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## Ban launches new Network of Men Leaders to combat violence against women



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launches a Network of Men Leaders

**24 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today marked the 10th anniversary of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women by launching a Network of Men Leaders, a major new initiative bringing together current and former politicians, activists, religious and community figures to combat the global pandemic.

"These men will add their voices to the growing global chorus for action," he said, noting that 70 per cent of women experience in their lifetime some form of physical or sexual violence from men, the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.

"As I launch this Network, I call on men and boys everywhere to join us. Break the silence. When you witness violence against women and girls, do not sit back. Act. Advocate. Unite to change the practices and attitudes that incite, perpetrate and condone this violence. Violence against women and girls will not be eradicated until all of us – men and boys – refuse to tolerate it."

Each member of the Network, part of the "UNiTE to End Violence against Women" campaign that Mr. Ban launched last year, will work to support the longstanding efforts of women and civil society organizations worldwide to end violence, undertaking actions from raising public awareness to advocating for adequate laws.

"We must demand accountability for the violations, and take concrete steps to end impunity," Mr. Ban said in a separate message marking the Day. "We must listen to and support the survivors."

He cited positive actions that men are already taking, such as judges whose decisions have paved the way for fighting abuse in the workplace, networks of men who counsel male perpetrators of violence, and national leaders who have publicly committed to leading the movement of men to break the silence.

He announced new grants for projects on the ground to be awarded this year by the UN Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women, managed by the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), amounting to \$10.5 million for 13 initiatives in 18 countries and territories.

Resources for the Fund, which gives grants to support innovative regional, local and national initiatives, fall drastically short for meeting a vast demand, with grant requests totalling \$857 million received just for 2009. To address this gap, the target of raising an annual \$100 million for the Fund by 2015 has been set by the Secretary-General as an objective of his UNiTE campaign.

By 2015, the UNiTE campaign aims to achieve the following five goals worldwide: adopt and enforce national laws to address and punish all forms of violence against women and girls; adopt and implement multi-sectoral national action plans; strengthen data collection on the prevalence of violence against women and girls; increase public awareness and social mobilization; and address sexual violence in conflict.

Members of the new Network include: Juan Carlos Areán, Programme Director of the Family Violence Prevention Fund; Gary Barker, International Centre for Research on Women; Ted Bunch, Co-founder of the National Association of Men and Women Committed to Ending Violence against Women; Brazilian novelist and UN Messenger of Peace Paulo Coelho; and Italian Foreign Minister Franco Fattini.

Others are: former Colombian President and Secretary General of the Organization of American States Cesar Gaviria Trujillo; former Chilean president Ricardo Lagos; Andrew Levack, Co-chair of MenEngageAlliance; Todd Minerson, Executive Director of the White Ribbon Campaign; Emmanuel Ochora of Gulu Youth for Action in Uganda; Dean Peacock, founder of Building Partnerships to End Men's Violence; Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero; Norwegian Justice and Police Minister Knut Storberget; and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu of South Africa.

“My commitment to this issue stems not just from my position as UN Secretary-General, but also as a son, husband, father and grandfather,” Mr. Ban later told a news conference. “Men have a crucial role to play in ending such violence – as fathers, friends, decision makers, and community and opinion leaders.”

## Secretary-General deplores ‘brutal’ political violence in the Philippines

**24 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today deplored the recent violence in the southern Philippines, in which more than 40 civilians have been killed in the context of a local election campaign, and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has reportedly declared a state of emergency in Maguindanao province, among other areas, following Monday's killings which have been described as the worst election-related violence in the nation's history.



President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo

Mr. Ban condemned “this heinous crime,” in a statement issued by his spokesperson.

“The Secretary-General extends heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and hopes that no effort will be spared to bring justice and to hold the perpetrators accountable,” the statement added.

## Israeli-Palestinian peace moves at 'deep and worrying impasse,' UN official warns



Israeli settlement near Jerusalem

**24 November** - With no Israeli-Palestinian negotiations underway, no agreed terms of reference for such talks, and Israel's refusal to freeze settlements posing a key challenge, a senior United Nations official today called for "immediate actions on the ground" to prevent Middle East peace efforts from unravelling.

"It is vital at this juncture that the international community takes a clear and united position," Assistant Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios told the Security Council in its monthly briefing on the crisis, warning that political efforts for a negotiated two-State solution have reached "a deep and worrying impasse," even as security and economic efforts have continued on the ground.

