



In the headlines:

- Ban says Obama's presence adds momentum to Copenhagen climate summit
- UN officials urge intensified efforts to eliminate violence against women
- Despite progress, challenges remain on child soldiers in Sudan, UN official reports
- Madagascar: UN appeals for \$6 million to stockpile supplies as cyclones loom
- UN boosts food aid to thousands uprooted by tribal violence in DR Congo
- Darfur: over 300 former combatants discharged through UN-backed programme
- Conditions still critical for typhoon victims in Philippines, says UN
- UN agency approves groundbreaking treaty to wipe out illegal fishing
- UN peacekeepers introduce local Congolese to the cow-drawn plough
- UN, Government data shows women and children on decline in Zimbabwe
- Cutting red tape key to improved trade among Asia-Pacific nations, says UN
- Trial of Serb politician to resume at UN war crimes tribunal in January 2010

More stories inside

Ban says Obama's presence adds momentum to Copenhagen climate summit

25 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today welcomed the announcement that President Barack Obama of the United States will attend the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen next month, and he will urge Commonwealth leaders to do the same when he meets them later this week in Trinidad and Tobago.

“As more and more heads of State and government confirm their attendance, momentum is building for a successful conclusion to this crucial world gathering,” UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters.



International negotiations on a new agreement to reduce greenhouse gas emissions are set to conclude in the Danish capital, where countries will meet from 7 to 18 December. With only 11 days to go, core political issues – such as financing – remain unresolved, casting doubts on the possibility of achieving a legally binding agreement to combat global warming.

During a visit to Washington D.C. earlier this month, Mr. Ban urged the US to take a leading role in forging a new global pact to combat global warming, warning that the consequences of failure outweigh the cost of tackling climate change.

“No country is more important than the United States in resolving this climate change issue,” he told reporters in the US capital after discussions with congressional leaders.

Just last week the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), Yvo de Boer, told a news conference that Mr. Obama's presence in Copenhagen "would make a huge difference," adding that he had no doubt that the conference will be successful.

The Secretary-General will use his presence at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Port of Spain on Friday to urge leaders attending the gathering to also attend the climate change conference, and to stay committed to reaching an agreement in Copenhagen that is ambitious, equitable, and satisfies the demands of science.

"At Copenhagen, an agreement can and must be reached to set the world on a new course that will ensure a healthy planet, a robust and sustainable economy, and a brighter future for all," his spokesperson added.

UN officials urge intensified efforts to eliminate violence against women



Women marching against sexual violence in the DRC (file photo)

25 November - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon led a chorus of United Nations officials today in calling on the international community to make greater efforts to tackle the global pandemic of violence against women and girls.

"In every country, women and girls continue to be plagued by violence, causing tremendous suffering," Mr. Ban said in a message marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, observed annually on 25 November.

He noted that such violence undermines development, generates instability and makes peace harder to achieve, stressing that the international community must demand accountability for the violations and take concrete steps to end impunity.

"Our goal is clear; to end these inexcusable crimes – whether it is the use of rape as a weapon of war, domestic violence, sex trafficking, so-called 'honour' crimes or female genital mutilation," said Mr. Ban.

It is crucial to address the root causes of violence by eradicating discrimination and changing the mindset that reinforces prejudice, he said, highlighting his "UNite to End Violence Against Women" campaign that calls for nations to put in place strong laws, action plans, preventative measures, data collection and systematic measures to address sexual violence in conflict situations.

"Women around the world are the very linchpin keeping families, communities and nations together," he said. "On this International Day, let us reaffirm our commitment to women's human rights and let us do all it takes to end these horrific assaults once and for all."

Yesterday Mr. Ban marked the 10th anniversary of the International Day by launching a Network of Men Leaders, which brings 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.

The head of the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) praised women's rights activists around the world for harnessing broader support to combat the scourge, saying that it is now an issue of human rights and peace and security as well as a matter of urgent concern to both men and women.

"There are now more national plans, policies and laws in place than ever before, and momentum is also growing in the intergovernmental arena," said UNIFEM Executive Director Inés Alberdi.

She said that despite these achievements, it is "shocking" that up to 70 per cent of women experience physical or sexual

violence from men in their lifetime. “It happens everywhere – at home and at work, on the streets and in schools, during peacetime and in conflict.”

