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Mutually beneficial solution to the Cyprus problem 'within reach,' Ban says

1 February - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon – who as a citizen of the Republic of Korea says he understands the “emptiness” of a country divided into north and south – today stressed that a solution to Cyprus' long-running problems is “within reach,” calling for the leaders of the two communities on the Mediterranean island to step up their efforts to reach agreement.

“No one is under the illusion that any of this is easy. Peace negotiations never are,” Mr. Ban told reporters after meeting in Nicosia with Greek Cypriot leader Demetris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat.

“But the time is ripe to push ahead. I am convinced these two leaders can achieve a mutually beneficial solution.”

The Secretary-General said that he is in Cyprus on his first-ever visit to the nation to show his support for the “Cypriot-led and Cypriot-owned process” to reunify the island.

In May 2008, Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat committed themselves to working towards “a bicomunal, bizonal federation with political equality, as defined by relevant Security Council resolutions.”



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon speaks at inauguration of second phase of Ledra-Lokmaci Street stabilization work

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

“For decades, the world has heard about the Cyprus problem. Now is the time for the Cyprus solution,” said Mr. Ban, who arrived in the country yesterday, pledging the United Nations’ ongoing support in the process.

Following their meeting with the Secretary-General, the Cypriot leaders voiced “confidence that with goodwill and determination, we can achieve a solution in the shortest possible time.”

In a statement read out by Mr. Ban, they said that the Cyprus problem has remained unresolved for too long.

Although “time is not on the side of settlement,” they underscored that there is now a window of opportunity to find a solution “which would take into full consideration the legitimate rights and concerns of both Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots.”

Earlier today in the capital, Nicosia, the Secretary-General welcomed the start of the second phase of stabilization work at Ledra Street/Locmaki crossing, which he said has become “the symbol of the two leaders to heal divisions and to work together towards a common future.”

The crossing was opened in April 2008 following an agreement by Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat, which Mr. Ban hailed at the time as “positive step forward.”

From his own experience as a citizen of the Republic of Korea, “I have seen for myself the very sad reality, the emptiness and destruction and such very painful feelings I share with the people of Cyprus,” he said today.

During his three-day visit to Cyprus, Mr. Ban is slated to hold discussions with Alexander Downer, his Special Adviser for Cyprus, as well as with Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat.

With Haiti’s quake relief efforts going more smoothly, UN looks to longer-term goals



The “cash-for work” programme is kick-starting economic activity in Haiti

1 February - As immediate efforts to provide food and other aid to hundreds of thousands of Haitian quake victims improve, the United Nations is also looking to longer-term goals of procuring 200,000 tents for the upcoming rainy season and encouraging many residents of the overcrowded capital to return to the countryside, a top UN official said today.

“Looking at the mid-term and long-term recovery efforts, providing permanent assistance and job creation and opportunity for these people who have already been displaced is also an opportunity to decentralize and de-concentrate Port-au-Prince, so this is also an opportunity to decentralize the country,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Acting Special Representative Edmond Mulet told a news briefing by video link from the capital.

The Government’s idea, which it will present formally to a meeting of donor nations in New York in March “is to take a general overview of the country, not only where the physical damage happened but also to incorporate the reconstruction of Haiti into a global development programme,” he said, stressing the need to strengthen the provinces by providing job and agricultural opportunities to those people, many of whom migrated from there in the first place.

Some 3 million people, a third of the total population, lived in Port-au-Prince when the devastating earthquake struck on 12 January, killing up to 200,000 people, injuring many more, leaving 2 million in need of aid and destroying much of the city. The UN itself suffered heavy casualties when its headquarters collapsed, losing its head of mission Hédi Annabi and his deputy Luiz Carlos da Costa.

The UN casualty toll now stands at 92 dead, seven unaccounted for and 30 injured, Mr. Mulet said.

Mr. Ban's Deputy Special Representative and UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Haiti Kim Bolduc told the briefing that another priority was the urgent need to prepare for the rainy season that begins in three months and the subsequent hurricane season, since it takes time to bring in all the necessary tents and other materials which are normally transported by sea.

"At this point, the main concern is to focus on shelter and the lack of tents and accommodation for displaced people, mostly thinking about the rainy season. I think that we are facing a real challenge because although we're concerned about the rainy season that is coming soon we have not yet been able to get the means necessary to prepare evacuation sites outside of Port-au-Prince and outside areas affected by the earthquake," she said.