He called Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's stated withdrawal from forthcoming elections "a worrying assessment, from a leader unquestionably devoted to peace, that the political process lacks sufficient content and credibility at this time.

"This is a loud and clear wake-up call. If we cannot move decisively forward to a final status agreement, we risk sliding backwards, with both the Palestinian Authority and the two-State solution itself imperilled," he said.

Citing the obstacles over the past month, Mr. Menkerios cited Israel's proposal to restrain rather than freeze settlement activity, noting that this does not conform to the requirements of the Roadmap peace plan sponsored by the UN, European Union, Russia and United States, which seeks a two-State solution with both Israel and Palestine living side by side within secure and recognized borders.

Moreover, such restraint would reportedly not apply at all in occupied East Jerusalem, where Israel approved 900 more housing units to significantly expand Gilo settlement on the southern outskirts while demolishing 17 Palestinian houses, displacing 99 Palestinians, more than half of them children.

On inter-Palestinian politics, Mr. Menkerios noted the refusal of Hamas, which seized control of Gaza two years ago, to allow elections to be held there and its threats against anyone planning to be involved in their preparation after Mr. Abbas called for Presidential and legislative polls in January, calling the postponement this entailed "deeply regrettable."

But, he added, the political uncertainty has not interrupted continued efforts by Mr. Abbas's Palestinian Authority to meet Roadmap commitments, pursue economic and security cooperation, and build institutions for statehood.

"We continue to urge the Palestinian Authority to maintain its efforts in improving law and order, fighting extremism and ending incitement," he said, citing the dismantling of two unexploded devices near Jenin and the handing over of 20 pipe bombs confiscated in Nablus to Israeli forces.

On incidents involving Palestinians, Israeli security forces and settlers across the West Bank, he noted 45 recorded instances of settler attacks on Palestinians and olive trees, leading to 24 Palestinian injuries, and 26 incidents involving Palestinian violence towards settlers in which seven settlers were injured.

During the past month, 73 Palestinians were injured and over 300 arrested during Israeli raids in the West Bank, representing an increase from the previous reporting period.

Turning to Gaza, Mr. Menkerios noted that Israeli blockade continued 10 months after the end of its winter offensive against Hamas, with mostly only food and hygiene products allowed in and no exports allowed out, while the UN has yet to receive a satisfactory response from Israel to a six-month old proposal to complete \$77 million of stalled housing, school and health projects.

“The UN has left no stone unturned in seeking approval of this package in extensive consultations with the Israeli authorities, and is confident of its capacity to ensure the integrity of programming,” he said. “It is completely unacceptable that no meaningful progress has been made in kick-starting UN civilian construction activities essential for the well-being and recovery of a war- and blockade-affected population, half of whom are children.”

At the same time, according to Israeli officials, arms continued to be smuggled into Gaza and rockets with increased capability have been test-fired, including some with a 60-kilometre range, capable of reaching Tel Aviv, he added. Hamas also closed down the International Federation of Journalists and public assembly remains severely restricted in Gaza.

## Côte d’Ivoire: Ban calls for speedy new date for yet-again-delayed elections

**24 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on all parties in Côte d’Ivoire to fix a new date as soon as possible for their much-delayed elections, now postponed yet again from their latest deadline of this month.

Welcoming yesterday’s publication of the provisional voter list in the West African country, split by civil war in 2002 into a Government-ruled south and a rebel-controlled north, he assured all parties that the UN would continue to provide the necessary financial, technical and logistical aid to help them organize and conduct open, free, fair and transparent elections.



Provisional voters list for the election in Côte d’Ivoire

The elections, originally scheduled for as far back as 2005, were planned for 29 November after repeated postponements.

“The Secretary-General believes that with this important development [the provisional list], the Ivorian parties and institutions have made significant progress towards the establishment of a consensual and transparent voters list,” a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson said.

“The Secretary-General now encourages all the Ivorian parties to build further on this critical milestone in order to prepare the final voters list and move forward in determining a new election date as soon as possible.”

A UN peacekeeping mission, known as UNOCI, has been stationed in Côte d’Ivoire since 2004 to help ensure a ceasefire and pave the way for permanent peace and democratic elections. Reauthorized repeatedly since then, most recently until 31 January 2010, it currently comprises nearly 8,400 uniformed personnel, as well as 407 international civilian staff.