Ms. Alberdi said that the solution to ending violence against women and girls lies within each individual by raising “a generation that will not resort to violence, by volunteering to provide services, by raising funds and by raising our voices to say no to violence against women.”

An independent UN human rights expert said that the reality on the ground around the world demonstrates that many forms of violence against women remain endemic, cutting across national boundaries, race, class, culture, tradition and religion.

“The consequences include the violation of dignity and also of the right to equality, non-discrimination, physical integrity and freedom from violence,” said Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women, its causes and consequences Rashida Manjoo in her message for the Day.

States have a responsibility to eliminate violence against women through legal and policy measures, a robust criminal justice system, the provision of social services and economic policies that empower women, said Ms. Manjoo.

“The due diligence standard requires States to promote the right to be free from all forms of violence, both private and public; and also to develop and implement legislation, policies and programmes that specifically address prevention, protection, prosecution and compensation,” she said.

Despite progress, challenges remain on child soldiers in Sudan, UN official reports

25 November - Despite progress in Sudan in the past two years in tackling the problem of children in armed conflict, many challenges remain, ranging from reintegrating child soldiers to dealing with youngsters abducted by the Ugandan rebel Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA) who have been brainwashed into killing their own parents, a senior United Nations official said today.

On the positive side, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Radhika Coomaraswamy cited a recent agreement with the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA), which fought a two-decade-long war with the Government until a peace accord in 2005.

Under the so-called action plan, the SPLA will discharge child soldiers and allow access to its camps to verify implementation, she told a news conference in New York on her return from a week-long visit to Sudan.

“I visited Sudan two years ago and I must say that since then there has been quite a bit of progress,” she said, also citing an acceptance of international standards among a large cross-section of people, a willingness by the Government and rebel groups in the strife-torn Darfur region to talk about an action plan and a Government commitment not to execute children sentenced to death.

She noted that all parties, including the Government, are on the list of those using child soldiers, and during her visit she broached the issues of rape and sexual violence, killing and maiming of children, especially in recent tribal conflicts in the south, targeting of humanitarian workers, denial of humanitarian access and combating of impunity.

“Despite this progress, I must say that of course there is a great deal of challenges that exist, there are still a large number of children that are associated with armed groups,” she said, although she added that she was unable to give specific figures.

Ms. Coomaraswamy underscored the difference between the SPLA and the rebel Justice and Equality Movement (JEM) and Sudan Liberation Army (SLA) factions in Darfur on the one hand, and the LRA on the other, which after being pushed out of Uganda has taken its atrocities to neighbouring Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Central African Republic (CAR).



Child soldiers at a military camp in Nyal, southern Sudan [File Photo]

In the case of the SPLA, for example, most of the children she saw were orphans thrown out by their families or who came to camps for refuge because it was the only institution available.

“As opposed to that, I met LRA children, which if you meet them you will just be shocked, there is no light in the eyes from years of abuse, the marked contrast is really quite remarkable and these children talked to us of terrible abuse, sexual and other,” she said.

Asked about allegations that children abducted by the LRA are required to kill one of their parents as proof that they will participate, she replied. “It is prevalent, it’s the LRA tactic... that’s their trademark... that you have to go and commit an atrocity against your own family, own village... If you meet these children, you can see in their physical being that they have been subject to great abuse and trauma and psychological damage.”

She met six children who had just been brought in. “Both I and my team were horrified by it, by their expression, by their body language. It’s really quite awful,” she said, noting that in other groups some children join voluntarily, but with the LRA they are abducted. “They’re forced to join the LRA and then as children they’re kind of brainwashed,” and threatened if they do not comply, she added.

Asked about the situation in northern Yemen where fighting between the Government and rebels has displaced some 150,000 people, she said there were allegations of large numbers of children being used by both sides, but this was not yet verified. “We are watching the situation in Yemen,” she added.

Madagascar: UN appeals for \$6 million to stockpile supplies as cyclones loom



A Malagasy family walks in search of shelter from Cyclone Ivan

25 November - United Nations humanitarian agencies launched an appeal today for \$6 million to help the people of Madagascar brace against the impact of a wave of intense cyclones forecasted to hit the Indian Ocean nation in the coming months.

