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## At UN food summit, Ban lays out steps to save billions from hunger



Inaugural ceremony of the World Summit on Food Security.

**16 November** - A three-day United Nations summit on world food security opened in Rome today, with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warning that on this day alone more than 17,000 children will die of hunger – one every five seconds, 6 million a year – even as the planet has more than enough food for all.

“Today, more than one billion people are hungry,” he told the assembled leaders, calling for immediate action on long-term remedies, a day after he himself fasted for 24 hours in solidarity with all those billion. “It was not easy. But, for too many people, it is a daily reality.”

The leaders unanimously adopted a declaration pledging renewed commitment to eradicate hunger from the face of the earth sustainably and at the earliest date. They agreed to work to reverse the decline in domestic and international funding for agriculture, promote new investment, and proactively face the challenges of climate change to food security.

Mr. Ban laid out a full, comprehensive spectrum of measures to combat a scourge gravely exacerbated by climate change and population growth that will see two billion more mouths to feed in 2050 – 9.1 billion in all – with an overall need to grow 70 per cent more food.

The steps range from immediate needs such as food aid, safety nets and social protection to the longer-term goals achieved

through increased investments in agricultural development, including provision of seeds, water supplies and land to ensure higher productivity, better market access, and fairer trade, above all for smallholder farmers, especially women.

“These smallholder farmers are the heart and soul of food security and poverty reduction,” Mr. Ban declared. “We must resist protectionism and end subsidies that distort markets. This, ladies and gentlemen, lies at the core of food security. Our job is not just to feed the hungry, but to empower the hungry to feed themselves.”

He warned of a chain reaction over the past year that threatens the very foundations of life for millions of people, with rising energy prices driving up food costs and eating away the savings that would otherwise be spent on health care or education.

“It is a vicious cycle that impoverishes not only its immediate victims but all people,” he said. “Millions of families have been pushed into poverty and hunger. Suffering on this scale spills over borders. It sets back development and undercuts social order, as we well know. Over the past year and a half, food insecurity led to political unrest in some 30 countries.”

But it is not enough just to deal with the crisis when it arrives, even though the world responded with the greatest-ever food aid, pledging funding and improved policies at various summits, and even worse potential damage was averted.

“Because the underlying problems persist, we will continue to experience such crises, again and again – unless we act,” Mr. Ban said. “The food crisis of today is a wake-up call for tomorrow.”

He stressed the inter-relationship between the food and global warming crises, pleading for agreement at next month’s climate change summit in Copenhagen on curbing greenhouse gas emissions to keep the temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius.

The melting of Himalayan glaciers would affect the livelihoods and survival of 300 million people in China and up to 1 billion people throughout Asia, while Africa’s small farmers, who produce most of the continent’s food and depend mostly on rain, could see harvests drop by 50 per cent by 2020, he warned.

“Today’s event is critical. So is the climate change conference in Copenhagen next month. There can be no food security without climate security,” Mr. Ban declared. “They must produce results – real results for people in real need, results for the one billion people who are hungry today, real results so millions more will not have to suffer when the next shock hits.

“The world is impatient for us to make a difference. I, too, am impatient. And I am committed.”

UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Director-General Jacques Diouf said eliminating hunger require \$44 billion of official development assistance (ODA) per year to be invested in infrastructure, technology and modern inputs.

“It is a small amount if we consider the \$365 billion of agriculture producer support [subsidies] in OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries in 2007, and if we consider the \$1,340 billion of military expenditures by the world in the same year,” he added.

UN World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director Josette Sheeran told a First Ladies’ summit in Rome yesterday that empowering women, who do much of the agricultural work in the developing world, was vital. “Women are the secret weapon to fight hunger,” she said.

She called on 700 million women who have enough food to contribute 1 euro a week to the 700 million women who are hungry as part of WFP’s “Billion for a Billion” Citizens’ Action Campaign. Launching an online version of the campaign ([www.wfp.org/1billion](http://www.wfp.org/1billion)) on Saturday, she said: “Now you can fill the cup of a hungry child with a simple click of a mouse. If a billion internet users donate a dollar or a euro a week, we can literally transform the live of a billion hungry people across the world.”

