards at the end of a week-long meeting.

Among the measures passed by the body, known officially as the Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC), guidance has been formulated to help prevent the contamination of Ochratoxin A, a fungal toxin which can also cause cancer in humans, in coffee.

It also approved measures to avert the formulation of acrylamide, a potentially dangerous chemical, in potato products.



Acrylamide can be produced during the frying of potatoes

CAC was established in 1963 by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to set food standards to protect the health of consumers and ensure fair practices in the food trade.

During its meeting in Rome, which was attended by some 500 people representing 125 countries, the body also launched new projects, including schemes to set maximum levels for melamine in food and feed.

A chemical most commonly found in the form of white crystals, melamine can cause kidney stones when consumed, potentially stop the production of urine, lead to kidney failure and in some cases death.

“Applying Codex standards and guidelines are an important part of ensuring that consumers in every part of the world can be protected from unsafe food,” said Ezzeddine Boutrif, FAO Director of the Nutrition and Consumer Protection Division.

## UN tribunal upholds contempt of court conviction against Bosnian Serb



International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) building in The Hague

**6 July** - The United Nations war crimes tribunal set up in the wake of the Balkan conflicts in the 1990s has upheld the conviction of a Bosnian Serb army officer who was given a four-month jail sentence earlier this year for refusing to testify in a case.

The appeals chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), which sits in The Hague, announced on Friday that it had dismissed the appeal of Dragan Jokic against the conviction and sentence issued by the trial chamber in March.

Mr. Jokic had been subpoenaed to testify as a prosecution witness in the case of Popovic and others in late 2007, but refused to do so, giving his reasons in a confidential submission to the ICTY.

The trial chamber ruled that the submission did not justify the refusal to testify, stressing that the duty of subpoenaed witnesses to testify was a basic principle of justice.

Mr. Jokic will serve his four-month sentence in an Austrian jail where he is also serving a separate nine-year term imposed by the ICTY in 2005 after he was convicted of aiding and abetting the notorious extermination, murder and persecution of

Bosnian Muslim men in the town of Srebrenica – which was supposed to be a safe haven – in July 1995.

## Advances in tackling HIV at risk from economic downturn, warns UN agency

**6 July** - The well-being of millions of people could be put at risk as HIV prevention and treatment programmes fall victim to funding cutbacks as a result of the global economic crisis, warns a new report released today by the United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Bank.



The report, “The Global Economic Crisis and HIV Prevention and Treatment Programmes: Vulnerabilities and Impact,” says that eight countries – which together are home to more than 60 per cent of all those receiving AIDS treatment – are already facing shortages of antiretroviral drugs or other disruptions to treatment.

In addition, 34 out of the 71 surveyed countries report that HIV prevention programmes focusing on high-risk groups such as sex workers, injection drug users and men who have sex with men are already feeling the impact of the crisis.

“This is a wake-up call which shows that many of our gains in HIV prevention and treatment could unravel because of the impact of the economic crisis,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

He added that any interruption or slowing down in funding would be a disaster for the 4 million people on treatment and the millions more currently being reached by HIV prevention programmes.

In 2006, the General Assembly pledged to achieve universal access to comprehensive HIV prevention, treatment, care and support by 2010. A report by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on progress on HIV/AIDS commitments shows that achieving national universal access targets by 2010 will require an estimated annual outlay of \$25 billion within two years.

According to a news release issued by the agencies, there are no reports of major cuts in donor assistance for 2009. However, it was reported that current funding commitments for treatment programmes in nearly 40 per cent of the countries examined will end in 2009 or 2010. It is feared that external aid will not increase or even be maintained at current levels.

“This evidence shows us that people on AIDS treatment could be in danger of losing their place in the lifeboat and bleak prospects for millions more people who are waiting to start treatment,” Joy Phumaphi, the World Bank’s Vice President for Human Development, stated.

“We cannot afford a ‘lost generation’ of people as a result of this crisis,” she added. “It is essential that developing countries and aid donors act now to protect and expand their spending on health, education and other basic social services, invest effectively and efficiently, and target these efforts to make sure they reach the poorest and most vulnerable groups.”

The joint report outlines several steps to maintain and expand access to HIV treatment and prevention during the economic crisis, including using existing funding better, addressing urgent funding gaps and monitoring risks of programme interruption. It also recommends looking at sources of financing that can be sustained over the long term.

Addressing a meeting of the General Assembly convened last month to assess progress in the response to the global epidemic, Mr. Ban said the economic crisis should not be an excuse to abandon commitments. Rather, it should be an impetus to make the right investments that will yield benefits for generations to come.

“Now is not the time to falter,” he said, noting that a vigorous and effective response to the AIDS epidemic is integrally linked to meeting global commitments to reduce poverty, prevent hunger, lower childhood mortality, and protect the health and well-being of women.