This year meteorologists are warning that four to five powerful tropical storms will swirl through the island causing large-scale destruction and putting thousands of lives at risk.

“We are in a very grave situation and need to pre-position supplies in the areas most at risk to be able to effectively save lives and mitigate the impact on these communities,” said UN Resident Coordinator Christopher Peter Metcalf.

“It is urgent that resources be mobilized now,” stressed Mr. Metcalf. “We urge the international community not to ignore the plight of the Malagasy people.”

Due to its geographic location, Madagascar is affected every year by three to four cyclones, and with almost 70 per cent of the population – or nearly 13 million people – considered poor, coping with such emergencies is precarious.

In addition, poor infrastructure means that once a cyclone has hit it can take weeks to reach some of the affected communities which are left isolated and at great risk of hunger and disease.

Over the last two years, the country was hit by five cyclones affecting over 463,000 people, damaging 2,276 classrooms, destroying 180,000 hectares of agricultural land and leaving 190,000 people homeless.

“The tragedy is that this is an annual event and it appears that each year the severity and impact is potentially greater,” said Mr. Metcalf. “Investments in disaster risk reduction programmes can save lives and help communities recover more quickly.”

UN boosts food aid to thousands uprooted by tribal violence in DR Congo

25 November - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) said today it is ramping up efforts to feed tens of thousand of Congolese who fled a recent outbreak of tribal violence in north-western Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

More than 38,000 people escaped into neighbouring Republic of Congo, crossing the river separating the two countries after deadly clashes erupted on 30 October between two tribes in DRC's Equateur province.

The fighting, thought to be over disputes based on farming and fishing rights in the village of Dongo, left dozens dead and an estimated 14,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs) inside DRC who are too afraid to return to their villages. In some locations, bodies are still visible lying in the streets or in the river, WFP said in a news release.

UN assessment missions on both sides of the Oubangi River have underscored the need for food assistance for people, mainly women and children, who have been on the run for several weeks now.

WFP is slated to start food distributions in the second week of December using stockpiled supplies already in the DRC after completing its ongoing assessment of the exact needs in areas in and around Dongo.

A total of 23 trucks carrying 455 tons of WFP food have also arrived in Betou in northern Republic of Congo from the Central African Republic (CAR), as well as 8,000 litres of fuel to assist the humanitarian relief effort.

Earlier this week, WFP also chartered a cargo plane in Brazzaville, capital of the Republic of Congo, to deliver medical and other supplies for the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In coordination with Government authorities and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), WFP is set to start distributions in Betou, Dongou, Enyelle and Impfondo districts of Likouala province in the Republic of Congo next week. An emergency distribution of 10 tons of rice and 1.5 tons of high energy biscuits already took place in Eboko (Betou district) to 187 vulnerable families on Sunday.

Darfur: over 300 former combatants discharged through UN-backed programme

25 November - More than 300 former combatants in Darfur, including women and disabled persons, have participated in a three-day discharge programme organized by the Government of Sudan with support from the joint African Union-United Nations mission in Darfur.

The programme is expected to be extended to other parts of Darfur, targeting a total of 5,000 former combatants affiliated with signatories to the 2006 Darfur Peace Agreement (DPA) who were disarmed in July 2008 when they formally surrendered their weapons.

The Government is providing cash payments of 400 Sudanese Pounds, around \$150, for each participant, to be followed by food vouchers and other services after two months.

The AU-UN mission, known as UNAMID, is offering logistical support to the exercise, including security, transport and health services.



Thousands of Congolese fled violent clashes in the DRC and crossed the river into the Republic of Congo



UNAMID's contribution will help the Government in its efforts to strengthen the peace process and improve the overall security situation across Darfur, where some 300,000 people have been killed and an estimated 2.7 million others displaced from their homes since fighting began in 2003, pitting Government forces and allied Janjaweed militiamen against rebel groups.

Beneficiaries of the just-ended programme in the North Darfur capital of El Fasher include members of the Sudanese Armed Forces, People's Defence Forces, and the Sudan Liberation Army/Mother Wing.

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programme is part of the final security arrangement of the DPA, which paved the way for the deployment of UNAMID at the start of last year.