Mr. Mulet gave an upbeat assessment of current relief efforts after the initial difficulties caused by the enormity of the disaster and the lack of infrastructure in the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere, noting that 100,000 people received 15 days' supply of food yesterday, and 600,000 in all had received multi-day food supplies. Initially the UN had hoped to feed some 1 million people within two weeks of the disaster and 2 million in the first month.

"Distribution yesterday and today went very, very well, very smoothly with no incidents whatsoever. The population is acting very responsible, very orderly... So everything is coming together and we're very pleased by the results on the ground," he said, stressing the enormity of the task and the many fronts on which simultaneous action is needed. "But the Government also is structuring itself in a better way and responding.

"So I must say that in spite of all this tragedy, in spite of all the sorrow and the difficult times we have been going through, at the same time we are putting back the United Nations, MINUSTAH (UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti), agencies on their feet and they're clearly performing really very, very well, and so is the Government, so I'm very confident that more and more, day by day and week by week we will begin to work better and deliver better."

He noted that other food was getting through to scores of thousands of people through the school lunch programme that provides cooked meals for 100,000 people as well as through the Red Cross.

He added that the UN was also helping to address the needs of the up to 500,000 people who had left the capital for the provinces and that the number of those enrolled in the UN Development Programme (UNDP) cash-for-work initiative doubled over the weekend to nearly 32,000 and is expected to double again by the end of the week.

The programme is aiming to put 100,000 workers on the street as quickly as possible, ideally doubling that further as conditions and funds allow. The workers are paid 180 gourdes, or roughly \$4.50 at current rates of exchange, for six hours' labour removing building rubble from the streets, crushing and sorting reusable material and disposal of debris.

The purpose is to restore essential public facilities, such as light rehabilitation and repairs of public infrastructure, access to water and protection of water sources, markets, communal washing areas and community centres.

One of the challenges was obtaining the boots, gloves, shovels, pickaxes, wheelbarrows and trucks needed to remove the waste, Cash-for-Work Programme Manager Abdullah Al-Laham said. "At the end of the programme, all this material will be given to the poor and vulnerable to help sustain their livelihoods."

Top UN envoy in Iraq shocked by killing of scores of pilgrims

1 February - The top United Nations official in Iraq today expressed his shock and sadness at the suicide bombing targeting Shi'a pilgrims, reportedly killing over 40 people.

Media reports say that more than 100 people were also injured in the attack which occurred as pilgrims travelled from Baghdad to Karbala to take part in the religious rite of Arba'en.

Today's bombing is "a horrific crime committed against defenseless journeying pilgrims practicing their faith," said Ad Melkert, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's Special Representative.



SRSG Ad Melkert working out of his Baghdad-based office

Dozens of pilgrims travelling to Karbala were killed last February in a series of attacks, which Mr. Ban said “cannot be justified by any political or religious cause and must be condemned in the strongest possible terms.”

In a statement issued at the time, he said that he joined “with the people of Iraq in rejecting these cruel and reprehensible attempts to reignite sectarian violence in the country.”

In Haiti, UN feeds thousands more with new food scheme aimed at women

1 February - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is “cautiously optimistic” about a newly launched scheme that could provide rice to some 2 million Haitians over the next two weeks, and promises to cut down on the recent chaotic scrambles around food trucks as men, women and children pushed to obtain supplies.

“We have been very encouraged by how things have gone yesterday and today. There are a couple of small glitches like fraudulent coupons which are easy to identify. Nothing that cannot be improved,” Natasha Scripture, public information officer with WFP in Port-au-Prince, told the UN News Centre. “We are cautiously optimistic.”



WFP operations in Léogâne, a town west of Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The programme, launched yesterday, provides women with coloured and dated vouchers that can be exchanged for a 25-kilogram (55-pound) rice ration at one of 16 centres in Port-au-Prince – including at the Sylvio Cator Stadium, which before the earthquake was the country's national soccer stadium and now houses a tent-city of displaced Haitians.

The rice ration is expected to feed a family of six for up to three weeks. So far, some 100,000 people picked up their rations, nearly all of them women.

“WFP generally targets female heads of household with food assistance. Distribution to women tends to be more orderly and calm. Women are often the first ones pushed out of line,” explained Ms. Scripture.

While women are prioritized, men are encouraged to accompany their families and help them carry the food home. WFP is working with its partners to assist men in need of aid.

“Two people were coming to carry the bags. The population was very orderly,” described Edmond Mulet, the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations and interim head of the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), speaking via teleconference to journalists in New York.

