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UN chief congratulates Afghan President on inauguration



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (left)
and Afghan President Hamid Karzai (file)

19 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today reaffirmed the commitment of the United Nations to support Afghanistan's progress towards peace, stability and development, as he congratulated Hamid Karzai on his inauguration as President for a second term.

"He welcomes the commitment of President Karzai to serve all Afghans, to fight corruption and to bring increased good governance, security and services to the country," Mr. Ban's spokesperson said in a statement.

"In pursuance of realizing these goals concretely, the United Nations looks forward to working with President Karzai and his Government, the people of Afghanistan, and Afghanistan's international partners," the statement added.

Mr. Ban sent his best wishes to the President and to the people of Afghanistan at this "critical juncture in their history" and reaffirmed the UN's determination to support the country's peace and development efforts.

Mr. Karzai was re-elected after his opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, withdrew from the presidential run-off that had been planned for 7 November.

On a visit to Afghanistan earlier this month, Mr. Ban urged Mr. Karzai to ensure good governance, "including the

eradication of corruptive practices prevalent in Afghanistan, controlling drug trafficking and forming a unity government with experienced ministers and government officials.”

In addition, he has pledged that last month’s attack on a guest house in the capital, Kabul, which killed five UN staff and injured nine others, will not deter the world body from its mission to help the Afghan people build a better future.

The Secretary-General was represented at today’s inauguration ceremony by his Special Representative and head of the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA), Kai Eide.

UN confident of success at Copenhagen climate summit, with US on board

19 November - With just 17 days left before the United Nations climate change summit in Copenhagen, a top UN official today predicted success for a framework accord including specific reduction targets from the United States, the only hold-out among industrialized nations, with a formal treaty to follow within six months.



“There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever that it [Copenhagen] will yield a success,” the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yvo de Boer, told a news conference in New York, saying President Barack Obama’s presence in the Danish capital “would make a huge difference.”

As the three main points that must come out of Copenhagen, he cited individualized targets “in black and white” by industrialized States to reduce global warming greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, a list of actions by developing nations, and clear short- and long-term financing to support developing countries on both mitigation and adaptation.

At an informal meeting of the General Assembly held today, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, citing various emission and deforestation reduction targets announced recently by Indonesia, Russia, the Republic of Korea, Brazil, Japan and the European Union, also voiced confidence in reaching a deal in Copenhagen that sets the stage for a binding treaty as soon as possible in 2010.

He put short-term financing from richer nations to the developing countries at \$10 billion in fast-track funding annually over the next three years to jump-start low-emission growth, limit deforestation and finance immediate adaptation measures, while medium-term needs are estimated at \$100 billion annually through 2020.

Mr. de Boer told the Assembly that aggregate pledges made so far by industrialized countries for mid-term reductions fell short of the target of 20 to 40 per cent below 1990 levels by 2020, which the scientific community calls necessary to avoid more disastrous change, adding: “Industrialized countries clearly need to raise their level of ambition.”

Also, he said, without resolving the political issues of mitigation and finance, reaching agreement in Copenhagen would be impossible in the battle to curb climate change, with its impact already being felt in droughts, changed rainfall patterns and floods.

General Assembly President Ali Treki told the same meeting that progress at Copenhagen is not optional – “it is imperative to our very survival.”

He later added at a news conference that the world is now conscious of the dangers of climate change for everyone, not just the most vulnerable countries, and that it is in the interest of everyone to “achieve a good result” in Copenhagen.

A numerical mid-term target and a commitment to financial support from the US are essential “and I believe it can be done,” Mr. de Boer added at his news conference.

“I’ve seen some recent reports that say that Copenhagen has failed even before it starts and I must say that those reports are

simply wrong.” He cited new commitments and pledges coming in “almost every day” from both industrialized and developing countries.

The political leadership that so many heads of State and government promised at the September climate summit at UN Headquarters in New York “is alive, it is well and it will lead to success in Copenhagen,” he declared.

“Rich countries must put at least \$10 billion [for developing countries] on the table in Copenhagen to kick-start immediate action, and they must list what each individual country will provide and how funds will be raised to deliver very large, stable and predictable finance into the future without having to constantly renegotiate the commitments every few years.”