## UN reports promising trend in HIV infection rates, record numbers living with virus



Support group for people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa

**24 November** - The trend in new HIV infections around the world has slowed markedly over the past eight years, according to a United Nations report released today, which also notes that more people than ever before are living with the virus.

The 2009 AIDS Epidemic Update reported that new HIV infections have been slashed by 17 per cent globally and that some 33.4 million people are now living with HIV, while AIDS-related deaths have dropped by 10 per cent in the last five years.

The report, by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the World Health Organization (WHO), largely attributes the decline in infections and decrease in deaths to a rise in the number of people benefiting from HIV prevention programmes and those receiving antiretroviral treatments.

“The good news is that we have evidence that the declines we are seeing are due, at least in part, to HIV prevention,” said UNAIDS Executive Director Michel Sidibé.

“If we do a better job of getting resources and programmes to where they will make most impact, quicker progress can be made and more lives saved,” added Mr. Sidibé.

The UNAIDS and WHO report estimated that some 2.9 million lives have been saved since 1996 due to the availability of effective treatments and a boost in funding.

“International and national investment in HIV treatment scale-up has yielded concrete and measurable results,” said WHO Director-General Margaret Chan.

The report noted that in Botswana, where treatment coverage is 80 per cent, AIDS-related deaths have fallen by over 50 per cent over the past five years and the number of children newly orphaned is also coming down as parents are living longer.

“We cannot let this momentum wane,” said Dr. Chan. “Now is the time to redouble our efforts, and save many more lives.”

The joint report also said that allowing access to antiretroviral therapy for HIV-positive mothers has prevented around 200,000 new infections among children since 2001.

Another of the report’s findings pointed to the positive impact of integrating prevention and treatment programmes with other health and social welfare services.

“AIDS isolation must end,” said Mr. Sidibé. “Half of all maternal deaths in Botswana and South Africa are due to HIV. This tells us that we must work for a unified health approach bringing maternal and child health and HIV programmes as well as tuberculosis programmes together to work to achieve their common goal.”

The report also warns that prevention programmes must keep pace with changes in the epidemic. For example, it said that programmes should take into account shifts in the spread of the disease in parts of Asia where the epidemic – once characterized by transmission through sex work and injecting drug use – is now increasingly affecting heterosexual couples.

## School meals key to feeding and educating most vulnerable children – UN report

**24 November** - The introduction of free meal programmes not only ensures children are fed, but are crucial to keeping the poorest and most vulnerable in school while providing a boost to learning and health, according to a United Nations report released today.

The new report from the World Bank and the World Food Programme (WFP) noted that although most countries offer meals to their students, poor nations face a double obstacle of expanding under-funded feeding programmes while battling the worst effects of the financial, food, and fuel crises, with little support from the international aid community.



A beneficiary of WFP's school meals programme in Bolivia

“In the face of global crises, we must now focus on how school feeding programmes can be designed and implemented in a cost-effective and sustainable way to benefit and protect those most in need of help today and in the future,” said World Bank President Robert B. Zoellick in a foreword to the Rethinking School Feeding: Social Safety Nets, Child Development, and the Education Sector report.

The report noted that school meal programmes are most effective when twinned with other measures such as de-worming and provision of micronutrient-fortified snacks and biscuits, or vitamin supplements.

In many countries, such programmes – along with abolition of school fees – are key incentives for children to attend school, especially girls and the poorest. A recent study of WFP data from 32 countries in sub-Saharan Africa showed that girls’ enrolments went up by 28 per cent, twice the rate in schools not receiving assistance.

In addition, combining on-site school meals and take-home rations for a student’s family prompted girls’ enrolment in the

highest grade of primary school to surge by 46 per cent, twice the yearly rate for girls in schools offering only on-site meals.

The study also found that older girls are less likely to drop out, and that girls in general are more likely to stay in class throughout primary school when they bring food home to their families on top of their school meals.

“At this critical hour of rising need, nations must stand together to help those who most risk tipping into crisis,” said WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran in her forward to today’s report.

“Nations such as Brazil and China have demonstrated that social safety net programmes like school meals help protect nutritionally vulnerable children and ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable do not plunge into destitution,” said Ms. Sheeran.