At a news conference later in the day, Mr. Ban said he remained positive about Copenhagen, citing much convergence in the areas of adaptation, technology and capacity building. “I am fighting for a real deal in Copenhagen, a deal that paves the way for a binding global climate treaty,” he stressed.



Also today, he visited WFP headquarters to pay tribute to the five colleagues recently killed in Pakistan. He has also held bilateral meetings with a number of leaders, including the Brazilian, Chilean, Egyptian, Italian, Libyan and Tanzanian presidents.

## With crucial elections ahead, UN must commit to Iraq for the long term – top official

**16 November** - With upcoming Iraqi elections marking a crucial step on the road to stability, the United Nations must redouble its long-term commitment to a country that is still threatened by both insurgents and potential conflict between the central government and the Kurdish region, the top UN official for Iraq warned today.

“Success is far from guaranteed as inside and outside forces continue their efforts to impose an agenda of division and destruction,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative Ad Melkert told the Security Council. “Opposed to this stands the will of the people to participate in the design of the future and to democratically mandate its leaders. This is the true significance of the historic elections ahead.



Special Representative for Iraq Ad Melkert addresses the Security Council

“And this must motivate the United Nations to mobilize all possible support for this process and progress, for Iraqis are receptive and eager to incorporate the values of the UN Charter in the building of a new state and a new society,” he added, stressing the utmost importance of the Council’s enabling the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) to live up to the expectations.

“This will have to be a commitment over a long period of time. There will be no shortcuts. Change needs rooting. Change is underway in many aspects. For the rooting, however, these are still early days.”

In a presidential statement read by Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting of Austria, which holds the monthly presidency for November, the Council reaffirmed “its full support” for UNAMI in helping Iraq to strengthen democratic institutions, develop a just and fair solution for the disputed internal boundaries, and hold the elections.

Mr. Melkert stressed that soon after election day, scheduled for 18 January, the serious issues of internal boundaries between the federal government and Iraqi Kurdistan, and revenue sharing, including oil extraction, must be addressed. Without resolving these key issues “the new Iraq will be permanently at risk of being pulled back or dragged into fundamentally destabilizing conflict,” he warned.

The Special Representative was presenting Mr. Ban’s latest report on Iraq to the 15-member body, with its call to the international community to help the country to deliver basic services in critically under-funded social sectors to ensure stability. He noted the continued violence, including the two massive and deadly attacks on Government buildings in August and October.

“Whilst still frequently the face of daily life shows the ugly sides of death and threat, the soul of the overwhelming majority of Iraqis vibrates in reaching towards the prospect of a safe and fair society,” he said.

“In the foreseeable future Iraq will continue to face big challenges and contradictions. More than before it will depend on the determination of constructive forces from the inside and outside to seize new and real opportunities,” he concluded. “From many Iraqis the determination to advance is there. For neighbouring and partner countries and for the Security Council to back this up unambiguously is the signal those Iraqis need and deserve.”

Asked at a later press conference about reports of Iranian arms supplies to insurgents in Iraq and interference in the internal affairs of the country, Mr. Melkert replied: “There is reason for concern generally about the interaction between different neighbours of Iraq with Iraq, as the Iraqi Government itself stated... [But] UNAMI is not in a position to specify.”

## Israel must end Gaza blockade, evictions, alleged abuse of young Palestinians – Ban



**16 November** - Israel should end the blockade of Gaza, cease evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes, and ensure that the rights of children are respected and that all allegations of torture and ill-treatment are promptly investigated and perpetrators prosecuted, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in an annual report released today.

“In particular, the Government of Israel should allow unimpeded access to Gaza for humanitarian aid and the non-humanitarian goods needed for the reconstruction of properties and infrastructure,” he writes in the report to the General Assembly on the human rights of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East

Jerusalem.

“Israel should also address effectively and immediately the water, sanitation and environmental crisis in Gaza,” he stressed, citing the devastating damage stemming from Israel’s military action against Hamas last winter and its blockade of many materials other than foodstuffs, medical supplies, stationery and some industrial or electrical appliances.

“Those heavy import restrictions, coupled with a near total prohibition on exports, have had a devastating effect on the Gaza economy. The blockade has also severely impaired the realization of a wide range of economic, social and cultural rights, as well as civil and political rights.”

