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## Ban announces independent review of UN-backed climate body



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) with Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman, IPCC

**10 March** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the head of the United Nations-backed panel tasked with preparing regular scientific reports on the impact of climate change today announced that the body, which is facing growing attacks from global warming sceptics, will undergo an independent and comprehensive review.

In 2007, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) issued its Fourth Assessment Report, which found the warming of the climate is outpacing natural variability, driven largely by human activity.

But its credibility has come into question after revelations that the landmark publication contained some mistakes, including over the rate of Himalayan glacier melt.

Although there were “a very small number of errors” in the 3,000-page Fourth Assessment Report, “I have seen no credible evidence that challenges the main conclusions” of the publication, Secretary-General Ki-moon underscored to reporters today.

“Let me be clear: the threat posed by climate change is real,” he said. “Nothing that has been alleged or revealed in the media recently alters the fundamental scientific consensus on climate change. Nor does it diminish the unique importance of the IPCC’s work.”

In fact, Mr. Ban said, the science underpinning climate change continues to be strong, with evidence collected since 2007 showing that it is picking up pace. “The need for action is all the more urgent.” To this end, he stressed the necessity of transparency, accuracy and objectivity, as well as the importance of curtailing the possibility of any errors in the future.

IPCC Chairman Rajendra Pachauri, at same press encounter, acknowledged criticism of the Fourth Assessment Report, but he said that the publication’s findings remain “robust” and that its “major conclusions of that report are really beyond any reasonable doubt.”

The IPCC is currently preparing to start work on the Fifth Assessment Report, scheduled to be finalized in 2014.

The InterAcademy Council (IAC), a scientific organization bringing together experts from around the world, has been tasked with reviewing the IPCC’s processes and procedures to strengthen the quality of its reports.

The review will be led by IAC co-chairs Robbert Dijkgraaf, who heads the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Science, and Lu Yongxiang, President of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

“It will be conducted completely independently of the United Nations,” Mr. Ban emphasized today.

Mr. Dijkgraaf said today that the IAC seeks to “assure nations that they will receive sound, scientific advice” so that “governments and citizens alike can make informed decisions.”

Scientists will be selected to serve on a voluntary and unpaid basis to prepare a draft report on their findings, which will then undergo an intensive peer review by other scientists. “Only when the IAC board is satisfied” will the final report be issued, he said.

Characterizing the task as “forward-looking,” Mr. Dijkgraaf said that there are “no preconceived conclusions.”

The IAC, he said, has been asked to look into issues such as data quality assurance and control; procedures for correcting errors; and analyzing the IPCC’s communications strategies.

The UN will fund the endeavour, and it seeks to submit its final report to Mr. Ban and the IPCC. It will also be transmitted to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), which set up the IPCC in 1988.

## Myanmar: Secretary-General voices concern at new electoral laws

**10 March** - New electoral laws unveiled by authorities in Myanmar do not meet United Nations expectations of what is required for an inclusive political process in the Asian country, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today.

The UN is carefully studying the laws as they are being published by the Government in preparation for planned national elections later this year, Mr. Ban said in a statement issued by his spokesperson.

According to media reports, the new laws relate to the registration of political parties and prohibit anyone with a criminal conviction from being a member of an official party.

“The indications available so far suggest that they do not measure up to our expectations of what is needed for an inclusive political process,” Mr. Ban said.

“The Secretary-General reiterates his call for the Myanmar authorities to ensure such an inclusive political process leading to fair, transparent and credible elections in which all citizens of Myanmar, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, can freely



Aung San Suu Kyi

participate.”

Ms. Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate and leader of the National League for Democracy (NLD), a prominent opposition leader, has been under house arrest for much of the past two decades. In August last year she was sentenced to an additional 18 months of detention after being convicted of violating State security laws.

Last month Mr. Ban expressed disappointment that Ms. Suu Kyi’s appeal against her house arrest was rejected and reiterated his call for her release.

Myanmar is slated to later this year conduct its first elections in over 20 years as part of a Government-designed timetable towards greater democratization.

## Ban speaks out against Israeli plans to expand settlements



An Israeli settlement in West Bank

**10 March** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who has repeatedly called for Israel’s settlement construction to come to a halt, has condemned its announcement that it is building 1,600 new housing units in East Jerusalem.

“He reiterates that settlements are illegal under international law,” according to a statement by his spokesperson issued last night in New York.