Mr. Mulet noted that four of the 16 food distribution centres were closed today but are expected to be opened in coming days.

The closed sites include a distribution centre in Cité Soleil, one of the poorest and most troubled neighbourhoods in Port-au-Prince. The first WFP delivery arrived there on 24 January, but since then “gang activity has been on the rise” said Ms. Scripture.

Even in safer areas, armed national Haitian police work alongside military troops from MINUSTAH, and from Canada and the United States to maintain order at the food distribution centres and to protect food trucks.

“It’s a joint effort,” said Ms. Scripture. She was speaking from a satellite telephone while zigzagging between the centres. Her phone dropped the connection four times, and getting her back was impossible even after six tries. It’s a reminder that the situation on the ground is improving only slowly.

WFP has said that the food distribution programme is a trial for the next two weeks. If it works, the system could be implemented for distribution of other necessities, such as tents or medicines.

With the additional numbers reached this weekend, WFP estimates that it has delivered the equivalent of more than 22 million meals to nearly 750,000 people since the earthquake struck.

African leaders join forces to help achieve UN goal for malaria prevention

1 February - Dozens of African leaders met today in Ethiopia to tackle the challenges facing the continent in the effort to meet the United Nations target of ensuring universal access to malaria control measures by the end of this year.

Some 26 heads of State convened the first working session of the African Leaders Malaria Alliance (ALMA) during the annual African Union (AU) summit, which got under way yesterday in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa.



A child sleeps under a malaria bednet

ALMA aims to defeat the disease, which accounts for over 25 per cent of all deaths of children under the age of five across Africa, affects over 50 million pregnant women and is responsible for 10 per cent of all maternal mortalities every year.

As much as 40 per cent of health-care spending in endemic countries goes on malaria, costing the continent around \$12 billion a year, according to a press release issued by ALMA.

The 26-nation ALMA coalition said that in the past 12 months alone at least 90 million long-lasting, insecticidal mosquito nets were delivered in Africa, and overall 200 million such nets have been distributed to 400 million people in sub-Saharan Africa, where virtually all malaria deaths occur.

“The world is closer than ever before to ending malaria deaths,” said the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon’s Special Envoy for Malaria Ray Chambers, with the World Health Organization (WHO) 2009 World Malaria Report indicating that more than one-third of malaria-affected countries have documented reductions in cases of more than 50 per cent.

“In the remaining year until the Secretary-General’s deadline to ensure that all people at risk are protected from the disease, African leadership has the greatest authority to ensure the realization of these goals,” added Mr. Chambers.

“By collaborating through ALMA and joining together to defeat this deadly disease, Africa’s leaders are reaping tremendous benefits in cost-savings, efficiencies, and sharing of best practices – all of which will translate into millions of lives saved,” said Mr. Chambers.

ALMA was launched during the General Assembly in September to provide a forum to ensure efficient procurement, distribution, and utilization of malaria control interventions; facilitate the sharing of effective malaria control practices; and ensure malaria remains high on the global political agenda.

Mr. Chambers is in Addis Ababa as part of a three-day trip, which will take him to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) tomorrow to meet with the country’s Health and Finance Minister. The DRC is tied with Nigeria as the country with the world’s highest malaria burden and faces a shortfall for the purchase of 14 million nets.

UNICEF aims to bring sense of stability and safety to children after quake

1 February - Where did you sleep last night? Where did you eat? What does your neighbourhood look like? These are some of the questions United Nations staff are asking hundreds of children in Haiti after launching a new programme to keep track of children orphaned or separated from their families by the earthquake.

Since last week, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and its partners have identified and registered some 200 unaccompanied children found in orphanages and wandering in neighbourhoods of Port-au-Prince.

Based on the given information and photographs taken, workers will begin to trace the families of these children, if they exist. A similar registry was used after the 2004 tsunami in Indonesia and more recently in cyclone-hit Myanmar.

The Haitian Government estimates that up to 60,000 children have been affected by the earthquake. UNICEF expects to register several thousand children in the coming weeks.

"We've been working with 29 partner organizations and the Government around the clock. We're moving forward but it's going to take some time; this is a long process," Roshan Khadivi, a spokeswoman for UNICEF in Port-au-Prince, told the UN News Centre.

"For teenagers, it's easy for them to describe where they lived, but for babies it is much more difficult," Ms. Khadivi said. "Some children have been traumatized so they may not open up immediately. We have counsellors on hand."