“In partnership with the World Bank, WFP is working with nations to create the next generation of school meal programmes that are sustainable and effective – drawing, where possible, from the produce of local farmers,” she added.

## Cypriot leaders focus on immigration and citizenship in UN-backed talks



Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias (right) and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat

**24 November** - The Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders met today to continue discussions on immigration, citizenship and asylum as part of the ongoing United Nations-backed, power-sharing negotiations.

Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat held “very fruitful discussions,” the Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Cyprus, Tayé-Brook Zerihoun, told reporters at the UN-protected area in Nicosia after the meeting.

The leaders are slated to meet again next Tuesday to take up scheduling matters, and again on Thursday. Their representatives have tentatively agreed to convene next Wednesday and Friday to discuss the economy and property issues, Mr. Zerihoun added.

In September 2008, Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat began these talks aimed at achieving “a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality as defined by relevant Security Council resolutions” for the Mediterranean Island.

That partnership would comprise a Federal Government with a single international personality, along with a Turkish Cypriot Constituent State and a Greek Cypriot Constituent State, which would be of equal status.

## UN official kicks off Asia-Pacific forum on impact of global economic meltdown

**24 November** - A shift in economic direction towards greater domestic spending and social protection in the Asia-Pacific could help the region better absorb the impact of future financial crises, a senior United Nations official told a meeting of country representatives in Bangkok today.

The latest crisis offered the region an opportunity to redress the balance of its economic activity in favour of domestic and regional consumption, as well as establish social protection systems for the most vulnerable, said the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), Noeleen Heyzer.



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer

“People without social protection hold on to their savings and are unlikely to spend,” she told ESCAP’s Committee on Macroeconomic Policy, Poverty Reduction and Inclusive Development.

“Providing minimum wage and unemployment insurance will buffer people from financial uncertainties and help drive

economic recovery,” she added.

The three-day meeting, hosted by ESCAP, aims to take an in-depth look at the financial and economic crisis, focusing on recovery patterns, policy responses and improving regional financial and economic cooperation.

## Yemen: head of UN agency voices concern at lack of access to conflict displaced

**24 November** - The Executive Director of the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today highlighted her continued concern about safe humanitarian access to civilians displaced by fighting in northern Yemen.

“We are still worried about the situation in Sa’ada town, which has been virtually cut off from the rest of the world for more than three months now, and we are calling for localized humanitarian ceasefires and humanitarian corridors to allow for safe and uninterrupted access to families who remain trapped by the conflicts so that further displacement and suffering can be avoided,” Josette Sheeran said in a statement.



Thousands of people in Sa'ada, Yemen, are in need of humanitarian aid

WFP spokesperson Emilia Casella told reporters in Geneva that as of yesterday, the agency and its partners have managed to get food assistance to 118,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs).

An estimated 175,000 people have been affected by the conflict in Yemen since 2004, including those displaced by the latest surge in fighting between Government forces and Al Houthi rebels that began in August.

WFP has also been able to open a corridor through Saudi Arabia, and so far one convoy had reached 10,000 people in that area and another convoy had just crossed over the border yesterday with food for 15,000 people.

Ms. Casella added that WFP is planning a blanket supplementary feeding programme for children under five beginning in December for about 30,000 children in the internally displaced population. These children had already been receiving high energy biscuits along with their regular rations.

Plans were underway to broaden that out to the entire vulnerable population of under-five children in Yemen, upwards of 900,000 children in the coming year, she said.

## UN peacekeepers' hospital brings treatment to hundreds of local Congolese



Civilian eye specialist, Dr. Kabuyaya (left) and Lt Col K Shyamsundar, CI Spl (Ophthalmology), examine a child at the Himbi Primary School in Goma

**24 November** - A hospital set up in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) to care for United Nations peacekeepers is also bringing hope to hundreds of local people who might otherwise lack necessary treatment for their illnesses and injuries as well as screening that can ward off preventable sickness.

“Our specialists are capable of carrying out life- and limb-saving surgeries,” says Lieutenant- Colonel D. Bhattacharya, Commanding Officer of the UN mission’s Indian hospital in Goma, capital of strife-torn North Kivu province. “They are also helping local medical professionals by transferring skills and by offering professional advice to the local populace.”

On any given day, hospital staff handle civilian cases ranging from malaria to gunshot wounds. Late last week, doctors treated airline passengers for severe stress and minor injuries after their Congolese plane over-shot the runway at Goma International Airport and crashed into a mound of lava rock.