Mr. Ban says the reported ill-treatment of children includes beatings, being forced to stand or sit for long periods in extremely painful and harmful positions, in most cases with hands tied together and eyes blindfolded, threats of sexual abuse and hooding the head and face in a sack.

He cites one case documented by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), in which a 14-year-old-boy from the village of Qatanna was arrested in March by soldiers after other children had thrown stones at an army vehicle. While being transferred to an Israeli military camp, soldiers slapped him several times, handcuffed and blindfolded him.

The boy stated that the handcuffs were too tight and caused him great pain and that the blindfold may have been coated in tear gas since his eyes were burning the entire time. After repeated appeals at the police station, a soldier noted the boy’s hands were turning blue and took off his handcuffs and blindfold. He was then subjected to interrogation for four hours, during which an interrogator beat his face and ears with the back of his hand, approximately 40 times.

“All parties to the conflict should abide scrupulously by their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law,” Mr. Ban writes in an overall recommendation, calling for all allegations to be investigated by credible, independent and transparent accountability mechanisms. “Equally crucial is upholding the right of victims to reparation.”

On the West Bank, he reiterates that the wall which Israel says it is building to keep out Palestinian suicide bombers and other attacks, should be dismantled where it is in occupied territory, in accordance with an advisory opinion by the International Court of Justice.

Israel should also issue viable zoning plans and a less cumbersome process for issuing building permits in a non-discriminatory manner for all in East Jerusalem and other places in the West Bank. “Until such time, the evictions and demolitions of Palestinian homes should cease,” Mr. Ban stresses. “Victims of forced evictions should also be afforded the possibility of effective redress. Punitive demolitions should cease immediately.”

In East Jerusalem alone from January to July 2009 at least 194 persons were forcibly displaced as a result of home demolitions. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in August cited “conservative estimates”

of more than 1,500 pending demolition orders in East Jerusalem.

Some neighbourhoods face the prospects of mass demolitions. In the Silwan neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, some 90 houses are threatened, potentially displacing about 1,000 people. In Sheik Jarrah, an area in central East Jerusalem, 475 residents could face potential eviction as the ownership of their homes is contested by Israeli settlers.

## Greater efforts needed on land to fight piracy off Somali coast, says Ban

**16 November** - The Somali Government and the African Union force in the country need more help on land to fight piracy in the waters, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon says in a new report released today.

“One of the ways to ensure the long-term security of international navigation off the coast of Somalia is through a concerted effort to stabilize the situation ashore, as pirates have become more sophisticated in their methods and techniques of attacking,” he states.



In the report to the Security Council on the situation of piracy and armed robbery in territorial waters and high seas off the coast of Somalia, Mr. Ban noted that the expanding maritime presence by Member States is playing a critical role in stabilizing the situation in the Gulf of Aden.

At the same time, he calls for an integrated approach that would strengthen the capacities of the Somali Transitional Federal Government (TFG) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) on land.

The approach should include further development of law and security institutions to complement the ongoing peace process in the strife-torn nation, including for the investigation and prosecution of those suspected of acts of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

In this regard, the Secretary-General welcomes the initiative by INTERPOL and Member States to look into the financial mechanisms that provide funding for piracy activities.

He also noted that it would be important for Somali authorities to continue to provide sustainable livelihoods to their people in order to address the roots causes of piracy and armed robbery at sea.

In a related development, the Security Council was briefed today in a closed meeting by Ambassador Claude Heller of Mexico, who chairs the sanctions committee for Somalia.

Council members strongly condemned the recent increased fighting and loss of life in Somalia, in a statement read out to the press after that meeting by Ambassador Thomas Mayr-Harting of Austria, which holds the rotating Council presidency for this month.

They “reiterated their continued and full support to the Transitional Federal Government, its efforts to achieve peace, security and reconciliation through the Djibouti Peace Process, and the work of the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM),” said the statement.

## International aid needed for returning Chadians displaced by conflict – UN



Darfurian refugees in eastern Chad

**16 November** - The United Nations is appealing for international aid to assist some 18,000 Chadian villagers who have returned to their homes in a resource-poor region of the strife-torn African country after fleeing inter-communal violence and a spill-over of the conflict from neighbouring Sudan's Darfur region.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the UN Mission in Chad and the Central African Republic (MINURCAT) have stressed that the lack of natural resources are the principal cause of conflict between the local and foreign populations.