“Furthermore, he underscores that settlement activity is contrary to Israel’s obligations under the Roadmap, and undermines any movement towards a viable peace process,” it added.

The Roadmap, endorsed by the diplomatic Quartet comprising the United Nations, the European Union, the United States and Russia, calls for two States – Israel and Palestine – living side by side in peace and security.

Yesterday, Israel’s Interior Ministry announced that it has approved plans to build 1,600 new homes in East Jerusalem.

“Unfortunately, the decisions that have been taken in the past few days are not helpful... to build a climate of trust,” Filippo Grandi, the new Commissioner General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), told reporters in New York today.

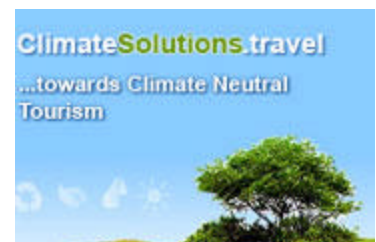
The Secretary-General noted last month that while Israel’s efforts and willingness to resume peace talks are welcome, returning to negotiations is hampered by developments on the ground, including continued settlement expansion in the occupied Palestinian territory.

“At this crucial juncture, Israel should refrain from taking steps which have the potential to prejudge negotiations and create tensions,” especially in East Jerusalem, where settlements are expanding and Palestinians are being evicted, he stressed in a message to the UN-backed International Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace held in Qawra, Malta.

## Global travel to rebound by as much as 4 per cent, says UN tourism chief

**10 March** - The head of the United Nations tourism organization is calling on the industry to strengthen its resilience, stimulate sustainable growth and contribute to the green economy as it leaves behind one of its most difficult years.

The UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) forecasts a growth of 3 to 4 per cent in international tourism this year, possibly higher in emerging regions, such as Asia. The rise follows a 4 per cent drop in tourism in 2009 and a loss in earnings of 6 per cent.



“Though there are positive signs emerging from the global economy, we all recognize that recovery is still weak, uneven, easily reversible and that many downside risks remain,” said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai at today’s opening of the ITB Travel Trade Show in Berlin, the world’s largest tourism fair.

One year after the industry issued the UNWTO Roadmap to Recovery – a framework to help the tourism sector respond to the global economic crisis while staying on track with climate and development imperatives – countries that were quick to implement mitigation measures have seen the greatest recovery, Mr. Rifai noted.

Calling unemployment the most common issue of concern at a time when “our global economic order and our global ecological balance are both challenged,” Mr. Rifai said the tourism industry can rapidly create jobs, particularly for youth and women.

He noted that in the longer term, the emphasis should not be just on any job, but on “skilled jobs, decent work and green economy jobs.”

UNWTO has increasingly spoken out about the tourism industry’s commitment to the transformation to the green economy. In October, the organization issued a warning that rising sea levels and melting snow caps could threaten lucrative travel spots, particularly in poorer countries.

In today’s speech, Mr. Rifai called on the industry to bridge the poverty gap between the developed and developing countries to contribute more fairly to globalization and global equity.

His message echoes that of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who last month said that social justice based on the values of fairness, equality and respect for diversity is more important than ever amid the global financial and economic crisis.

Mr. Rifai also called for a retooling of the industry’s business models and development of more comprehensive public policies.

“We cannot build a meaningful public-private partnership without strong, healthy and identifiable national public policies on travel and tourism,” Mr. Rifai said.

## **As Gaza blockade nears 1,000-day milestone, UN official warns situation worsens**

**10 March** - The situation in the Gaza Strip is becoming increasingly dire as the Israeli blockade approaches its 1,000th day, allowing an illegal economy to flourish, the new head of the United Nations agency tasked with assisting millions of Palestinian refugees said today.

Filippo Grandi, the Commissioner General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), said that the problems faced by Gaza are not just humanitarian, but “encompass every aspect of society.”



**Filippo Grandi, Commissioner General of UNRWA**

Last March, nations gathered in the Egyptian Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh and pledged nearly \$5 billion to help rebuild Gaza.

However, those funds cannot be disbursed, Mr. Grandi pointed out. “Virtually no materials or equipment destined for reconstruction by the UN and by the private sector... can be transported from Israel because we don’t have permission to do so.”

As a result, an illegal economy “is being imposed, almost, on the Gazans,” he stressed.

Cement producers he has spoken with in Gaza have expressed their unhappiness at having to deal with black marketeers.