“The hospital with its specialist medical equipment and professional acumen treated 19 injured passengers,” said Brigadier

General Ajae Kumar Sharma, Commander of the North Kivu Brigade of the UN mission, known as MONUC. "Most of the patients had severe stress reaction for which counselling and medication were provided."

The hospital, operational since March, has a staff of 90, covering general medical care and surgery, anaesthesiology, pathology, gynaecology, radiology, psychiatry, dermatology, ophthalmology and dentistry.

So far this year, some 950 local civilians have been successfully treated for common complaints including hypertension, diabetes, malaria, infectious and diarrhoeal disorders, and a range of skin diseases. Civilians have also been treated for fractures, appendicitis, wounds and lacerations and have received plastic and reconstructive surgery.

The hospital laboratory handles biopsies and other testing that is unavailable elsewhere in eastern DRC and is critical to the overall state of health and hygiene in the surrounding community.

About 400 primary school children have been screened this year for eye problems that could lead to blindness if left untreated. Among the most common eye ailments are allergic conjunctivitis, refractive errors, cataracts and glaucoma. Congenital cataracts in infants and children as well as glaucoma patients have been treated and MONUC plans to improve infrastructure at a local eye hospital by procuring specialized equipment for it.

The hospital also has plans to run a regional dental camp for civilians.

Lt-Col. Bhattacharya is a psychiatrist and conducts regular stress management courses for MONUC military contingents in North and South Kivu.

## Ban voices concern as tensions grow between Western Sahara parties



Born and raised in remote desert refugee camps in Algeria, these Sahrawi children know little about the outside world

**24 November** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is concerned by the growing tension between the parties to the Western Sahara negotiations, which have increased following the recent detention of several groups of Saharawi activists.

"The Secretary-General has urged both parties to continue to cooperate with his Personal Envoy, Mr. Christopher Ross, in seeking to schedule another set of talks and to work together to achieve progress toward a mutually agreed political solution," UN spokesperson Michele Montas told reporters in New York.

Mr. Ross has been leading talks between Morocco and the Frente Polisario to resolve the dispute, which began when fighting broke out between them after Spain's colonial administration of Western Sahara ended in 1976.

The UN Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, known as MINURSO, is tasked with monitoring the ceasefire reached in September 1991 and organizing a referendum on self-determination in the territory.

Morocco has presented a plan for autonomy, while the Frente Polisario's position is that the territory's final status should be decided in a referendum on self-determination that includes independence as an option.

The most recent talks, held in Austria in August, concluded with a commitment from both parties to continue negotiations as soon as possible.

## As temperatures drop, UN distributes winter aid to displaced Pakistanis



A young boy carries blankets for his family at Jalozai camp on the first day of distribution.

**24 November** - The United Nations refugee agency has begun distributing additional relief supplies to civilians displaced by the ongoing military operations in north-west Pakistan to help them cope as temperatures begin to drop in the region.

The first phase of the winterization drive carried out by the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) started on Monday in Jalozai camp, near Peshawar in the North West Frontier Province (NWFP).

Some 85,000 people, or 13,600 families, are expected to benefit from the additional aid, which will continue to be distributed in eight camps until 28 November.

More than 82,000 blankets, 37,000 plastic sheets and some 55,000 sleeping mats will be distributed this week in several camps including in Jalozai, Jalala, Benazir complex, Wali Kandow, and Palosa in NWFP.

According to UNHCR, there are currently more than 100,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) residing in 10 camps in NWFP, with more than 80,000 living in the largest camp, Jalozai.

The agency said that up to 900,000 people from the northern areas of the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) and NWFP could still be displaced and staying with host communities, according to overall relief distribution figures.

“Movement back and forth between displacement and return areas has made it difficult to have more precise estimate on the remaining IDPs,” UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic told reporters in Geneva.

UNHCR and its partners are carrying out a re-screening process at seven humanitarian hubs in five districts of NWFP to better understand the scope and needs of the remaining displaced population, he added.

In addition to the aid that is being distributed to those in the camps, UNHCR is continuing to distribute tents to people who fled the fighting and are staying in Dera Ismail Khan and Tank districts with host families.

More than 14,000 family tents, as well as sleeping mats, blankets, jerry cans and kitchen sets, have been given out so far.