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### World Humanitarian Day: UN honours sacrifices, celebrates spirit of aid workers

**19 August** - The United Nations is marking World Humanitarian Day today by paying tribute to aid workers who carry out life-saving activities around the world, often in dangerous and difficult circumstances, while celebrating the spirit of humanitarian work worldwide.

“On World Humanitarian Day, we honour the heroic aid workers who rush bravely to help people in need. We remember their sacrifices, and we recognize the millions of people who count on humanitarian workers for their very survival,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message for the Day.

The Day is observed annually on 19 August, the anniversary of the 2003 bombing of the UN headquarters in Baghdad that killed 22 people, including UN envoy Sergio Vieira de Mello. Among today’s events is a wreath-laying ceremony at UN Headquarters in New York to honour aid workers killed in the line of duty.

This year’s observance comes at a time when the number of aid workers killed, kidnapped and seriously wounded has reached the highest number ever recorded, according to new figures published today by the United Kingdom-based organization known as Humanitarian Outcomes.

The research shows that in 2013, 155 aid workers were killed, 171 were seriously wounded and 134 were kidnapped. Overall this represents a 66 per cent increase in the number of victims from the previous year. With 81 aid workers killed in 2013, Afghanistan is still the country with the highest number of attacks.

Preliminary figures show that as of 15 August 2014, 79 aid workers have been killed this year alone. The months of July and August saw a rise in the level of attacks and incidents involving aid workers including in Gaza and South Sudan.
“One aid worker killed in the line of duty is one too many. Nurses, engineers, logisticians and drivers for example all take
great risk doing their work in sometimes extremely dangerous and difficult circumstances,” said Valerie Amos, the Under-
Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

“World Humanitarian Day is the day we remember the sacrifices that humanitarian workers make. We also pay tribute to all
humanitarians who work to help and support the most vulnerable,” added Ms. Amos, who is attending a memorial service in
London for aid workers.

Under the theme, “The world needs more Humanitarian Heroes”, events took place around the world and first-hand accounts
were heard from humanitarians working on the front line of the world’s most dangerous conflicts.

Among those in the audience at UN Headquarters was the UN Secretary-General, who denounced attacks on humanitarian
workers as attacks on humanitarian aid itself, leaving “children unvaccinated, the sick and wounded untreated, and people
forced from their homes without shelter, food or water.”

The Secretary-General listened to accounts by humanitarian workers like Pernille Ironside, who has worked to aid and
protect children of Gaza and Ken Payumo, a former New York Police Department (NYPD) officer who spent 10 years in the
field in Bor, Sudan, and drew attention to the Humanitarian Heroes website, where hundreds of aid workers tell their stories.

Mr. Ban, as did a representative of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) at a similar event at the UN Office in Geneva, saluted
the drivers who risk their lives working taking humanitarian workers to those in need.

“Let me share with you the words of Gervais Beninga, a driver for the World Food Programme in the Central African
Republic, where communal violence has left 2.5 million in need of urgent help,” the Secretary-General said. “Gervais faces
serious risks every day. Armed groups could loot his precious cargo. He himself could be targeted for violence and
intimidation. Yet is not deterred. As he drives toward people in need, he is driven by the humanitarian imperative.”

The panellists at the New York event included Pernille Ironside, currently working in Gaza with the UN Children’s Fund
(UNICEF) to provide support of the local population. She stressed that United Nations should provide security
for all the displaced people in the region.

“It is the population of the region that inspires humanitarian workers,” she said, adding: “A humanitarian is someone who
tries to give voice to the voiceless, [so] everyone can take important steps in their lives to help and be a hero for someone.”

Ken Payumo, a former officer with the New York Police Department who has worked in several missions, most recently in
South Sudan, where at a UN compound he helped save the lives of over 12,000 civilians.

“I had to make the decision and respond to the threat” said Mr. Payumo. He told the audience that after being threatened, he
had to make the decision to close the gates to protect the lives of his colleagues, before his own.

He stressed that people who would like to help and to make a difference in the world do not need to go far; they could start
where they live, right in their local communities. “It doesn’t matter where you are, there is always someone that needs your
help” he concluded.

Anthony Lake, the Executive Director of the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), noted in a statement that aid workers endure
harsh conditions and risk harm to save lives, rebuild communities, and bear witness in conflicts, catastrophes, and crises.

“These emergencies have increased in both frequency and complexity. So, too, has the risk to humanitarian workers – and
the death toll among them has risen accordingly,” he said.