The conference also needs to launch immediate action for international cooperation on the pressing needs to preserve and sustain forests, he said, noting: “If the lungs of the world collapse, the rest will die.”

Finally, governments must agree in a tight deadline to finalize it all into a legal treaty, he added, “and that means no delay, no more long drawn-out process. For all this Copenhagen will be the turning point where talking about action stops and taking action begins.” Originally it had been hoped that the treaty could emerge at the conference, set to begin on 7 December.

On financing for developing countries, Copenhagen must provide much more clarity as to who will be contributing what, “because another collective pledge that leaves unclear what individual shares of that pledge are doesn’t really help you very much,” stressed Mr. de Boer.

Asked about the position of the US, which never ratified the 1997 emission reduction treaty known as the Kyoto Protocol, he replied: “I think that President Obama has shown incredible courage and leadership... He wants a strong domestic policy in this area not just because of climate change, but also because of issues of energy security and energy prices... he wants a deal in Copenhagen.”

Mr. Obama was now focusing on health care and climate change will come up early next year, but “having said that, I am confident that the President of the United States can come to Copenhagen with a target and with a financial commitment,” he added.

Welcoming progress, UN official urges more support for Sri Lanka’s displaced



A scene inside the Menik Farm camp, Sri Lanka, on 16 August 2009 following heavy rains

19 November - The top United Nations humanitarian official has welcomed the recent releases of internally displaced persons (IDPs) from camps in northern Sri Lanka, and underscored the need to ensure full freedom of movement for those remaining.

John Holmes noted in particular that the Menik Farm camp contains only half the number of displaced now than it did at the end of May, when the Government declared an end to its military operations against the separatist Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

During a joint press conference with Foreign Minister Rohitha Bogollagama in the capital, Colombo, Mr. Holmes said he hoped to see continued progress in allowing people to leave the camps and restore their lives.

Mr. Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, also noted that the returnees he met during the course of his three-day visit were pleased that they could return home.

At the same time, he added that the returns process could be improved, particularly through better consultation with IDPs and more timely information sharing with humanitarian partners on return plans.

Mr. Holmes reaffirmed the UN’s commitment to working with the Government to improve the returns process, and to

ensure satisfactory conditions in areas of return, especially in the fields of shelter, basic services and livelihoods. Demining and mine-risk education were also important to ensuring the safety of returnees, he added.

“Both UN organizations and NGOs [non-governmental organizations] are ready to continue to help support IDPs in camps and assist returnees with their humanitarian needs, especially in terms of food, shelter, basic services, and livelihoods. The UN is also keen to support longer-term recovery and reconstruction,” Mr. Holmes said.

In addition to visiting the camps and meeting with IDPs and returnees, the UN humanitarian chief also met with Government officials, including President Mahinda Rajapaksa, as well as with members of parliament of the Tamil National Alliance during his mission – his fourth to the country this year.

Despite much progress, more must be done to protect children’s rights – UN

19 November - Despite considerable progress over the past 20 years in improving the lot of the world’s children, including a 28 per cent drop in annual mortality of those under five from 12.5 million to an estimated 8.8 million, their rights are still far from assured, according to a new United Nations report issued today.

“It is unacceptable that children are still dying from preventable causes, like pneumonia, malaria, measles and malnutrition,” UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Ann M. Veneman said in releasing the annual State of the World’s Children report.



A child in Dili, capital of Timor-Leste.

The special edition of UNICEF’s flagship report comes on the eve of the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by the UN General Assembly.

“Many of the world’s children will never see the inside of a school room, and millions lack protection against violence, abuse, exploitation, discrimination and neglect,” she added, stressing the “particularly alarming” problem of violence against children, with between 500 million and 1.5 billion youngsters estimated to suffer such abuse annually.

The Convention “is the most ratified human rights treaty in human history” with 193 States parties, she said, listing the benefits achieved since its inception.

Beyond the mortality reduction, these include access to improved water sources for 1.6 billion people; an increase in primary-school-age children in class to around 84 per cent, with the gender gap narrowing; more care for children in the HIV and AIDS pandemic; steps to protect youngsters from serving as soldiers or trafficked into prostitution or domestic servitude; a rise in age of children getting married; and a gradual fall in the number of girls subjected to genital cutting.