A symbolic reconciliation ceremony was held over the weekend between the communities in the villages of Tiero and Marena in an area from where some 30,000 people fled a worsening security situation in 2007, many into Darfur where the Sudanese Government, its allied militias and rebels have been fighting for more than six years.

Between 2005 and 2006 the villages sheltered several thousand people fleeing the fighting along the Chad-Sudan border, but in 2007 they were themselves victims of attacks that killed several hundred people and displaced thousands more.

UN officials attending the ceremony pledged to support the return home of displaced communities in the region.

## UN forum on women celebrates progress in Asia-Pacific, notes challenges



A health worker examines an infant at a busy clinic in South Asia

**16 November** - Nearly 15 years after the landmark United Nations conference on women, countries in Asia and the Pacific have made tangible progress but obstacles and challenges remain, a meeting convened by the world body's regional arm heard today.

Participants are meeting at the Bangkok headquarters of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) for a three-day review of the follow-up to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, specifically to assess progress in implementing the Beijing Platform for Action – a wide-ranging blueprint for promoting and protecting the rights of women and girls.

“As we rejoice in the Platform's coming of age, the achievements and the progress, we must continue with its implementation and ask for accountability for gender equality and women's empowerment,” said Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of ESCAP. “Women must be legitimate participants in all spheres of public life – as leaders in government, businesses and the broader community.”

While there are signs of progress since the creation of the agenda, including the nearly universal adoption of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), persistent obstacles and challenges remain.

Joanne Sander, Deputy Executive Director of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), said, “Accountability is particularly crucial at this time. Who will answer for the painfully slow progress on reducing maternal mortality when it is entirely preventable? Who will answer for the inadequate progress in increasing women's meaningful political participation in most countries in the region?”

Carolyn Hannan, Director of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, emphasized accountability on the issue of violence against women. She highlighted the importance of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's campaign UNiTE to End Violence against Women, and drew attention to the adoption by the Security Council of two new resolutions on sexual violence in armed conflict.

The opening session of the three-day review meeting drew about 250 delegates, including a number of ministers, and was opened by a trio of ESCAP musicians who performed the song, "Keep on Moving Forward," sung at the Non-governmental Organization (NGO) Forum held at the time of the Beijing Conference in 1995.

The next two days of the meeting will focus on topics such as gender and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the pledges world leaders made to slash a host of social ills, including extreme hunger and poverty, infant and maternal mortality, and lack of access to education and health care – all by 2015, as well as CEDAW and a regional campaign to end violence against women.

## Senior UN peacekeeping official to visit China



Chinese engineers working for UNAMID unloading their equipment kits

**16 November** - The United Nations peacekeeping chief is slated to pay an official visit to China this week to attend a meeting on the Organization's operations tasked with restoring stability and democracy in conflict-ravaged countries.

Under Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Alain Le Roy will be accompanied by the Secretary-General's top military adviser General Obiakor and Assistant-Secretary-General Anthony Banbury.

In addition to participating in the UN peacekeeping symposium in Beijing, Mr. Le Roy plans to meet with members of the Chinese Defense Ministry and Foreign Affairs Ministry to discuss the vast Asian nation's contribution to the world body's peacekeeping efforts.

Meanwhile, Under-Secretary-General for Field Support Susana Malcorra is in Sudan this week to attend the latest round of tripartite talks with the Sudanese Government and the African Union (AU).

Among the issues Ms. Malcorra is expected to discuss is the deployment of troops, personnel and equipment to the joint UN-AU Mission in Darfur (UNAMID).

UNAMID was established by the Security Council in 2007 to protect civilians in Darfur, where an estimated 300,000 people have been killed and another 2.7 million forced from their homes since violence erupted in 2003, pitting rebels against Government forces and their allied Janjaweed militiamen.

## Edging closer to end of mandate, UN-backed court hands over prison to Sierra Leone



Binta Mansaray of the SCSL (right) hands over key to the detention facility to Sierra Leone's Justice Minister Abdul Serry-Kemal

**16 November** - The United Nations-backed tribunal trying the worst acts committed during the decade-long brutal civil war in Sierra Leone today transferred its detention centre to the national prison service.