There are some success stories. Guy Hubbard, communications officer with UNICEF, wrote online about 11-year-old Sindy, who was separated from her family during the earthquake. Alone and injured, she wandered to a hospital. The hospital contacted UNICEF, which was able to track her relatives and reunite the family.

"I was so happy to see them. I hugged them, and they were so happy to see me again," Sindy told UNICEF.

The children without anyone to look after them are then moved to one of five so-called "safe spaces" in Port-au-Prince. Housed in stable buildings safe spaces provide children with access to shelter, food, water and trauma counsellors. Children are taken to medical facilities, if required.

UNICEF and its partners now have the capacity to house 900 children and are surveying new locations. The buildings have to provide a safe haven for the children, including an area where the children can play and interact out of view.

"There are no signs on our buildings and we keep the locations private. We keep hearing reports of people just showing up at various locations. An older child can speak but babies can become victims," Ms. Khadivi said.

Since the quake, there have been reports in the media of rushed or even illegal adoptions and possible human trafficking. The UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) is conducting investigations into alleged kidnappings.

"Are some of the reports true? Yes, unfortunately. This is an issue raised at the highest level in the Haitian Government, with our partners and with the international community," said Ms. Khadivi.

As of 22 January, all adoptions in Haiti have to be approved by Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive. As another layer of security, UNICEF has been working with local police known as the Children's Brigade – to check documents of all children leaving Haiti through the Port-au-Prince airport or the border with the Dominican Republic.

This weekend, a United States-based charity group was arrested at the border with 33 Haitian children who allegedly have



UNICEF is bringing stability and safety to children after the 12 January earthquake in Haiti

not had their paperwork approved by the Prime Minister.

Meanwhile, families around the world in the process of adopting Haitian children have pressured their governments to speed up the process – to the discouragement of UNICEF.

“We are sending a message to the international community that while some adoptions have already been approved, we are asking everyone to hold off and let us register these children, and – if possible – to connect them with their communities,” Ms. Khadivi said.

UNICEF Executive Director Ann M. Veneman has called Haiti a “children’s emergency.”

In a statement released on 19 January, she noted that “these children face increased risks of malnutrition and disease, trafficking, sexual exploitation and serious emotional trauma. The race to provide them with life-saving emergency food and medicine, safe shelter, protection, and care is under way.”

As a way of proving a sense of stability to children, the Haitian Government today reopened a few of the schools that withstood the earthquake. Only 10 per cent of the schools in Port-au-Prince are functional and about 40 per cent in the southern port city of Jacmel and other localities.

“There are families who are afraid of sending kids to school because they’re afraid there will be another quake,” Ms. Khadivi said.

She said that she hoped the return to school, along with an immunization programme UNICEF planned to launch this week against measles, diphtheria and tetanus, would give families a greater sense of normalcy.

“What I find amazing,” Ms. Khadivi said, “[is that] people are shaken, but we have come across people who have not lost hope. They are working. There is a sense to restart again. There is hope. I wish that would come across more. Children want to go back to school. People want to bring back a sense of normalcy to their lives and their children’s lives, and want to move on.”

Afghan farmers and villagers help rid communities of landmines – UN

1 February - Farmers and villagers are taking part in United Nations-backed efforts to rid Afghanistan of landmines, which is also providing a much-needed boost to their incomes.

An average of 40 people are injured or killed every month by mines in the Asian nation, down from 150 per month three years ago.

But 40 “is still high and puts Afghanistan at the top of countries affected by mines” and explosive remnants of war (ERW), or unexploded bombs, said Haider Reza, Programme Director of the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan (MACCA), supported by the UN and the Afghan Government.



Last year alone, more than 100 people were killed and many more injured in incidents related to mines or ERW.

In eight of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces, people are being trained as de-miners to clear mines in their own communities.

“I think it is good for us that we de-mine our own communities since we know where the minefields are better than anyone and it is good that the programme has created jobs for us,” said a farmer from the Spena Kalacha village of Kandahar province.

Over the past 20 years, 15,000 hazard areas across Afghanistan have been cleared, with 84 districts and 1,370 communities

having been declared mine-free.

“This is very, very considerable,” Mr. Reza noted.

In 2009, 1,299 minefields and 121 battle areas were cleared, with over 50,000 anti-personnel mines, some 700 anti-tank mines and over one million ERW destroyed.

“We would like to assist families and ordinary people on the ground to have an income by working on their land, on their farms, and by grazing their animals,” the MACCA official stressed.