The rights of girls still require special attention, the report stresses. The majority of children not attending primary school are girls, and girls are more likely to suffer sexual violence, be trafficked or forced into child marriage. In many regions they are less likely to receive essential healthcare.

The report includes special expert essays from public and private sector representatives, alongside examples of the child rights situation in a range of countries. The essays offer advice on the role the Convention can have in an increasingly populous, urbanized and environmentally challenged world, over the next 20 years and beyond.

More than 160 events are taking place worldwide commemorating the anniversary. The report launched today is part of UNICEF’s contribution, which includes jointly hosting with civil society and government partners a global commemoration and panel discussion at UN Headquarters in New York tomorrow.

In a foreword to the report, Ms. Veneman called for broad collaboration at international and national levels in implementing the Convention’s principles and the rights contained in it.

“The challenge for the next 20 years is to build on the progress achieved, working together to reach those children who are still being denied their rights to survival, development, protection and participation,” she wrote. “The Convention on the Rights of the Child stands as a universal standard for building a better world – a world in which the best interests of children are a primary concern of all.”

Number of poor in Latin America to rise by 9 million this year, says UN report

19 November - Nine million more people in Latin America will fall into poverty this year due to the global economic crisis, bringing the total number of poor in the region to 189 million, or 34 per cent of the population, according to a United Nations report released today.

The UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), which produced the report, stated that the new estimates depart from the trend towards poverty reduction that was prevalent in the region thanks to greater economic growth, the expansion of social spending and better income distribution.



ECLAC Executive Secretary Alicia Bárcena

“We can’t say that all that was attained between 2002 and 2008 has been lost,” said ECLAC Executive Secretary Alicia Bárcena, as she presented the report, *Social Panorama of Latin America 2009*.

“However, the rise in poverty calls us to action. We need to rethink social protection programmes with a long-term, strategic perspective and measures that make the most of human capital and protect the income of vulnerable families and groups,” she added.

ECLAC recommended, among other things, reforming social protection systems and adopting both urgent short-term measures as well as strategic long-term ones.

“In doing so, governments should avoid fiscal irresponsibility and rigid labour markets, increase taxes progressively, redistribute social spending and extend coverage of social services,” the Commission stated.

The Commission also noted that the projected increase in poverty for 2009 will impede efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the globally agreed targets to slash poverty, hunger and a host of other social ills, all by 2015.

At the same time, the impact of the current crisis on poverty in the region is not expected to be as great as with previous crises, such as the Asian financial crisis in the late 1990s, it pointed out.

Ban to focus on climate change during Trinidad and Tobago visit



Trinidad and Tobago's capital Port of Spain

19 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is hoping to boost momentum for December’s climate change conference in Copenhagen when he meets with political leaders at the biennial Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago next Friday, his spokesperson said today.

“The Secretary-General expects to focus the attention of these leaders on key issues that require their engagement in the climate change negotiations, in particular, concerning mitigation and finance,” Michele Montas told reporters.

She added that the Commonwealth Meeting is a crucial gathering of leaders in the run-up to the conference set to begin on 7 December in the Danish capital, where countries will aim to reach accord on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, the 1997 pact which has strong, legally binding targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and whose first commitment period ends in 2012.

“The Secretary-General hopes to boost momentum for an ambitious outcome in Copenhagen that will advance international action on climate change,” Ms. Montas stated.

In addition to participating in special sessions on climate change, Mr. Ban will also hold bilateral meetings with heads of State and government on issues of mutual interest during his two-day visit.

Cambodian troops arrive to bolster UN force in Chad, Central African Republic

19 November - The United Nations mission set up to protect civilians and facilitate humanitarian aid in Chad and Central African Republic (CAR) received a boost this week with the arrival of troops from Cambodia.

The 42 Cambodian soldiers will be assisting in the movement of UN personnel and logistic assets in eastern Chad, where humanitarian agencies are providing aid to some 250,000 refugees from neighbouring Sudan’s strife-torn Darfur region, as well as 160,000 displaced Chadians.

Northern CAR has also been affected by a spill-over from Darfur as well as by displacement from other armed groups.