“They’re very eager to be able to go back to a normal situation where materials can be imported legally according to previous agreements and therefore proper reconstruction can begin.”

Addressing reporters in New York today, Mr. Grandi also welcomed yesterday’s announcement that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will visit the region in the coming weeks.

Mr. Ban, the UNRWA official said, was the first international leader who visited Gaza following the end of Operation Cast Lead, the three-week Israeli military offensive starting at the end of 2008 which had the stated aim of ending rocket attacks by militants operating in the area.

The fighting left more than 1,400 people dead, injured 5,000 others and reduced homes, schools, hospitals and marketplaces to rubble.

Mr. Grandi, who served as Deputy Commissioner General for nearly five years before assuming the top UNRWA post in January, voiced hope that the Secretary-General’s impending visit “will also mark the beginning of a new and more positive phase for the people in Gaza and hopefully for the people in the occupied Palestinian territory as a whole.”

He also expressed concern over UNRWA’s precarious financial situation.

The agency provides assistance, protection and advocacy for some 4.7 million registered Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria and the occupied Palestinian territory, including in the areas of education, health care, community support and emergency response in times of armed conflict.

UNRWA is funded almost entirely by voluntary contributions from Member States.

It requires \$600 million a year to carry out its work, including in the education sector, where UNRWA employs 20,000 teachers. But its funding falls 20 per cent of the amount needed.

Mr. Grandi said that he hopes to roll out new schemes shortly, including helping young refugees in Gaza, where a large proportion of the population is under the age of 20. “They’re the ones who are most fragile, most exposed to all sorts of risks,” he stressed.

He met yesterday with General Assembly President Ali Treki, who noted that after more than six decades, the question of Palestinian refugees is still awaiting a just and durable solution.

Earlier this week, John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, called for “radical” changes in Israeli policies towards the occupied Palestinian territory to allow people to carry out normal and dignified lives.

“For this to happen, marginal improvements here and there are not enough,” he underscored in Jerusalem while on a visit to the region.

“I have a lot of admiration for the resilience and ingenuity of Gaza residents in trying to cope with the present circumstances,” he said. “The work of relief agencies to assist those who have to endure hardship is also remarkable.”

But he stressed that it is “disturbing” that one year after the fighting ended, “no meaningful reconstruction has yet started.”



## Ban urges Member States to rally behind Chilean quake relief efforts

**10 March** - United Nations Member States must play their part to help Chile rebuild after last month's deadly earthquake and tsunami, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today as he announced he has tasked senior UN officials with ensuring coordinated support for the emergency and recovery phases in the wake of the disaster.

Briefing an informal plenary meeting of the General Assembly at UN Headquarters in New York, Mr. Ban noted that Chile had been extraordinarily generous in helping Haiti during its time of need when a catastrophic earthquake struck that Caribbean country in January.

The Secretary-General said that now is the moment for the UN and the international community to stand with Chile and its people.

Hundreds of people were killed and numerous buildings and roads were destroyed or damaged after one of the most powerful earthquakes in history, measuring 8.8 on the Richter scale, struck the South American country on 27 February. A subsequent tsunami inundated part of the coastline.

Mr. Ban, who visited Chile last weekend to assess the situation first-hand, said today that as the magnitude of the devastation becomes clearer in the days and weeks ahead, the UN should be ready to increase its engagement with the Chilean Government to help with relief and reconstruction efforts where required.

He said he has asked John Holmes, the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, to ensure there is coordinated support both in the emergency phase after the quake and in terms of longer-range disaster management.

Mr. Ban has also tasked Helen Clark, the Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), to work closely with the Chilean Government, the World Bank and others to launch a post-disaster needs assessment.

Meanwhile, in an address yesterday to the McDonnell International Scholars Academy in New York, the Secretary-General said the recent experiences of Chile and Haiti demonstrated the worth of disaster risk reduction and national capacity. Far fewer lives were lost in the Chilean quake, even though the tremor was much stronger than the one in Haiti.

He added that he hopes that the international outpouring of support for Haiti following its disaster will continue "long after the media focus shifts elsewhere – and in other places that don't attract such attention."

In a related development, a UN expert panel in Geneva earlier this week stressed that the rights of the displaced must be "an essential component" of Haiti's recovery and reconstruction processes.

An estimated 1.9 million Haitians are internally displaced persons (IDPs), two months after the quake struck, and the panel said those people's rights "should serve as benchmarks for all recovery efforts."