UN chief appoints Filipino general to lead peacekeeping in Golan Heights



UNDOF military observer on duty in Mount Hermon, Golan Heights

1 February - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today named a Filipino general as the new Force Commander for the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Golan Heights, tasked with observing the ceasefire between Israel and Syria in the region.

Major-General Natalio C. Ecarma will succeed Maj.-Gen. Wolfgang Jilke of Austria as Head of Mission and Force Commander of the UN Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF).

Last month, the Security Council extended the mandate of UNDOF – established in May 1974 following the disengagement of Israeli and Syrian forces after the 1973 war – to run

until 30 June 2010.

The Secretary-General voiced his gratitude to Maj.-Gen. Jilke for his outstanding service and leadership of 1,040-strong force over the past three years.

Maj.-Gen. Ecarma will bring extensive experience to his new UN command. Prior to his present assignment as Deputy Commandant of the Philippine Marine Corps and Concurrent Commander of Marine Forces in the southern Philippines, the General served as Combat and Service Support Brigade Commander and Marine Brigade Commander.

Ugandan rebels kill 100 civilians in north-eastern DR Congo, UN reports



LRA fighters [File Photo]

1 February - Some 100 people were slaughtered by a notorious Uganda rebel group in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) last month, the United Nations humanitarian arm has said.

According to reliable information collected by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the Lord's Resistance Army attacked the village of Mabanga in north-eastern DRC on 13 January.

The total number of Congolese slain by the LRA in January is still unknown, but OCHA reported that over 80 had been killed in December 2009 alone.

The Office also expressed concern over attacks on camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The mainly Rwandan Hutu rebel group known as the Forces démocratiques de libération du Rwanda (FDLR) reportedly raided the Nyange camp in North Kivu province on 22 January, killing three people.

Government forces have been accused of taking supplies belonging to a non-governmental organization (NGO) in the Muhanga camp, also in North Kivu, disrupting the distribution of items to IDPs. The Congolese Army said that it is

investigating the incident and has informed aid agencies that it is taking action against the perpetrators.

UN turns to forensic science to help combat illegal fishing



1 February - Forensic science, more often associated with solving murders in prime time television crime series, is now helping the United Nations fight illegal fishing, fraudulent product substitution and false documentation that not only cheat consumers but also endanger fish stocks and threaten livelihoods in developing countries.

Experts, inspectors, law enforcement officials, scientists and academics from round the world recently gathered at a UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) workshop in Rome to discuss how to enforce best practices in the \$86-billion-a-year global fishing industry, using such tools as DNA analysis and chemical testing.

“We need to push the envelope, because we can be sure that those involved in IUU fishing are doing so,” FAO Fisheries and Aquaculture Department official Michele Kuruc said, referring to illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing (IUU), noting that a workshop participant related how a group convicted of illegally trading abalone confessed that they learned techniques for destroying evidence by watching *CSI: Miami*.

“We’re interested in promoting wider use of available forensic techniques, in particular by developing countries,” she added, stressing that the 110-million ton annual seafood industry is a major source of employment and government revenue for these countries, where many of the fishing grounds that feed the first world are found

DNA analysis can unveil the species of a suspect white fillet, for example, and chemical tests on fish ear bones reveal absorbed nutrients to pinpoint the region where they were caught, major weapons in combating unscrupulous fishers and traders who game the system to prevent over-fishing and avoid international restrictions aimed as preserving fish stocks, as well as taxes and other limits.

An unknown percentage of seafood on the shelves simply is not what it is purported to be, and this is a growing problem given that today’s more conscious consumers are aware of the multiple health benefits of eating seafood but are also keen to be sure they are eating fish that has been caught or farmed responsibly and is safe to eat.

The workshop discussed how best to build capacity in developing countries, handle evidence, train inspectors, and identify laboratories capable of handling testing, including upgrading labs in developing countries currently testing for food quality to conduct forensic work. The group also agreed to operate as an ad hoc FAO reference network that can be tapped by authorities around the world for guidance and advice.

“Fish can be properly identified if samples are handled properly, get to the right labs, and checked using forensic techniques,” Ms. Kuruc said. “So the idea is to help countries that don’t have such facilities and know how can access so them so they can identify and prosecute cases of malfeasance.”

UN envoy 'pleased' about Israel's release of Lebanese citizen, progress in peace talks

1 February - A senior United Nations official today welcomed the release of a Lebanese citizen apprehended by Israeli Defense Forces on Sunday in a disputed area of land located on the border between southern Lebanon and the Golan Heights, announcing that the UN peacekeeping operation in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is conducting its own inquiry into the episode.