Conditions still critical for typhoon victims in Philippines, says UN

25 November - Nearly a month after back-to-back typhoons submerged villages across the Philippines, hundreds of thousands of people displaced or still living in flooded areas are in need of safe water, sanitation facilities and hygiene items, the United Nations humanitarian wing said today.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), some 46,000 homes were completely destroyed and 261,000 partially damaged after Tropical Storm Ketsana and Typhoons Parma and Mirinae swept through the country, bringing with them the heaviest torrential rains in 40 years and landslides that cut off contact with villages.



Survivors line up for water at a community wiped out by devastating floods by Ketsana in the Philippines capital Manila

OCHA said today that the humanitarian situation is still critical for people who were displaced by the typhoons and those living in submerged homes or areas inaccessible by landslides. As of 16 November, nearly 79,000 families, or more than 382,000 individuals, were still living in flooded areas in 871 villages.

Emergency response projects are winding down and recovery programmes are taking over. The most recent figures from OCHA's Financial Tracking Service show that the Revised Philippines Flash Appeal 2009 of nearly \$144 million is 22 per cent funded at almost \$31 million.

This month, the World Food Programme (WFP) plans to distribute rice and high-energy biscuits in six regions. Preparations are also underway for WFP's supplementary feeding programme. Starting in January, some 50,000 children between 6 and 24 months will receive a monthly take-home ration of fortified blended food, sugar and oil.

Meanwhile, WFP is due to release its Emergency Food Security Assessment later this month. Various UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated in the assessment which was concluded on 20 November. The preliminary results have been incorporated into the Post-Disaster Needs Assessment, an effort led by the World Bank to determine the extent of damage and loss, as well as identify measures for recovery and reconstruction.

UN agency approves groundbreaking treaty to wipe out illegal fishing

25 November - A landmark treaty that aims to shut down ports to illegal fishing vessels has been approved by the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), the United Nations agency announced today.

This will be the first ever legally-binding global pact that commits governments to prevent, deter and eventually eliminate illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing by taking steps to guard their ports against ships engaged in such illicit practices and consequently preventing their catch from entering international markets.

Eleven FAO members – Angola, Brazil, Chile, the European Commission, Indonesia, Iceland, Norway, Samoa, Sierra Leone, the United States and Uruguay – signed the treaty immediately following its approval by the agency’s Governing Conference.

The “Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing” will enter into force once 25 countries have ratified it.

“It’s a milestone achievement,” said FAO Assistant-Director-General for Fisheries Ichiro Nomura.

“No longer will we solely rely on the ability of fishing nations to monitor behaviour by vessels flying their flags on the open waters of the oceans,” said Mr. Nomura. “Now countries are committing to taking steps to identify, report and deny entry to offenders at ports where fishing fleets are received. That’s a key back door that will be slammed shut with the new international treaty.”

IUU fishing damages the productivity of fisheries and could lead to their collapse, FAO warned in a news release. Operating without proper authorization, catching protected species, using outlawed types of gear or disregarding catch quotas are among the most common unlawful activities.



Port State measures are said to be one of the best and most efficient ways to fight illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing

UN peacekeepers introduce local Congolese to the cow-drawn plough



MONUC peacekeepers introduce farmers in the DRC to the use of their cattle as ploughs

25 November - United Nations peacekeepers are going beyond the call of duty in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), not only protecting local civilians from rebel militia but also helping them boost agricultural output as well as resurfacing roads and refurbishing a school.

Having watched the local population use hoes and shovels in labour intensive work to prepare their fields while their cows did nothing but eat grass all day long, members of the Pakistani battalion in the UN Mission in DRC, known as MONUC, suggested to farmers in the small community of Walungu in strife-torn South Kivu province that a cow can also be a good tractor.

“Some of the farmers were concerned at the beginning that pulling a plough might kill their cows,” Battalion Commander Lieutenant-Colonel Akif said. “But our troops managed to assure them that a little work wouldn’t hurt them. In some of the communities where our peacekeepers come from, cattle are still used for ploughing.”

The use of cattle for farm work is something quite radical in Walungu, where herds are raised for prestige, milk and meat.

Two oxen, linked by a simple wooden yoke can plough fields five times faster than people with hand tools, and the crop

yield per hectare using a deep furrow plough is roughly doubled. After discussing the possibilities with the local chiefs and administrators, the peacekeepers constructed a simple wooden plough and began training some farmers and their oxen.