In 2007, the Security Council established the mission, known as MINURCAT, which currently stands at only 53 per cent of its authorized strength, or 2,750 troops, due to difficulties faced by some contributing countries in acquiring and transporting equipment.

Last month Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations Edmund Mulet told the Council that the UN is doing everything possible to expedite the deployment of all pledged contingents.

Ban urges lawmakers to work with UN to pull developing countries out of recession

19 November - National parliaments are key allies of the United Nations in its efforts to haul the world’s most vulnerable people out of the global economic crisis, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today told an international gathering of lawmakers in New York.

“The global recession cannot be an excuse to abandon pledges,” Mr. Ban said at the annual parliamentary hearing at UN Headquarters, an event jointly organized by the world body and the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

“On the contrary, there is an urgent need to increase the volume, quality and reliability of aid flows,” he said, stressing that this is “central to a coordinated global recovery plan.”

This year’s hearing is slated to focus on highlighting effective responses to the global economic crisis, which Mr. Ban said strikes the poorest the hardest. “They are among those who are most affected yet least responsible.”

He told participants that as lawmakers they “take the work that is done in these halls and help make it real on the ground. You translate international standards and agreements into domestic legislation and regulations.”

In his address to the forum, Mr. Ban outlined the UN system’s broad and coordinated response to the crisis, bringing together funding and initiatives on the ground to meet the needs of each developing country.

He said that his call earlier in the year for a global stimulus – a \$1 trillion effort backed by the Group of 20 industrialized nations (G-20) to advance the interests of all nations – was only a beginning.



MINURCAT peacekeeper with Sudanese children from the Oure Cassoni refugee camp in Bahaï, Eastern Chad



Secretary-General addresses 2009 parliamentary hearing

Promoting recovery through “green” growth is another critical plank to leveraging recovery efforts, said Mr. Ban, noting that the UN climate change conference in Copenhagen is just days away.

“Copenhagen can be a catalyst for powering green growth,” he said. “We know that investing in green sectors improves chances for recovery and sustainable growth while preserving the environment. Let us continue to work together to invest in green.”

The Secretary-General also spotlighted the long-term efforts of the UN High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis to slash the number of hungry people around the world; the UN Trade Initiative’s work to counter protectionism and promote transparency in trade finance markets; and the Global Jobs Pact’s initiatives focusing attention of decision-makers on employment and decent work as the foundation for long-term recovery.

In addition, “inclusive growth requires inclusive institutions,” he said, referring to the Bretton Woods institutions, established towards the end of the Second World War.

“The global frameworks and bodies created generations ago must be made more accountable, more representative and more effective. We must work to expand the voice and participation of developing countries – in decision-making in general.”

Aid agencies assisting hundreds of thousands of displaced Pakistanis – UN



Displaced people have begun to move further away from the conflict zone in South Waziristan

19 November - United Nations agencies and their humanitarian partners are assisting hundreds of thousands of civilians uprooted by the latest military operations in Pakistan which intensified nearly three weeks ago.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 400,000 people have fled the clashes between Government forces and militants in South Waziristan to seek safety in two neighbouring districts.

Of the total registered, approximately 300,000 people have fled the area since mid-October, and most of these are poor people who desperately need humanitarian assistance.

Despite the insecurity, OCHA said humanitarian actors on the ground are working to provide the internally displaced persons (IDPs) with assistance.

Since early November, a partner agency of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has distributed around 9,000 tents in the district of Dera Ismail Khan, most of which have been set up in the gardens of host families, to relieve the burden on the hosts.

In addition, UN agencies and their partners have helped to register IDPs and provide monthly food rations, hygiene kits and household items, as well as provide vaccinations for children and improve community water supplies.

The UN has repeatedly called on all parties to the conflict to ensure the safety of unarmed civilians, especially women and children, as well as safe passage for those escaping the violence.

UN blue helmets help passengers in DR Congo when plane overshoots runway



MONUC peacekeepers provide critical support at scene of Goma air crash

19 November - United Nations peacekeepers helped passengers and provided emergency medical treatment today after an airliner with 117 passengers on board over-ran the airstrip in Goma in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The airliner from the Congolese Compagnie Africaine d'Aviation (CAA) was on a flight from Kinshasa, the capital, when its brakes failed to hold on a rain-slicked runway and it overshoot the tarmac, coming to rest on a large pile of lava rock.