The panel included Walter Kälin, the Secretary-General's Representative on the Human Rights of IDPs, and Michel Forst, the Independent Expert on the Situation of Human Rights in Haiti.



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (second right) briefs General Assembly on his recent visit to Chile

## Ban calls for renewed commitment to peace pact from Sudan ahead critical year



Haile Menkerios

**10 March** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has called on Sudan to renew its commitment to the 2005 agreement which ended the long-running north-south civil war, and to ensure a peaceful transition following next year's referendum on southern secession.

"Sudan is at a critical juncture," stressed Mr. Ban in a message delivered Tuesday by his Special Representative for Sudan Haile Menkerios to the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

"With elections scheduled for April and the referendum on the self-determination of southern Sudan less than one year away, the parties to the CPA [Comprehensive Peace Agreement] will need enormous support to resolve key outstanding issues," he told participants at the IGAD gathering in Nairobi, Kenya.

The Secretary-General noted that this week's agreement to start demarcation along the north-south border is a "positive step" and that resolving the border dispute in the contested areas around Abyei, considered the link between northern and southern Sudan, to be a "core task for the parties in the year to come."

He cautioned that post-referendum arrangements, "including wealth and power sharing between the north and the south," are a prerequisite for a peaceful transition after the referendum in 2011.

The Secretary-General told IGAD that it has a "critical role to play in supporting the relationship between the parties" which includes resolving outstanding issues and helping both sides to establish functional, stable institutions.

In addition to backing from IGAD – which consists of six Horn of Africa nations – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan, the success of the CPA depends on strong support from the international community, said the Secretary-General.

## New UN satellite standards to boost communications in emergencies



Communications satellite

**10 March** - New radiocommunication standards for satellite services that could be used to save greater lives in the wake of natural disasters have been approved, the United Nations International Telecommunications Union (ITU) announced today.

"Establishing communications in the aftermath of a disaster is vital to facilitate rapid and effective rescue and rehabilitation efforts," said the agency's Secretary-General Hamadoun Touré.

He called on satellite operators and others "to support the development of robust, comprehensive, early warning and relief systems to mitigate emergencies and disasters at the national, regional and international levels."

The recommendations include information on the range of radio frequencies that can be used by fixed satellite systems for emergency and disaster relief operations.

Recognizing the urgent need for reliable telecommunications links following disasters, such as the recent earthquakes in Haiti and Chile, ITU has joined global efforts to deploy satellite terminals and earth stations to re-establish basic communication links.

## UN aid officials warn of fears of water-borne diseases in flooded Kenya



A flooded section of the Ewaso Nyiro River along Isiolo-Samburu districts in Kenya after heavy rains

**10 March** - The recently flooded regions of Kenya could fall victim to water-borne diseases if public hygiene campaigns are not organized, the United Nations humanitarian wing warned today.

This year's rainy season in Kenya, which just begun and is expected to last through June, has killed at least 11 people and affected some 8,300 others. The northern, north-eastern and western regions of the country are the worst affected areas.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said hundreds of livestock have been washed away and farms are submerged, particularly near the country's border with Uganda, where mudslides have caused thousands to flee their homes.

In the central district of Isiolo, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) has provided chlorine for water purification.

Garba Tulla, a small town in the district known for one of the country's large schools, may need additional support since the piped water distribution system has reportedly been damaged, said the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Potable water is also needed in the north-eastern town of Mandera, near the border with Ethiopia and Somalia, where displaced people have been gathering. The town is known for droughts and frequent periods of famine.

UNICEF is consulting with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Kenyan Red Cross Society to provide health support, including the distribution of health kits which are on standby.

OCHA said it is also working with local partners on potential plans for flood-prone areas, in case of emergency.

## UN political chief arrives in Nepal as appeal for aid is launched

**10 March** - The top United Nations political official arrived in Nepal today for a three-day visit to assess the state of the peace process which ended 10 years of fighting between the Government and Maoists.

The visit comes as the peace process that ended the country's civil war, which claimed some 13,000 lives, remains largely stalled, threatened by tensions and mistrust between Maoists, the Government and the army.

The signing of a peace accord ended the conflict in 2006. After conducting Constituent Assembly elections in May 2008, Nepal abolished its 240-year-old monarchy and declared itself a republic.



B. Lynn Pascoe (centre) meets with Nepali Congress president Girija Prasad Koirala. At right is Special Representative Karin Landgren

B. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, held talks today with Nepali Congress President Girija Prasad Koirala and other congressional leaders, as well as with Pushpa Kamal Dahal, chairman of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal-Maoist (UCPN-M), and Prime Minister Madhav Kumar Nepal.