The handover of the facility, which is slated to house female prisoners, is the latest step in the completion of the mandate of the Freetown-based Special Court for Sierra Leone (SCSL), which delivered its last judgment inside the country in October.

Last month, the eight prisoners convicted and held by the SCSL were transferred to Rwanda to serve their sentences. The remaining trial, involving former Liberian president Charles Taylor, is continuing at The Hague, where it was moved for security reasons.

The Special Court is an independent tribunal established jointly by the Sierra Leonean Government and the UN in 2002. It is mandated to try those who bear the greatest responsibility for atrocities committed in Sierra Leone after 30 November 1996.

## New agreements will deliver funds, expertise to help UN combat hunger



**15 November** - United Nations efforts to strengthen agriculture and enhance food security received a boost today, ahead of a major summit set to begin on Monday, thanks to new initiatives with the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) and a leading Brazilian university.

The \$1 billion agreement signed in Rome by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and IDB will fund agricultural development in 26 least developed countries that are members of both the Bank and FAO.

The agreement aims to help leverage additional resources and bring total investment in the IDB-FAO programme to \$5 billion by 2012.

“This agreement comes at a critical moment, when the international community recognizes it has neglected agriculture for many years,” FAO stated in a news release. “Today, sustained investment in agriculture – especially smallholder agriculture – is acknowledged as the key to food security.”

The agency added that both FAO and IDB share the same vision and strategy, and will continue working together in improving rural infrastructure, promoting local economic development and enhancing food security while strengthening and revitalizing their cooperation.

Meanwhile, scientists from the Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV), one of Brazil's leading academic institutions specialized in food and agriculture, are set to provide their expertise to FAO for its agricultural development programmes in Latin America and Africa under another agreement signed today.

The university will also facilitate access by students from developing countries supported by FAO to its capacity-building and human resources development programmes.

More than 60 heads of State and government are scheduled to meet at the World Summit on Food Security to focus on boosting agricultural production and eradicating hunger, a scourge affecting 1 billion people worldwide.

Ahead of the gathering, the three Rome-based UN agencies dealing with the issue today launched strategy to enhance collaboration between them.

According to a joint statement issued by the FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the decision culminates a two-year effort to advance joint action to help developing nations address food insecurity by investing in agriculture and safety nets, and to address hunger exacerbated by the food and financial crises and climate change.

## UN forum examines how to maximize Internet's potential to help poor countries develop



**16 November** - A United Nations-backed international gathering focusing on how to make the most of the Internet to boost social and economic well-being for the greatest number of people around the world is underway in Egypt.

The fourth Internet Governance Forum (IGF) brings together some 1,500 representatives from government, international organizations, academics, the private sector, civil society and the Internet's technical community to examine development opportunities through the

Internet.

Participants at this year's four-day meeting in the coastal resort city of Sharm el-Sheikh are also slated to discuss the extension of the IGF's initial five-year mandate beyond 2010, as well as the more traditional issues of Internet access, diversity, openness and security.

In his remarks to the Forum's opening on Sunday, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Sha Zukang underscored that African and Arab States lag behind Europe, Asia and the Americas although more people are gaining access to the Internet in developing countries.

Mr. Sha said this year's overarching theme – "Internet Governance: Creating an opportunity for all" – was timely and appropriate, while drawing attention to the "critical decision that we will have to make about the future of the IGF."

He noted that the IGF fully supported efforts critical to the UN agenda, including the promotion of higher standards of living, full employment, and the conditions of economic and social progress and development.

The Secretary-General of the UN International Telecommunication Union (ITU), Hamadoun Touré, stressed that the Forum is key to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a set of international agreed targets to combat poverty, deadly diseases and maternal mortality, as well as achieve universal primary education, gender equality and environmental sustainability by 2015.

## Ban warns of dangers of losing cultural differences as world grows closer



**16 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today cautioned against the erosion of diversity and rise of discrimination as the forces of globalization and technology bring disparate communities across the world closer together, in a message marking the International Day for Tolerance.

In his message for the Day, observed annually on 16 November, Mr. Ban said that Internet chatrooms and social networking sites enable us to connect with more people than we can hope to meet.