About 20 passengers were transferred to hospital facilities of the UN mission in DRC (MONUC) in Goma and treated for minor injuries and shock, while a MONUC fire truck doused the plane's smoking engines.

UN peacekeepers were quickly on the scene to help passengers leave the aircraft through exit slide doors and to control a gathering crowd, MONUC reported.

The mission's headquarters are near the airport, and it has been aiding a German-funded project to clear lava rock that reduced the length of the runway when the Mt. Nyiragongo volcano erupted in 2002, spewing lava over the a third of the tarmac and much of the town of Goma. Hundreds of local workers and UN earthmoving equipment have been employed in clearing the rock from the airstrip since April of this year.

The airport serves as a supply hub for peacekeepers, humanitarian relief teams and deliveries in eastern Congo, which has been ravaged by fighting between Government troops and various rebel forces, as well as for regular domestic passenger flights.

Lebanon: UN force commander confers with prime minister on security in south

19 November - The military chief of United Nations peacekeepers in Lebanon today met separately with Prime Minister Saad Hariri and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to discuss the security situation in the south of the country.

UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) Commander Major General Claudio Graziano said afterward he told Mr. Hariri of the mission's readiness to continue to work with the Lebanese Army and the Government on common objectives towards implementing the Security Council resolution adopted in 2006 on the cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah militants.



UNIFIL headquarters in Naqoura (file photo)

Resolution 1701 expanded UNIFIL, which currently has nearly 13,000 military personnel in south Lebanon, and called for an end to hostilities, respect for the so-called Blue Line separating the Israeli and Lebanese sides, the disarming militias and an end to arms smuggling.

Hizbollah has not disarmed, and earlier this month Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams said sporadic rocket launches into Israel, almost daily Israeli flights over Lebanon, the active maintenance of an arms depot by Hizbollah and the apparently Israeli surveillance equipment left on Lebanese territory raised the spectre of a potential escalation.

Leaders of Rwandan rebel militia arrested for atrocities committed in DR Congo – UN



Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda (FDLR) in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) [File Photo]

19 November - The top United Nations envoy to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) today welcomed the arrest of two leaders of a rebel Rwandan militia on suspicion of carrying out crimes against humanity and war crimes in the eastern region of the DRC.

The two men, Ignace Murwanashyaka and Straton Musoni, who are thought to be high-ranking members of the ethnic Hutu rebel Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR), were taken into custody by German authorities on Tuesday.

“This is an important development, which we believe will help the people in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the region move to a more peaceful future,” said the Secretary-General’s Special Representative Alan Doss.

“I would urge other nations where FDLR leaders are sheltering, to follow Germany's example,” added Mr. Doss, who also heads the UN peacekeeping mission in the DRC, known as MONUC.

The nearly 19,000 strong MONUC force, set up in 2000 to help restore peace after years of multiple civil wars, has been supporting the DRC national army in its efforts to flush out the FDLR rebels who have been operating in the east of the country since the end of 1994 genocide in neighbouring Rwanda.

The arrests are in line with Security Council resolutions calling for UN Member States to take action against leaders who are known to be supporting FDLR commanders in eastern DRC, where an estimated 1.7 million remain homeless due to violence in North and South Kivu with over 400,000 of them fleeing their homes since January.

Spain doubles aid for UN food operation in Horn of Africa



Millions of people are being pushed closer to destitution by factors beyond their control in the Horn of Africa

19 November - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) received a boost today for its emergency relief efforts feeding millions of hungry people in the Horn of Africa, with the announcement of a \$112 million donation from Spain.

“This extraordinary contribution brings hope and help to the 20 million most vulnerable people that we are committed to assisting in the Horn of Africa,” said WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran.

WFP has scaled up aid efforts to people living in Kenya, Ethiopia and Somalia who have been struck hard by prolonged drought, recurring conflict, stubborn high food prices and the global financial crisis.

In September the agency launched an emergency appeal for almost \$1 billion over the next six months, to provide millions of people throughout the region with food assistance.