"We are pleased to say that early this morning this Lebanese citizen was released and has returned to Lebanon," said Special Coordinator for Lebanon Michael Williams, referring to the incident, which took place in the Shebaa Farms area.



UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon
Michael Williams

"UNIFIL has launched an investigation to establish the exact circumstances of this incident," Mr. Williams said in a statement following a meeting with Lebanese Foreign Minister Ali Shami in Beirut.

Mr. Williams said he had a positive meeting with the Foreign Minister, which provided an opportunity to follow up on their discussion a few weeks ago, their first since the new Government was formed late last year.

Their talks included the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701, which called for a full cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hizbollah and greatly increased the UN peacekeeping force – known as UNIFIL – in the conflict zone.

In addition to expanding UNIFIL, which currently has nearly 13,000 military personnel, the resolution called for respect of the so-called Blue Line separating the Israeli and Lebanese sides, disarming militias including Hizbollah, and an end to arms smuggling, among other measures.

"I informed the Minister that the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on this resolution is due to the Security Council at the end of this month," said Mr. Williams.

"In that regard we discussed the situation in south Lebanon," he added, referring to the region where Israel fought a 34-day war with Hizbollah in 2006.

The UN envoy briefed Mr. Shami on his talks last week with Israeli officials who confirmed their commitment to the cessation of hostilities in Lebanon.

"Much more needs to be done," stressed Mr. Williams. "We are hoping that progress can be made in order to move from a cessation of hostilities to a more enduring ceasefire."

Women must play active role in Haiti's recovery – UN experts

1 February - Women must be given a key role in all aspects of the emergency relief effort in earthquake-ravaged Haiti for it to be effective and to protect the human rights of the most vulnerable, a United Nations committee warned today.

"The needs and capabilities of women must be taken into consideration in all sectors and clusters of the emergency response, as the role of women in early recovery is critical to effective implementation and long term sustainability," said Naéla Mohamed Gabr, who heads the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).



Naéla Gabr

Haiti was rocked on 12 January by a 7.0-magnitude earthquake that devastated its capital, Port-au-Prince, with the

Government confirming that at least 150,000 people have perished, thousands more are still buried under the rubble and an even larger number made homeless.

CEDAW said in a statement that following such natural disasters the responsibilities of women are greater on account of their roles as caretakers of children, the elderly, the disabled, the injured and other survivors.

“Whilst the strength and resilience of women are in high demand following such emergencies, they cannot adequately fulfil these roles if their basic needs are unmet and if decision-makers ignore them,” said Ms. Gabr. “If women are to look after the needs of others, their own safety, dignity, health and nutritional concerns must be met as well.”

The Committee also noted that in a time of heightened stress, lawlessness and homelessness, women face an increased threat of violence and find it harder to support themselves and other survivors in their care.

“The protection of human rights of women is as important as providing immediate medical attention, food and shelter,” stressed Ms. Gabr in a statement urging emergency assistance teams to put in place a coordinated security system to protect women and children.

Days after the tremor, the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) issued a call for close to \$2 million – as part of the world body’s overall \$575 million flash appeal – to provide urgently needed services for the protection of women and their families, especially the construction of women’s shelters and expansion of emergency services.

UN political chief to start four-nation East Asian visit in DPR Korea



Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe

31 January - The top United Nations political official is set to kick off a four-nation visit to East Asia in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), according to a statement attributable to the spokesperson for the Secretary-General released today.

The DPRK will be the first stop for Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs B. Lynn Pascoe on the tour, which will also take him to China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK).

Mr. Pascoe will visit the DPRK as a Special Envoy of the Secretary-General from 9 to 12 February, when he is expected to hold comprehensive talks on all issues of mutual interest and concern with senior national officials.

He will also meet with the UN country team and members of the diplomatic corps, as well as visit several UN project sites.

In September, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met with DPRK Vice Foreign Minister Park Gil Yon at UN Headquarters in New York, where he discussed the country's nuclear issue along with the humanitarian and human rights situation.

Ban commits UN to harnessing support for African development needs

31 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today pledged to mobilize support to tackle the critical challenges threatening peace and prosperity across Africa, including extreme poverty, economic and social well-being, and the ravages of climate change.

In remarks to the opening of the African Union Summit, Mr. Ban highlighted the United Nations gathering in September on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) – a set of internationally agreed targets to eradicate poverty and other social ills by 2015.

The September Summit on the MDGs will take place along with the opening of the General Assembly, where leaders of the 192 UN Member States meet each year at its Headquarters in New York.