"Global branding and the growth of international social and cultural movements expose us on a daily basis to the tastes, opinions and habits of our fellow men and women," said Mr. Ban.

He said that there are more ways than ever to communicate and to benefit from cross-cultural exchanges. "And as we grow closer, there is also a danger that the human propensity to build walls will assert itself, separating people into 'us' and 'them.'"

All too often these divisions lead to the victimization of some of the most vulnerable groups in society, defined along lines of nationality, ethnicity and religion among other markers that single out minorities.

"Tolerance does not mean indifference or a grudging acceptance of others," said Mr. Ban. "It is a way of life based on mutual understanding and respect for others, and on the belief that global diversity is to be embraced, not feared."

On behalf of the "most vulnerable communities, and for all humanity, let us work together to promote tolerance," he urged.

## Ban urges countries to press ahead on political deal at climate summit



**16 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged countries to seize the opportunity presented by next month's climate change conference in Copenhagen to clinch a political agreement that will help chart the way forward on a new legally binding pact to combat global warming.

"Opportunity is knocking. It is up to you to open the door," Mr. Ban told a two-day meeting that began today in the Danish capital, ahead of the UN Climate Change Conference.

The conference, set to begin on 7 December, aims to reach accord on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 pact which has strong, legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions, whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

In a message delivered by Yvo de Boer, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Mr. Ban stated that Copenhagen will mark a milestone in international efforts to build a more sustainable relationship with the planet.

"We must seize this opportunity to create a safer and more prosperous future for all, to reduce the emissions that are causing climate change, and to help the most vulnerable adapt to impacts that are already under way," he said, adding that "the technical details can be resolved at a later stage."

While applauding the progress made in the negotiations to date, the Secretary-General noted that core political issues remain unresolved.

A comprehensive outcome, he pointed out, should ensure enhanced action to help the poorest and most vulnerable to adapt; ambitious emission reduction targets for industrialized countries; nationally appropriate mitigation actions by developing countries with the necessary support; significantly scaled-up financial and technological resources; and an equitable governance structure.

"These are the essential elements of a Copenhagen deal – a deal that can safeguard our common future while ushering in powerful new opportunities today for economic growth, enhanced security, and sustainable, climate-resilient development."

He added that the engagement of world leaders is critical, noting that the support of the ministers gathered in Copenhagen today and tomorrow is vital for ensuring that a global climate change deal stays at the forefront of their agendas.

Last week Mr. Ban strongly encouraged all heads of State and government to accept the invitation issued by Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen to attend the closing days of the 7 to 18 December conference.

"The Secretary-General believes it is essential to maintain political momentum at the highest level and from all sectors of society, and is optimistic that an ambitious, fair and effective climate deal can be reached at Copenhagen," read a statement issued by his spokesperson.

## Ban urges support for developing countries in combating diabetes

**14 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called for greater support to developing countries in preventing diabetes, which kills at least one million people every year, and in increasing access to health care.

In a message marking World Diabetes Day, Mr. Ban noted that the illness can make other diseases worse, and can have a terrible impact on maternal and child health.

“In some countries, the rapidly rising burden of diabetes is a factor in faltering progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” he said, referring to the pledges world leaders made to slash a host of social ills, including extreme hunger and poverty, infant and maternal mortality, and lack of access to education and health care – all by 2015.

At the same time, the Secretary-General noted that Type 2 diabetes is preventable. It is among the so-called “lifestyle diseases” – along with cardio-vascular disease and some cancers – attributable to unhealthy diets, a lack of exercise, tobacco use and the abuse of alcohol play.

“This means that effective strategies and plans of action will not be limited to the health sector alone,” he said. “Rather, they should involve many areas of government and a wide range of actors, including civil society and the private sector.

“Prevention can help reduce poverty, promote economic productivity and keep countries on track in their efforts to achieve the MDGs,” he added.

More than 220 million people worldwide have diabetes, according to the UN World Health Organization (WHO), which adds that a healthy diet, regular physical activity, maintaining a normal body weight and avoiding tobacco use can prevent or delay the onset of the disease.

## New UN scheme aims to feed 172,000 most vulnerable Iraqi schoolchildren



Iraqi children attend school

**16 November** - The United Nations food agency today launched a school feeding programme in Iraq, providing some 172,000 children with a free daily snack to help boost attendance and learning in eight of the country’s poorest districts.