Only last month, he pointed out, humanitarian workers were killed in South Sudan by armed fighters while supporting the
mission to reach malnourished children before it is too late. In Gaza, aid workers have lost their lives in shelling attacks
while providing critical care to the sick, the wounded, and the dying, and comforting families of the dead.
And in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea, health workers trying desperately to save lives in the Ebola epidemic have succumbed to the deadly virus themselves. Others have been threatened with bodily harm for trying to stop the spread of the disease.

“The loss of these heroes is a loss to the entire humanitarian community – and the world,” said Mr. Lake. “On World Humanitarian Day, we mourn their deaths and mark their sacrifice. We also honour the dedication of all the brave women and men who continue to do their jobs every day despite the risks – in the service of our common cause: A more safe, just, and peaceful world.”

UN General Assembly President John Ashe said the Day is not only an opportunity for the international community to celebrate the spirit of humanitarian work, but also to underscore the need to do more, as growing humanitarian crises continue to threaten millions of the most vulnerable communities where lives have been torn apart by war and other natural disasters.

“As we look to implement a new sustainable development agenda, eradicating poverty while maintaining peaceful societies based on an inclusive, people-centred approach will be essential components if we are to achieve success and build a just and prosperous future for all the world’s citizens,” he said in a statement.

As part of this year’s celebration of humanitarian action, the UN is shining the spotlight on ‘humanitarian heroes’ – the aid workers themselves – and their stories of life on the frontline of some of the world’s worst and often forgotten humanitarian crises.

**Iraq: UN refugee agency launches major humanitarian aid push for displaced people**

**19 August** - The United Nations refugee agency said today that it is launching one of its largest humanitarian aid pushes in response to the deteriorating situation in Iraq, aiming to help close to a half million people who had been forced to flee their homes.

Barring last minute delays, an air, road and sea operation will begin tomorrow with a four-day airlift from Aqaba in Jordan to Erbil in Iraq. This will be followed by road convoys from Turkey and Jordan, and sea and land shipments from Dubai via Iran over the next 10 days.

“The major focus is on improving living conditions for the displaced in the region, particularly people without shelter or housing,” said Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). “Conditions remain desperate for those without access to suitable shelter, people struggling to find food and water to feed their families, and those without access to primary medical care.

“Many are still coming to grips with the tragedy they’ve been through in recent weeks – fleeing homes with nothing, and many trying to cope with the loss of loved ones. Emergency support is an urgent need that we are trying to meet,” he told reporters in Geneva.

Included in the initial aid shipments are 3,300 tents, 20,000 plastic sheets, 18,500 kitchen sets, and 16,500 jerry cans. This assistance and further aid deliveries is being made possible thanks to a recent $500 million donation from Saudi Arabia, as well as support from the United States, the United Kingdom, Japan, Denmark, Kuwait, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and global retailer IKEA – a UNHCR corporate partner.

Meanwhile, inside Iraq, UNHCR is already working closely with regional authorities in the Kurdistan Region, where at least half the displaced have settled, some 200,000 of them since early August when the city of Sinjar and neighbouring areas were seized by armed groups.

The Saudi contribution has also enabled the UN World Food Programme (WFP) to scale up food assistance to hundreds of thousands of Iraqis displaced from their homes in recent weeks.
“The food security situation in Iraq is alarming – the worst that the country has witnessed since the sanctions in the early 1990s,” Mohamed Diab, Director of WFP’s Regional Bureau for the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, said in a news release.

“The breakdown of the Public Distribution System for food in many parts of Iraq, the destruction and confiscation of agricultural produce, widespread insecurity and massive displacement of civilians have resulted in immense hardship and untold human suffering,” he stated.

Despite a challenging security situation and displaced people on the move since mid-June, WFP has distributed food to more than 524,000 people in 10 governorates across the country and has plans to scale up its operation to reach 1.2 million people by early 2015.

An estimated 1.2 million Iraqis have been displaced so far in 2014, including some 600,000 people uprooted by the Anbar province crisis which began in January, and 600,000 displaced from conflicts in and around Mosul and more recently Sinjar, since August.

The UN humanitarian spokesperson in Iraq, Kieran Dwyer, said in an interview with UN Radio, that resources are a critical element to helping the hundreds of thousands affected by the ongoing crisis in the country.

“This $500 million from the Saudi Government is allowing the United Nations to scale up fast and get aid wherever we can get access to work with the local authorities,” Mr. Dwyer said.

He added that security is a major challenge in gaining access to many areas of Iraq and delivering vital assistance to those who need it.

“Humanitarian workers cannot get access to many areas of Iraq in order to deliver aid,” he said, noting the rapid unravelling of the humanitarian situation and well as the still unstable security situation. “We need to urgently make sure we have the conditions for them to survive and secondly, we need to stabilize the situation so that we can bring consistent services.”