## ICC begins radio series to explain activities to Central Africans



International Criminal Court  
Headquarters in The Hague

**6 July** - The International Criminal Court (ICC) today launches a series of radio programmes in the Central African Republic (CAR) as part of an outreach campaign aimed at informing the country's population about the court's mandate and activities.

The 13-episode series, which will be broadcast in the Sango language, is called "Understanding the International Criminal Court" and uses a question-and-answer format. At least 14 separate radio stations are expected to air the programmes.

The radio programmes are the result of some 50 outreach sessions held by the ICC in the Central African capital, Bangui, between January and June this year.

Individual episodes will be aired once a week, and the topics include the structure of the court, the rights of suspects, judgement and sentencing and the rights and responsibilities of witnesses and victims.

The situation in the CAR is one of four – along with Sudan's Darfur region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Uganda – currently under investigation by the Prosecutor of the ICC, an independent, permanent court that tries persons accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

## UN envoy Bill Clinton begins first visit to Haiti in his new role



Former United States President and new  
UN Envoy to Haiti Bill Clinton

**6 July** - The recently appointed United Nations Special Envoy to Haiti, the former United States president Bill Clinton, will today begin his first visit to the Caribbean country in his new capacity.

During his three-day visit, Mr. Clinton is expected to meet with a series of senior Government officials to discuss how best the international community can support their efforts to better prepare for hurricanes, generate new jobs and enhance the delivery of basic social services.

He is also going to examine how the UN, civil society and the international donor community can better align their efforts with the Haitian Government's recovery plan and with each other, according to a note issued by his office.

Earlier this month Mr. Clinton laid out his vision to advance development in Haiti, telling a news conference at UN Headquarters in New York that the country, more than ever before, has an opportunity to progress.

"Haiti, notwithstanding the total devastation wreaked by the four storms last year, has the best chance to escape the darker aspects of its history in the 35 years that I have been going there," he said.

Mr. Clinton has already visited Haiti this year, but this will be his first trip to the impoverished State since his appointment as an envoy by Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in May. In March the two men visited Haiti together to assess the situation in the wake of the devastating hurricanes that struck in quick succession in 2008.

## UN mission helping to boost aid effectiveness in Afghanistan

**6 July** - The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is helping to increase the effectiveness of aid to the South Asian nation by boosting cooperation between the Government and donors.

UNAMA has been tasked by the Security Council to lead efforts in donor coordination.

“When donors and the Government work together, the impact is much greater,” Mark Ward, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan, told a news conference in Kabul. “We believe this strongly in UNAMA – and the facts prove it.”



Girls attending the community-based school in the village of Hussain Khel (file photo)

Successful coordination requires donors and the Government “not just telling each other what they are planning to do, but planning what they are going to do together,” he said, adding that authorities must also design good schemes for donors to fund.

Mr. Ward cited the example of the Ministry of Agriculture, which last April presented five priority programmes that are now receiving donor funding.

Initiatives taken by the Ministries of Public Health and Education, which “forced the donors to align their funding behind the Government’s priorities,” have resulted in over 80 per cent of Afghans having access to basic health services and more than 6 million children going back to school.

UNAMA plays a crucial role in helping the Government create solid programmes and then pushing donors to fund the projects rapidly, said the Special Advisor.

With most donors planning their spending years in advance, many are adverse to last-minute changes, he noted.

“So we have to push them to be flexible and change their budgets to support the urgent new programmes with the Government,” he said. “This makes us a bit unpopular with the donors, but it is important.”

Another priority of UNAMA is to ensure that donors discuss new programmes not only with the Government but also with each other to prevent duplication of efforts.

## UN agencies join forces to reduce risk from natural disasters in South-East Europe



Loss of life can be minimized with investment in disaster prevention measures (file photo)

**6 July** - Two United Nations agencies are collaborating on a project to improve early warning systems to try to reduce the risk posed by natural disasters and extreme weather conditions across South-East Europe.

The World Meteorological Organization (WMO) announced today in a press release that it is working with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on a programme to integrate the national meteorological and hydrological services of countries in the region so that they better plan and prepare for possible disasters and extreme events.

Under the project, South-East European countries will have greater capacity to collect and share meteorological data with each other so that they can develop better warning systems, and move more closely in line with the standards and policies within the European Union (EU).

The programme is being financed by the European Commission and follows an assessment phase carried out by WMO with the support of the World Bank and the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR).

WMO says the Western Balkans area and Turkey face threats from many natural hazards, including floods, droughts, forest fires, earthquakes and landslides, and those threats may increase.

Michel Jarraud, WMO's Secretary-General, said climate change had the potential to increase the risks even further.

"Integrating early warning systems, based on accurate and timely hydro-meteorological data, analysis and forecasts, into disaster management and response will help save lives and protect property and livelihoods," he said.