During these meetings, Mr. Pascoe underscored the importance of rebuilding trust and pushing ahead with the peace process.

He also conferred with the officials on the continuing contribution made by the UN political mission in Nepal, known as UNMIN, to the process.

UNMIN was set up at the request of the Government in 2007 to support the peace process, as well as to monitor the management of arms and armed personnel of the former Royal Nepal Army and the Maoists. Its current mandate runs until 15 May.

While in the Asian nation, Mr. Pascoe will meet with leaders of other political parties, the Defence Minister and the Army Chief of Staff. He also plans to travel to a Maoist cantonment site in Shatikhor in southern Nepal to witness UNMIN's work in arms monitoring.

In his latest report on the mission, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the political positions of these groups has "hardened at the opposing ends of the political spectrum, which has seriously eroded the common middle ground that had, from the outset, defined the peace process and remained its driving strength."

Prior to visiting Nepal, he stopped in India for a one-day meeting with Government officials in that country for discussions on a range of regional and international issues related to the UN.

In a related development, a UN-backed appeal was issued today for more than \$120 million to help 3.4 million people across Nepal in need of life-saving food aid.

Nearly half of the country's districts are short of food and the aid workers estimate that nearly 2.5 million people face extreme food insecurity, mainly in the Mid- and Far-Western Hill and Mountain Regions of western Nepal.

"As a country emerging from conflict, Nepal needs sustained international humanitarian support to see it through this fragile period of transition," said John Holmes, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs.

With some 28,000 children dying every year from preventable diseases, including from the consequences of severe malnutrition, "most of these problems can be solved with adequate donor support," he stressed.

Bolstering preparedness and early warning systems to reduce the number of people affected by future natural disasters has also been identified as top priorities by the humanitarian community.

Nepal is highly vulnerable to floods, landslides and earthquakes. Last year alone, some 152,000 people were affected by monsoon floods and landslides. Preparations in the areas of water, sanitation and hygiene are also vital after a severe diarrhoea outbreak hit western Nepal in 2009.

According to a press release issued by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), over 70 per cent of household budgets are put towards food and dependence on subsistence agriculture remains high, rendering rural households especially vulnerable.

Funding for agriculture last year did not match needs, compounding the effects of the severe winter drought. OCHA said that had there been sufficient investment in this sector, the current food crisis could have been alleviated.

The Office also noted that while economic growth and development will take to take root in the wake of conflict, generalized poverty and the lack of social services have created widespread needs.

Seven UN organizations and three non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are taking part in the appeal launched today. The funds sought – \$123.5 million – will be used to improve food security, improve nutrition, strengthen disaster preparedness and assist refugees, including the nearly 90,000 refugees from neighbouring Bhutan.

These refugees had fled ethnic tensions in their home country in the early 1990s and are sheltering in seven camps in eastern Nepal.

## General Assembly President travels to Asia for two-nation tour



General Assembly President Ali Treki

**10 March** - The President of the General Assembly is on his way to the Republic of Korea and the Philippines for talks with senior officials from both countries that will focus on interfaith dialogue, economic development and other issues.

Ali Treki travels first to Seoul, the Korean capital, for meetings with that country's President Lee Myung-bak, Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan and National Assembly Speaker Kim Hyung-O, his office announced today.

The General Assembly President will then head to Manila for a five-day official visit that will include his attendance at the Special Non-Aligned Movement Ministerial Meeting on Interfaith Dialogue for Peace and Development.

Before he left United Nations Headquarters in New York, Dr. Treki met yesterday with Gabonese President Ali Bongo Ondimba and other senior officials from the African country.

The social and economic targets known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which world leaders have pledged to try to attain by 2015, topped the agenda of the talks between Dr. Treki and Mr. Bongo Ondimba, according to information released by the Assembly President's office.

The two officials also discussed the situations in Africa and the Middle East, climate change, UN reform and economic development issues.

## UNESCO chief reaffirms commitment to protect Haiti's cultural heritage



UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova (second right) visits remains of Quisqueya University in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

**10 March** - Kicking off a visit to Haiti today, the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) today reiterated the agency's support to help the nation protect its cultural heritage – including works of art and libraries – in the wake of January's catastrophic earthquake.