Colonel Akif said that if more farmers decided to adopt the technology, peacekeepers would help them build more ploughs and harness equipment, and train their animals. "It is an easy thing to do and we know from our own experience, that they will benefit a lot," he added.

The Pakistan Battalion has also rehabilitated five kilometres of road from Walungu village to Kashanja, where members of the MONUC Chinese engineering unit are currently working on a 200-kilometre stretch to Shabunda, further west.

The absence of roads connecting towns and villages in both North and South Kivu provinces has added to the isolation of thousands of small communities, preventing communication, trade and commerce between them. Without roads, efforts to improve security for local populations have also been seriously inhibited.

Turning to the local primary school building, which was in a state of chronic disrepair, the peacekeepers did a major renovation of the roof and supporting walls which were open to the elements, installed new windows, doors and flooring, plastered the internal walls and helped build new desks for all students. They also raised money through their families and friends in Pakistan to provide books, pens and pencils.

Future plans of the Pakistani Battalion to assist the Walungu community include similar support for other schools and construction of a vocational centre.

UN, Government data shows women and children on decline in Zimbabwe

25 November - Some 100 children under five years of age will die today in Zimbabwe, a bleak statistic that is part of new social development data released by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Government, revealing that the situation there for women and children has deteriorated in the past five years.

The Multiple Indicator and Monitoring Survey (MIMS), which was conducted in May 2009, reported a decline in access to many key social services for women and children, particularly for the poorest populations and in rural areas.



A girl carries containers filled with safe water provided by UNICEF, in the suburb of Budiro outside Harare

"The MIMS data underscores the deterioration that has occurred in the social sectors in the last few years and the tragic consequences that have resulted," said Dr. Peter Salama, UNICEF Representative. "Today and everyday in Zimbabwe 100 children below five years of age are dying of mostly preventable diseases."

The data showed a 20 per cent increase in the mortality rate of children under five since 1990, the baseline year for the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), with children in rural areas and those in the poorest one fifth of the population being the most vulnerable. Major causes of these deaths are HIV and AIDS, newborn disorders, pneumonia and diarrhea.

The survey also showed that 1 in 2 pregnant women in rural areas were now delivering at home and that 39 per cent nationally were not accessing the requisite medical facilities for delivery. Meanwhile, 40 per cent were not attended to at birth by a skilled attendant posing huge dangers for both mothers and newborns.

UNICEF says that these findings confirm the result of previous research indicating that user fees and other financial barriers are limiting women's access to life-saving obstetric services.

In addition, data from the national survey, which had a sample size of 12,500 households in Zimbabwe, revealed limited support to the country's orphaned and vulnerable children, with 79 per cent not receiving any form of external assistance. Further, around two-thirds of all children in the country do not possess birth certificates.

The survey is designed to obtain strategic information relevant for policy makers as they make decisions on development priorities and budgets. In addition, the survey provides data on Zimbabwe's progress in attaining international priorities like the MDGs, which includes among its targets reducing under-five mortality by two thirds by 2015.

"The MIMS data provides a powerful statistical testimony on the current state of women and children in Zimbabwe," said Dr. Salama. "It will assist the inclusive Government and its partners in determining the priorities for action. Women and children should be at the centre of the development agenda moving forward."

Cutting red tape key to improved trade among Asia-Pacific nations, says UN

25 November - Cutting red tape to reduce complex transaction costs is the key to unlocking significant benefits from international trade for economies in Asia and the Pacific, according to a new report from the United Nations and the Asian Development Bank (ADB).

"The hidden costs of trade are high – in some cases up to 15 per cent of the value of goods traded," said Noeleen Heyzer, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), which published the report along with ADB.



ESCAP Executive Secretary Noeleen Heyzer

Designing and Implementing Trade Facilitation in Asia and Pacific states that, despite falling tariffs and the removal of import quotas, there are still major costs to global trade associated with unnecessarily complex customs and border procedures, or with inefficient transit arrangements.

Trade facilitation, or "cutting red tape," can unlock further gains from international trade, especially in Asia and the Pacific, where it takes more than three times longer to complete export procedures than it does in developed countries.