## Joint UN-Timorese police operation smashes human trafficking ring in capital

**6 July** - United Nations Police (UNPOL) serving in Timor-Leste and the South-East Asian country's police force (PNTL) say they have cracked a human trafficking ring after arresting 10 people during a joint operation in a bar in the capital, Dili.

The 10 suspects, who include one woman, were arrested on 2 July at a bar in the Marconi neighbourhood and are now in Becora Prison awaiting pre-trial hearing.



UNPOL and PNTL found 21 women and one 17-year-old girl working in the bar, and they are being cared for by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) while they are being processed as victims of human trafficking.

Preliminary investigations indicate that the suspects deceived the women into travelling to Timor-Leste on the expectation they would have legitimate jobs as waitresses or masseuses, but then forced them to provide sexual services after they entered the country.

UNPOL Commissioner Luis Carrilho stressed in a statement issued by the UN Mission in Timor-Leste (UNMIT) that the UN regarded human trafficking as a form of serious exploitation and abuse.

"Police will not hesitate to take action against human traffickers," Mr. Carrilho said, adding that last week's operation highlighted the good relationship between UNPOL and PNTL.

## Myanmar's human rights record matter of 'grave concern,' says Ban



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meets with residents of Kyon Da in the Delta, Myanmar

**4 July** - Myanmar's future must be rooted in respect for human rights, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, voicing his deep disappointment that the South-East Asian nation's Government refused his request to meet with Nobel laureate and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Myanmar was one of the first United Nations Member States to adopt the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but "unfortunately, that commitment has not been matched in deed," Mr. Ban said in Yangon, at the end of his two-day visit to the country. "Myanmar's human rights record remains a matter of grave concern."

He called on authorities to release all political prisoners – including Ms. Suu Kyi – without delay.

The Secretary-General said that Senior General Than Shwe's refusal to allow him to meet with Ms. Suu Kyi, whose trial is pending, shows that the Government "has lost a unique opportunity to show its commitment to a new era of political

openness.”

He added that “allowing a visit to Daw Aung San Suu Kyi would have been an important symbol of the Government's willingness to embark on the kind of meaningful engagement that will be essential if the elections in 2010 are to be seen as credible.”

Myanmar's authorities have laid out stability, national reconciliation and democracy as their goals, and next year's polls, the first in two decades, must be “inclusive, participatory and transparent,” Mr. Ban stressed in his address today to diplomats, UN agencies, and international and non-governmental organizations.

“Sovereignty, territorial integrity and national unity are legitimate concerns for any government,” he said.

“Opening and broadening the political space is the best way to ensure that each group and each individual becomes part of the greater collective project,” added Mr. Ban, who met with leaders of Myanmar's registered political parties, including Ms. Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD), and with former armed groups observing a ceasefire during his time in the country.

The Secretary-General's last visit to Myanmar was in the wake of last May's devastating Cyclone Nargis, which killed almost 130,000 people. During this visit, he visited the Kyon Da Village in the Irrawaddy delta to see the results of recovery and reconstruction work first-hand.

In his speech today, he lauded the “unprecedented” cooperation between Myanmar, the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) through the Tripartite Core Group which he said showed that humanitarian imperatives and the principle of sovereignty do not conflict.

“Humanitarian assistance – in Myanmar as elsewhere – should never be held hostage to political considerations,” he emphasized. “We can and must work together to ensure access to humanitarian and development assistance to all those in Myanmar who need it.”

Mr. Ban, who met with Senior General Than Shwe yesterday and today, as well as Prime Minister Thein Sein, also urged Myanmar to lift millions of its citizens out of poverty by unleashing its economic potential.

“The people of Myanmar need jobs, they need food security and they need access to healthcare,” he said, calling on the country to “take advantage of the opportunities that the international community is prepared to offer.”

Myanmar, the Secretary-General said, can only benefit from engagement and has stated many times that cooperation with the UN is the cornerstone of its foreign policy.

“We ask it to match deeds with words,” he said. “The more Myanmar works in partnership with the United Nations to respond to its people's needs and aspirations, the more it affirms its sovereignty.”

Speaking to reporters in Bangkok, Thailand, after leaving Yangon, Mr. Ban stressed that the authorities' refusal to allow him to visit Aung San Suu Kyi “should not be seen as the only benchmark for success or failure of my visit.”

During his time in the country, he was able to “very frankly and directly” convey the international community's concerns, as well as its readiness to help Myanmar's people achieve their “legitimate aspirations,” to Senior General Than Shwe and his Government, he said.

While in the Thai capital, the Secretary-General said he met with Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva, and also told reporters that his Special Adviser, Ibrahim Gambari, will shortly convene the so-called Group of Friends on Myanmar, a gathering of countries supporting greater dialogue in the Asian country.

From Thailand, Mr. Ban is scheduled to travel to Switzerland, Ireland and Italy.