"I have come to express UNESCO's solidarity with Haiti," said Director-General Irina Bokova at the start of a two-day visit to the impoverished Caribbean nation, adding she hopes to see first-hand how the agency can best assist authorities "at this crucial time for the Haitian people."

With many Haitian artefacts under threat of looting, vandalism and illicit trafficking, UNESCO has helped set up an International Coordination Committee (CIC) for Haitian culture, led by the country's Government.

Ms. Bokova is scheduled today to visit Jacmel, in the southeast, which was founded in the late 17th century and suffered extensive damage during the 7.0-magnitude quake that struck Haiti on 12 January.

Jacmel, many of whose historical structures collapsed in the disaster, is on Haiti's tentative list of sites to be put forward for consideration for inscription on UNESCO's World Heritage List.

Earlier in the day, the UNESCO chief met with Prime Minister Jean-Max Bellerive, Education Minister Joel Desrosiers Jean-Pierre and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

She also stopped at CECOSIDA, a national communications centre seeking to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, which has

been providing psychological and post-traumatic support to journalists, with UNESCO's assistance.

"In the aftermath of the disaster, the media have a key role to play in rebuilding the nation," Ms. Bokova emphasized.

On education, she reiterated UNESCO's goal to help the Government re-establish the school system in the short-term, as well as to tackle issues at all levels of schooling, from primary school to university. The agency also aims to increase the number of children in schools nationwide and to stem the so-called 'brain drain.'

Later this month, UNESCO is holding a forum in Paris on rebuilding Haiti's "social, cultural and intellectual fabric," which will be attended by Mr. Bellerive. The gathering will bring together Haitian intellectuals, artists and decision-makers, along with experts from around the globe, to define the country's short-, medium- and long-term reconstruction goals.

Yesterday, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon led UN staff and the family and friends of personnel who perished in the earthquake in honouring the memory of the 101 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in the service of the Organization.

"Today, we commemorate the single greatest loss the UN has suffered in its history," a visibly shaken Mr. Ban stated during the memorial ceremony held at UN Headquarters in New York.

The quake affected one third of Haiti's 9-million strong population and brought down the Christopher Hotel, which houses the UN headquarters in Port-au-Prince, and other buildings hosting the world body's offices.

"We remember 101 lives of consequence," Mr. Ban told the gathering, which was also attended by senior officials, representatives of Member States, and colleagues from the UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH).

The Secretary-General's Special Representative to Haiti and head of MINUSTAH, Hédi Annabi, his Deputy Luiz Carlos da Costa and Acting Police Commissioner Doug Coates were among those that were killed.

"We honour 101 unique paths that joined in Haiti to write the larger story of the United Nations," he said of the diplomats, humanitarians, doctors, drivers, police officers, soldiers and various other professionals who died on 12 January.

Though they came to Haiti from all corners of the world, from all walks of life, they had one thing in common, noted the Secretary-General. "They shared a common conviction... a belief in a better future for the people of Haiti, and a common resolve to help them build it.

"And as they fulfilled their mission in Haiti, they illuminated a profound truth – earthquakes are a force of nature, but people move the world."

Also yesterday, the top UN official in Haiti told reporters in New York that nearly two months after the earthquake, the country is moving towards recovery but will need continued urgent humanitarian relief for at least the next 12 months.

"That first phase of humanitarian aid and assistance will have to be there in a parallel track with the other two – recovery and reconstruction – because the rainy season is already arriving and we will have the hurricane season in June," said Edmond Mulet, Acting Special Representative of the Secretary-General for MINUSTAH.

Emergency shelter, site management, sanitation and food continue to be the main priorities in Haiti, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). To date, emergency shelter material has reached nearly 525,000 people, or 41 per cent of those in need.

## **UN health agency funds urgent medical supplies in landslide-hit Uganda**

**10 March** - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) is sending \$50,000 in emergency funding to Uganda



where deadly mudslides and flooding have left hundreds of thousands of people in need of shelter, food, safe water and proper sanitation, and at an increased risk of water-borne diseases.

The \$50,000 will be used to procure urgently needed medical supplies, the agency reported. It will also help alleviate the costs associated with relocating or recruiting health workers, assisting with psycho-social support and training village health teams.

At least 92 people have been killed and hundreds of others are unaccounted for after a massive landslide on 1 March in Bududa district, near the extinct volcano of Mount Elgon on the Kenyan border.