“We have made great strides toward the Millennium Development Goals, but there is not much time to the 2015 deadline, and still much distance to travel,” Mr. Ban said in his message to the 14th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

The global recession, energy crisis, food insecurity and climate change have all made development more difficult and more urgent, he told more than 50 heads of State and Government attending the three-day meeting.

“Now is the critical time to mobilize action,” he stressed, adding that the September Summit will focus on harnessing support for the success of the MDGs, identifying gaps that need urgent attention, emphasizing priority areas for action and building a coalition capable of taking action.

“We have seen a sharp decrease in malaria and measles deaths across the continent, vital gains in primary school enrollment [and] marked improvements in child health,” said Mr. Ban.

He noted, however, that too many “women still die in childbirth, too many children still never live to see their fifth birthday, and too many women are unable to realize their full potential,” underscoring the need for donors to deliver on their promises.

Productive employment and decent work for all Africans, especially for women and young people, should be the development priority for the continent, said Mr. Ban.

“The most important employment sector remains agriculture, with more than half of the workforce,” said Mr. Ban. “And of course, we must invest in women and girls. When we empower women, we empower Africa.”

The Secretary-General also commended the African Union Summit for highlighting the potential of knowledge and Information and Communication technology (ICTs) in spurring development.

In addition, Mr. Ban announced the creation of the MDG Advocacy Group, consisting of eminent personalities from all walks of life who will “sound the global call for action” at the September Summit and put their influence to work for the cause.

Turning to global warming, Mr. Ban praised nations which signed the Copenhagen Accord at the Copenhagen Climate Change Summit in December and urged others to follow suite, stressing that nowhere are the linkages between sustainable development and climate clearer than in Africa.

“African nations are among the least responsible yet the most susceptible to climate change impacts,” he said. “We must keep up the momentum towards achieving a binding global climate agreement as soon as possible.”

Highlighting the need of developing countries to rapidly scale-up their clean energy programmes and their need for



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses opening of African Union Summit in Addis Ababa

significant support to adapt to the consequences of climate change, Mr. Ban said some \$30 billion is slated for immediate circulation over the next three years.

“Looking forward, \$100 billion annually is to be mobilized per year by 2020 for developing countries,” he added. “We hope to move quickly to secure these resources and implement programmes on the ground.”

In a wide-ranging speech, Mr. Ban also promoted the effectiveness of conflict prevention over intervention between warring parties, pointing to the recent successful cooperation between the UN, AU and other partners in Guinea.

“I strongly urge our partners to support the transition, prepare for the elections and implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry that investigated the 28 September massacres in Conakry,” he said, adding that of the 13 African nations scheduled to hold elections in the next two years, six are in countries with UN peacekeeping or peacebuilding operations.

Mr. Ban said that he attended a mini-summit earlier on Sunday on the future of Sudan, where time is of the essence,” he stressed. “The elections are just three months away [and] the two referenda to determine the future shape of Sudan are in just under a year.”

At the same time, millions continue to be displaced on the western flank of Sudan in the region of Darfur, noted Mr. Ban, expressing approval that African leaders supported UN efforts to secure a peaceful resolution to the Sudanese North-South and Darfurian conflicts.

At the mini-summit on Sudan, hosted by AU Commission Chairperson Jean Ping, Mr. Ban also announced his intention to appoint his Assistant-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Haile Menkerios as the new head of the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to start at the end of February with a view to facilitate the political process.

Before leaving Addis Ababa, Mr. Ban told reporters that he also informed the AU Summit of his plans to name Vice-President of the European Commission Margot Wallström as his Special Representative to tackle sexual violence against women and children in conflict situations.

Meanwhile, the recently appointed Joint Special Representative for the UN-AU peacekeeping operation in Darfur (UNAMID) Ibrahim Gambari met with AU Commission leadership, as well as several diplomatic delegations on the sidelines of the AU Summit.

In meetings with advisors to Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir, Mr. Gambari stressed that enhancing the security of civilians and internally displaced people (IDPs) providing more proactive support for the ongoing peace process and assisting in the normalization of relations between Chad and the Sudan were among UNAMID's priorities.

UN chief launches campaign in Africa to eradicate male violence against women



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launches campaign to End Violence Against Women

30 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on the support of African leaders to give new impetus to his campaign to end the violence suffered by women on the continent, which he called the “unsung heroines” of development in the region.