## Secretary-General: cooperatives can help pull world out of recession



**4 July** - Cooperatives, based on the principles of self-help and reciprocity, have the potential to help address the global economic crisis, especially among the world's most vulnerable, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today.

Cooperatives' economic model is not based on charity, he said, noting that in countries affected by the turmoil, cooperative banks and credit unions have expanded lending when other financial institutions have scaled back.

“This highlights the importance of strong alternative business models and institutional diversity for the resilience of the financial system,” Mr. Ban said in his message on the International Day of Cooperatives, whose theme this year is “Driving Global Recovery Through Cooperatives.”

With communities worldwide rediscovering the need to work together to overcome the crisis, he stressed that cooperatives deserve greater support from governments, which can adopt policies to boost the setting up of cooperatives, and consumers, who can buy food produced by small-holder cooperatives traded in fair markets.

In 1992, the General Assembly proclaimed the first Saturday of every July to be the International Day of Cooperatives, marking the centenary of the International Cooperative Alliance, which united and represents cooperatives around the world.

## Financing tops discussion among administrative heads of UN-backed tribunals

**3 July** - The Registrars, or top administrative officials, of the International Criminal Court (ICC), United Nations tribunals and courts backed by the world body wrapped up a meeting today focusing on funding and resources.

Silvana Arbia of the ICC, John Hocking of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), Adama Deng of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), Binta Mansara of the Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), and Herman von Hebel of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon attended the two-day gathering in Venice, Italy.



ICTY courtroom

Updating progress made by their respective institutions, the Registrars conferred on securing necessary funding and efficiently using resources, identifying governance, effective decision-making and budgeting processes as key areas of concern.

They also discussed the need to retain qualified staff, particularly among tribunals and courts wrapping up their work.

The Registrars agreed to explore common strategies regarding cooperating with countries on enforcing sentences and witness protection.

## UNESCO chief backs G8 call on Iran to respect human rights

**3 July** - The head of the United Nations agency tasked with upholding freedom of expression and press freedom today voiced his strong support for the recent call issued by the foreign ministers of the Group of Eight (G8) nations on Iran to respect fundamental human rights.

Protesters have taken to the streets following the 12 June presidential poll, which opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi has said was fixed in favour of President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad.

Koïchiro Matsuura, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), has been concerned over infringements of press freedom in the country in recent weeks.

According to a press release issued by the agency, restrictions have been imposed on both domestic and foreign journalists, while some reporters are said to have been arrested and access to the Internet limited, with some sites being shut down.

“Everywhere in the world, and in all circumstances, freedom of expression and press freedom are basic rights. There can be no justification to slighting them,” Mr. Matsuura said.

Last week, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed for an immediate end to the arrests, threats and use of force taking place in Iran amid the deadly post-election violence.

Mr. Ban “is dismayed by the post-election violence, particularly the use of force against civilians, which has led to the loss of life and injuries,” his spokesperson said in a statement.

“He urges an immediate stop to the arrests, threats and use of force,” it added, noting that Mr. Ban has called on the authorities to respect fundamental civil and political rights, especially the freedom of expression, freedom of assembly and freedom of information.

## **UN helping Timorese uprooted families return home peacefully**

**3 July** - The United Nations is assisting families displaced by violence which shook Timor-Leste in 2006 return to their homes and preventing potential conflicts in their communities.

In late April 2006, fighting – attributed to differences between eastern and western regions – erupted when 600 striking soldiers, or one-third of the armed forces, were fired. Ensuing violence claimed dozens of lives and drove 155,000 people, 15 per cent of the total population, from their homes.

The Metinara camp, one of the largest sites housing internally displaced persons (IDPs) uprooted during that crisis, began closing last month, with 700 families returning home after accepting a Government recovery package.

To prepare for the moves, the Government and its partners have been holding dialogues and mediations with the receiving communities to pave the way for the return of displaced families.

In his most recent report on Timor-Leste, which the UN shepherded to independence in 2002, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said warned that the root causes of the 20-6 crisis, including poverty and unemployment, still linger.

Monitors with the UN peacekeeping mission in the country, known as UNMIT, along with non-governmental organizations, have each been assigned a family to accompany home.

“Continued monitoring of the returned families will be critical in identifying and mitigating potential conflict in their communities,” said Louis Gentile, Timor-Leste Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Nearly 14,000 displaced families have accepted Government recovery packages, and despite the closure of camps, almost 2,500 people are still seeking refuge in shelters.

“We must consider the long-term impact that the displacement has had,” Mr. Gentile said.

According to UNMIT, short-term challenges for returning IDPs include protection, while longer-term obstacles will require the adoption of national land laws and efficient mechanisms to regulate land and property disputes sufficient investment in infrastructure to allow all people to access basic services and ensuring justice and accountability for the crimes that led to the original displacement.