More than 300,000 people in the Mount Elgon region and the neighbouring lowlands of Butaleja, Budaka and Tororo districts have been displaced, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

At least 104 people, mostly children, have been reported to suffer from diarrhoea at the Bukalsi Health Centre in Bududa.

Working with the Ugandan Government, which is leading the emergency response, UN officials have said that so far there are no reports of cholera, but warned about the possible health risks of increased malaria, acute malnutrition and psychological disorders.

WHO also cautioned that the likelihood of water-borne disease outbreaks remains high given the lack of proper sanitation at temporary camps, where large numbers of people are huddled, and water systems may be damaged or contaminated.

WHO Uganda is in urgent need of emergency medical and surgical supplies, including medicines and surgical equipment, and water quality surveillance kits. Insecticide-treated bed nets are also required for preventing malaria infection.

## In Gaza, UN teams destroy unexploded ordnance with white phosphorus

**10 March** - Special United Nations bomb disposal units today successfully destroyed two unexploded ordnance (UXO) containing white phosphorus in the Gaza Strip, the first of a series of planned activities to be conducted in the region over the coming months.



The UXO are the remains of Operation Cast Lead, the three-week military operation started at the end of 2008 against Hamas by the Israeli Government.

“I am proud of United Nations mine action efforts today,” said Max Kerley, Director of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS). “Our specialist teams work tirelessly to remove unexploded ordnance and increase the safety of the people of Gaza,” he added.

International Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) teams – together with the UN Mines Advisory Group and relevant authorities in Israel and Gaza – destroyed two 155-millimetre UXO containing white phosphorus, UNMAS announced.

The UN has also been supporting key mine action response activities in the region, including assessing and neutralizing the threat of unexploded ordnance and providing coordination for explosive ordnance disposal teams.

Mine action staff has also provided safety awareness training to more than 1,500 personnel involved in UN, non-governmental organization (NGO) humanitarian activities within Gaza, and to the local population.

The work reduces the potential for death and injury and to support rubble removal, reconstruction and rehabilitation of housing, infrastructure, agricultural land and livelihoods, UNMAS said.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is scheduled to visit Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip following next week’s meeting in Moscow on the Middle East peace process.

## African leaders support agribusiness plan at UN-backed conference

**10 March** - High-level representatives from 44 African countries wrapped up a United Nations-backed conference in Nigeria today with the approval of an ambitious plan to generate employment, income and food security across the continent through agribusiness.

The scheme provides a framework and financial mechanisms for public and private sectors investors to finance development of the agricultural industry in Africa, whose population could double by 2050 to reach 2 billion people.

Sub-Saharan Africa alone will need \$940 billion of cumulative investment over the next 40 years – most of it for agribusiness capital outlays – to feed its people, according to the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

“Agribusiness in Africa needs to undergo a profound structural transformation and technological upgrading during the next 20 years to generate jobs and income urgently needed by Africa’s growing population,” said UNIDO Director-General Kande K. Yumkella.

The African Agribusiness and Agro-industries Development Initiative, or 3ADI, was endorsed at a three-day gathering in the Nigerian capital Abuja, attended by some 500 participants – including heads of State, prime ministers and the ministers of agriculture and industry – and organized by UNIDO, with the African Union (AU), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and the African Development Bank.

“It is essential to avoid policies, such as subsidies on labour-saving technologies, that bias technology choice in favour of large-scale, highly mechanized operations,” stressed Mr. Yumkella.

He underscored the importance of developing agribusiness on a regional and continent-wide level, adding that private enterprises had to be stimulated, technology and innovation expanded, innovative financing mechanisms introduced, infrastructure and energy constraints removed.

“For agribusiness to become competitive, policies need to be in place, as well as research and practical actions to achieve a unique blend of ecological compliance and inclusive growth,” he said.

African States have pledged to invest through the AU a minimum of 10 per cent of budgetary resources in the agricultural sector, and the Group of Eight industrialized countries (G-8) conference in Italy last year renewed the donor community commitment to the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme, which has set an annual agricultural growth target of 6 per cent to achieve the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of halving poverty by 2015.

In a related development, UNIDO and Ecobank Transnational Incorporated (ETI), a leading pan-African banking group, signed an agreement to work together in promoting economic growth in Africa, particularly in the area of agribusiness, including food, leather, textiles, wood, agro-machinery; on renewable energy, including bio-energy initiatives, on hydro power projects, and other environmentally sustainable projects; as well as on clean technologies.



Promoting agribusiness and agro-industries in Africa