“We know African women are often a linchpin keeping families, communities, and nations together,” Mr. Ban said at the African launch of his “UNiTE to End Violence against Women” campaign in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

African women are the “driving force to overcome poverty, reduce hunger, fight illiteracy, heal the sick, prevent the spread of disease and promote stability,” he said in a message read on his behalf by Cheick Sidi Diarra, UN High Representative for the Least Developed

Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States.

“But far from being empowered, women are all too often subjected to horrific abuse and violence,” stressed Mr. Ban, urging leaders to address the violence through the eradication of discrimination.

The Secretary-General's UNiTE campaign, launched in 2008, calls for all countries to put in place strong laws, action plans, preventive measures, data collection, and systematic efforts to address sexual violence by 2015.

He noted that more than 5 million people have signed the “Say No to Violence Against Women” initiative, which spotlights the physical and sexual abuse experienced by up to 70 per cent of all women from men in their lifetime – the majority from husbands, intimate partners or someone they know.

“They are now looking for answers from us, from you, to uphold their right to live lives free of this threat,” said Mr. Ban.

UN food agency begins major scale up of aid to earthquake victims in Haiti

30 January - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) today began ramping up its operations in Haiti by opening 16 fixed food distribution sites offering supplies to some 2 million people affected by the massive earthquake in the capital, Port-au-Prince.



Haitians line up for UN-distributed food

“Up until now the nature of this emergency has forced us to work in a 'quick and dirty' way simply to get food out,” said WFP Executive Director Josette Sheeran.

Characterizing the emergency relief operation in Haiti – struck by a 7.0-magnitude tremor on 12 January - as the most complex ever faced by the agency, Ms. Sheeran said that the 16 fixed sites are an important step towards achieving food stability.

“This distribution system will not only allow us to reach more people, it will give us the qualitative step we need to facilitate the delivery of all kinds of humanitarian assistance in the weeks and months to come,” stressed Ms. Sheeran.

The distribution sites aim to reach over 2 million people during a two-week period under the leadership of the Haitian Government, and in coordination with the UN Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), the US military, and a group of key non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

The scale-up of the operation begins today with distributions of coupons to families across Port-au-Prince, and the first distributions will take place at all 16 sites on Sunday, continuing for 15 days.

Each family will receive a 25 kilogramme ration of rice, with only women being allowed into distribution sites to collect their share. WFP and its partners will work with the local authorities to ensure that men in need of assistance are not excluded.

Separate from this new operation, distributions to those affected by the earthquake currently living outside Port-au-Prince will continue, as will specialist support to hospitals and orphanages.

WFP's response has been hampered by the almost complete decimation of the city's infrastructure, the destruction of the supply chain to move food and other supplies into and around the country, and the huge scale of need.

Despite all these obstacles, WFP said it has reached nearly 600,000 people with over 16 million meals since the earthquake struck.

UN chief lands in Cyprus to usher reunification talks into final stages



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

31 January - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today praised the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot leaders for the significant progress made under United Nations-backed talks on reunifying Cyprus, as he arrived on the Mediterranean island for the first time.

In 2008 Greek Cypriot leader Dimitris Christofias and Turkish Cypriot leader Mehmet Ali Talat committed to establishing a federal government with a single international personality, along with a Turkish Cypriot Constituent State and a Greek Cypriot Constituent State, each of equal status.

“I am under no illusions that the Cyprus problem is easy to solve, or about the difficulties that you face,” Mr. Ban said on his arrival at Larnaca Airport. “At the same time, I am confident that a solution is possible and within reach.”

In December, the Security Council extended by six months the mandate UN peacekeeping mission in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which was set up in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the communities. After hostilities erupted again in 1974, its responsibilities were expanded to supervise ceasefire lines, maintain a buffer zone and undertake humanitarian activities.

Mr. Ban said he was impressed by the time and energy invested by the two leaders over the past 16 months during the fully-fledged negotiations on reunification of the island.

“I am pleased by the significant progress that has been achieved recently on governance and power-sharing,” he said in remarks commending the efforts of Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat.

“I am here to encourage the two leaders to bring these talks to a successful conclusion,” he said, noting that reaching a “mutually acceptable solution will require courage, flexibility and vision, as well as a spirit of compromise.

“You are the ones driving the process and the ones who will benefit from the tremendous benefits and opportunities a settlement would bring to this island,” said Mr. Ban.

During his three-day visit to Cyprus, Mr. Ban is slated to hold discussions with Alexander Downer, his Special Adviser for Cyprus, as well as with Mr. Christofias and Mr. Talat.