Under the \$1.6 million World Food Programme (WFP) pilot scheme, funded by the Iraqi Government, the primary schoolchildren will each receive an 80-gramme date bar fortified with a range of micronutrients over the next three months.

Next year, WFP is planning to extend the school meals initiative to cover almost 1 million children in the most vulnerable districts in 14 governorates, some of which only have 56 per cent of their children registered in primary school.

“This initiative, which we are taking to support the Ministry of Education, is one of a number of projects WFP is undertaking to assist the most vulnerable people in Iraq,” said WFP Iraq Country Director Edward Kallon.

“This is part of our overall strategy to help the Government provide social safety nets for the poorest members of the population,” added Mr. Kallon.

WFP noted that only 66 per cent of children complete primary school education in Iraq and nine out of ten children under



A young boy gives blood to be tested for diabetes

the age of 15 do not attend school regularly.

In countries where school attendance is low, this type of feeding project managed by WFP over the last 45 years has demonstrated that the promise of at least one nutritious meal each day increases enrolment and promotes regular attendance, the agency said in a news release.

WFP also plans to move production of the date bars from Egypt to Iraq and develop manufacturing capacity through the private sector, in with its strategy of purchasing locally to boost employment, promote local agriculture and stimulate the countries' economy.

## Top UN official lauds new tool to monitor, combat corruption



**16 November** - The head of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has welcomed a new mechanism to monitor and implement a global treaty to fight corruption, the result of week-long negotiations in Doha, Qatar.

“This agreement will not end corruption, but it will enable us to measure and fight it,” UNODC Executive Director Antonio Maria Costa said of the deal reached on Friday.

Under the new mechanism, all States parties to the UN Convention against Corruption – which currently numbers 142 – will be monitored every five years to see how they are living up to their obligations to prevent and criminalize corruption, promote international cooperation, recover stolen assets, and improve technical assistance and information exchange.

“From now on, States will be judged by the actions that they take against corruption, not the promises they make,” said Mr. Costa.

The country reports, based on self-assessments and peer reviews by experts, will, among other things, identify gaps in national anti-corruption laws and practices.

“Since corruption hurts us all, we must all unite to fight it,” said Mr. Costa.

Over 1,000 delegates from 125 countries, ranging from parliamentarians, the media, civil society, the private sector and international organizations, met in Doha to review implementation of the UN anti-corruption treaty, which entered into force in December 2005.

## UN-backed media forum calls for concrete action on murders of journalists

**14 November** - Broadcasters attending the United Nations-backed fourth World Electronic Media Forum (WEMF 4) have called for sustained and concrete global action to address the murder of journalists in peacetime and in war.

“Most journalists are killed not in war zones but in their own countries as they try to shine the light of the truth into the darkest recesses of their societies,” they said in a declaration adopted unanimously at the end of a two-day meeting in Mexico City.



More journalists have been killed in Mexico this year than in any other country in the Western hemisphere, many of them for reporting on drug trafficking and related corruption.

According to the International Press Institute (IPI), seven media professionals have been murdered in Mexico this year, the most recent being a journalist whose body was found earlier this month, as well as a radio presenter killed last month.

The murders were strongly condemned by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), which is tasked with defending press freedom, and which called on the relevant authorities to ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.

The declaration adopted at the Forum put the onus on governments, which it stated “are primarily responsible for the safety of all their citizens, including those in the news media? They have a responsibility to protect those citizens, pursue their killers and ensure freedom of expression.”

During the Forum, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information Kiyoo Akasaka voiced the UN's concern for the safety of journalists worldwide, while stressing the need to ensure freedom of opinion and expression, and the right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.

“Your continued vigilance in this area – and the safeguarding of this human right – is essential to the future and expansion of an information-based society,” he stated.

Like its three predecessors – in Geneva (2003), Tunis (2005) and Kuala Lumpur (2007) – WEMF 4 was organized by the world's eight regional broadcasting unions.

Apart from the safety of media professionals, the meeting also addressed the relation between broadband and broadcasting, electronic journalism and citizen reporters, and the value of archives and the cost of preserving them.