“Spain has been a model partner for WFP in spearheading both the response to high food prices and now, in taking the lead on our critical appeal for the Horn of Africa,” said Ms. Sheeran.

Having already contributed over \$107 million to WFP this year, the latest donation from the Spanish Government practically doubles its contribution and puts it on the agency’s list of top 10 donor nations.

UN and Iraq agree on plan to boost governance, socio-economic development

19 November - The United Nations and Iraq have agreed on the basics of a new development partnership to strengthen Iraqi governance, social services and economic growth over the next five years.

More than 120 participants, including from the Government, parliamentarians, civil society organizations, academia, international donors and UN agencies, took part in the discussions on the action plan for Iraq's first UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) for the period 2011 to 2014.



“The UNDAF is the UN’s most comprehensive tool to help countries meet their international development commitments – primarily the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),” said Christine McNab, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Iraq, referring to the globally agreed targets to slash extreme hunger and poverty, infant and maternal mortality, and lack of access to education and health care – all by 2015.

“This first ever UNDAF for Iraq represents our commitment to improve life for millions of Iraqis, by uniting the UN system in support of Iraq’s own priorities for reform, modernization and socio-economic revival,” she added.

The UNDAF discussions focused on Iraq’s development priorities in the aftermath of three decades of conflict, and outlined major areas of UN support in areas such as peace consolidation and human rights, good governance, economic growth, women and children’s rights and environmental protection.

These issues were selected to support Iraq’s five-year National Development Plan, which foresees over \$200 billion in investment in services, economic stimulus and environmental protection from 2010 to 2014.

The completed UNDAF will be co-signed by the UN and the Iraqi Government in 2010.

Prisoner access to sanitation a human right, say UN experts on World Toilet Day



People living in the streets without access to adequate sanitation

19 November - The United Nations today marked World Toilet Day, stressing access to proper sanitation as a human right due to all, with a particular focus on “forgotten” prisoners and detainees in state institutions.

“With 2.5 billion people worldwide without access to proper sanitation, which leads to 1.8 million deaths a year, access to sanitation itself is clearly a human rights issue,” three UN human rights experts – on water and sanitation, health, and torture – said in a joint statement.

“States must ensure that everyone, including people in detention, have access to safe sanitation. Without it, detention conditions are inhumane, and contrary to the basic human dignity which underpins all human rights,” they added.

The Special Rapporteur on torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment, Manfred Nowak, noted that in too many places detainees in prisons, migrant detention centers, juvenile institutions, psychiatric hospitals and other State-run institutions, are forgotten. “The conditions of detention in these places are frequently dismal, including a complete lack of access to sanitation,” he said.

Independent Expert on human rights related to safe drinking water and sanitation Catarina de Albuquerque called access to

sanitation fundamental for a life in dignity to which all people are entitled. “The State has a particular obligation to ensure fulfillment of this right for all those held in detention, whether legitimate or not. Even those convicted of heinous crimes must enjoy such basic rights,” she said.

Anand Grover, the Special Rapporteur on the right to the highest attainable standard of health, stressed that unsanitary conditions, especially human contact with fecal matter, directly cause many diseases rife in places of detention. “This denial of the right to health is as unacceptable as other forms of cruel and inhuman treatment,” he said.

Mr. Nowak noted that in his country visits he has found that detainees are forced to defecate into plastic bags due to lack of functioning toilets or latrines. In other cases, prisoners use buckets, which they must ‘slop out’ themselves every morning, with no opportunity to protect hygiene and cleanliness.

“In situations of overcrowding, which is all too often the case, people must defecate in front of other prisoners,” he said. “It is impossible for detainees to maintain their dignity in such demeaning circumstances.”

Although people think detainees are either criminals or political prisoners, most are ordinary people from the poorest, most disadvantaged sectors of society, including children deprived of a family environment, persons with disabilities, drug users, foreigners and members of ethnic and religious minorities or indigenous communities, the experts stressed.

“International human rights law demands that all persons deprived of their liberty be treated with humanity and with respect for the inherent dignity of the human person,” they said, noting that “sanitation itself is increasingly recognized as a human right, which should be enjoyed without discrimination, in all settings, including detention.”