Intra-regional trade in Asia could increase by \$250 billion, or about 21 per cent, if trade facilitation reforms were successful in bringing countries in the region, with below-average performance, closer to the regional average.

"Timely publication of trade regulations, simplification of trade procedures and documents, and improving coordination between relevant government agencies within and across borders can go a long way towards increased connectivity and integration of the region," said Ms. Heyzer.

The report, released today in Bangkok at the first Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum that brings together about 100 policymakers, traders and trade facilitation service providers from more than 25 countries across the region, provides guidance on how to assess the status of trade facilitation.

It also outlines what measures and reforms are necessary, how to design trade facilitation initiatives, how to implement them at national and regional levels, and which organizations can help in this process.

Ravi Ratnayake, Director of ESCAP's Trade and Investment Division, said the report was timely as trade facilitation was vital to the region's efforts to boost resilience to external shocks, such as the global economic crisis.

"Trade facilitation, particularly within and across Asia, is an integral part of the rebalancing required to support increased domestic and regional demand as a source of economic growth," he stated.

"The book is a practical operational guide of what works in getting goods and services moving across our region's national borders."

Trial of Serb politician to resume at UN war crimes tribunal in January 2010

25 November - The United Nations tribunal set up to deal with the worst war crimes committed during the Balkan conflicts of the 1990s has ordered that the trial of Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Šešelj, which had been adjourned in February amid allegations that witnesses had been intimidated, resume on 12 January 2010.

The Trial Chamber of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) decided yesterday to reconsider its decision for adjournment, because of what it said were new facts that had emerged, UN spokesperson Farhan Haq told reporters in New York.



Serbian Radical Party leader Vojislav Šešelj

Mr. Šešelj has pleaded not guilty to nine charges, including murder, torture and persecution, relating to his alleged role in an ethnic cleansing campaign in the Vojvodina region of Serbia between 1991 and 1993.

In July he was given a 15-month jail term after the ICTY found him guilty, in a separate trial, of contempt of court for publishing the names of three protected witnesses in his war crimes trial in a book he wrote.

He said he did not reveal the witnesses' names with the intention of intimidating them, but rather to "unmask a plot in public" regarding some events in the indictment for his war crimes trial.

But the Tribunal said it was gravely concerned with "the deliberate way in which the protective measure decisions" concerning the witnesses had been defied by Mr. Šešelj.

UN peacebuilding body ready for expanded role, Security Council told



25 November - The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) – tasked with marshalling resources to support recovery and development efforts in countries emerging from conflict – could be put to greater use by the world body, the Security Council was told in a briefing today.

In the wake of the 2005 World Summit, the UN set up the intergovernmental Commission to help struggling States avoid slipping back into war and chaos by providing strategic advice and harnessing expertise and finance from around the world to aid with recovery projects.

The Commission currently has four countries – Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Central African Republic (CAR) – on its agenda.

"While we can certainly identify initial progress in linking up the advisory role of the PBC with UN and non-UN operational entities, the PBC remains, in my view, underutilized," Ambassador Heraldo Muñoz of Chile, who chairs the Commission, told the Security Council.

Mr. Muñoz noted that three years after the PBC was established, its agenda is expanding in both scope and depth. "Peacebuilding is an area that may contribute to further define the image of the Organization in the coming years."

He highlighted the PBC's unique position providing the link between security, the rule of law and rebuilding activities to lay "the foundation for sustainable peace and development."

At the same, the PBC engages multiple actors in a range of humanitarian, security and development activities to ensure a coherent and integrated response to creating the conditions for peace in a country, he added.

“Likewise, the principles of national ownership and inclusiveness have been pivotal in the work of the Commission during these years,” said Mr. Muñoz.

“A potential added value of the PBC at the country level is to leverage its weight in order to advance mutual accountability between the national actors in the concerned country and its international and regional partners.”

In particular, Mr. Muñoz said the PBC could promote the seamless transition from humanitarian to early recovery assistance as well as synergy between peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts, among other activities.

“The envisaged 2010 review of the Commission’s founding resolutions will provide a prime opportunity to further build on the experiences it has gained, define its potential role in support of an expanding UN peacebuilding agenda and enhance its support to countries emerging from conflict.”