**Briefing Security Council, UN deputy chief urges protection for frontline ‘humanitarian heroes’**

19 August - United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson had one main message – “we must protect humanitarian workers” – as he marked World Humanitarian Day with a special briefing to the Security Council, addressing a subject critical to people caught in conflict.

Recalling that the Day commemorates the 19 August 2003 bombing of the UN premises at the Canal Hotel in Baghdad, Mr. Eliasson said the occasion is “dedicated to the memory of all the staff members and partners who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the line of duty for the humanitarian imperative.”

“We have since then seen shocking tragedies and terrorist acts against UN personnel and premises in places like Algeria, Nigeria, Somalia and Afghanistan. These appalling incidents remain fresh in our minds,” he added during his briefing, which also included statements from Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and Masood Director and Co-Founder of The Liaison, an Afghan non-governmental organization (NGO).

Humanitarian workers from the UN, the ICRC, international organizations and NGO’s dedicate their lives to assisting millions of women, children and men affected by conflicts and natural disasters around the world. Working in some of the most dangerous places, they take great risks to help people in desperate need.
“Yet, all too frequently,” Mr. Eliasson continued “their safety is compromised in the most despicable of ways: by threats, by attacks, and by the use of illegal methods of warfare that endanger lives or damage the infrastructure needed for the delivery of assistance.”

Such acts are part of a brutalization seen today in which parties to conflict often ignore international humanitarian law and target civilians for political and military gains. They have used collective punishment, incited ethnic violence, impeded the delivery of humanitarian assistance and attacked humanitarian actors.

He commented: “What this represents is nothing less than a deficit of humanity. Regretfully, this trend is getting worse, rather than better.”

Last year, more humanitarian workers were kidnapped, seriously injured or killed than ever before: 155 were reportedly killed; 171 were wounded and 134 kidnapped – representing a 66 per cent increase from 2012. According to preliminary figures, 2014 has already witnessed the deaths of 79 humanitarian workers in addition to 33 wounded and 50 kidnapped.

“In Somalia alone,” Mr. Eliasson asserted, “over a dozen humanitarian staff were kidnapped or detained during the first quarter of 2014. In recent weeks, several humanitarian workers have been killed in South Sudan and in Gaza.”

The consequences are not only felt by humanitarian workers and their families but also by the millions of people who cannot be reached when assistance is sabotaged by violence. They are felt by the children who do not get vaccinated; the sick and wounded who go untreated; and by those forced from their homes and left without shelter.

In recent years, the majority of incidents have occurred in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan and Syria – with the overwhelming majority of victims being national humanitarian workers struggling to save the lives of their own people.

“As we mourn these losses, and recall the plight of the many wounded and kidnapped, we must not accept this as the necessary cost of operating in risky environments,” Mr. Eliasson argued. “Our shared responsibility is to do everything we can to provide humanitarians with the safety and the space they need to do their life-saving work.”

Humanitarian action must not be politicized. A clear distinction between humanitarian actors and political or military actors must be guarded – even when military objectives are to protect civilians.

“If these lines are blurred, perceptions of humanitarian organizations can change quickly and radically and further expose them to violence,” warned the UN deputy chief. “For this reason, political and military actors must respect the need for humanitarian actors to carry out their work in an impartial, neutral and independent manner. Dialogue on how to best maintain this distinction – strike this balance, I would say – is an on-going endeavour.”

“This must include preserving the ability of humanitarian workers to engage with all parties to conflict. Such engagement serves humanitarian purposes. But I want to stress that it does not confer legal status or political legitimacy on non-state groups,” he explained.

Mr. Eliasson outlined four priority actions for the Security Council to support urgently needed humanitarian work in conflict situations. First, it can routinely call on parties to conflict to uphold their legal obligations – and condemn them when they do not.

Second, the Council can ensure that measures to safeguard peace and security, such as the negotiation of peace agreements or deployment of UN peacekeeping operations, do not blur the lines between political, military and humanitarian objectives. “Humanitarian efforts, essential as they are, are no substitute for political action to resolve the causes of conflicts,” Mr. Eliasson underscored.

Third, the Council can impose targeted measures against parties to conflict who violate their obligations to respect and protect humanitarian workers and the civilian population.
And finally, it can use all tools at its disposal to seek accountability for those who perpetrate attacks against humanitarian workers and assets. “This means supporting investigations and prosecutions at the national level, creating special criminal tribunals or mixed arrangements, making use of commissions of enquiry and fact finding missions, and referring relevant situations to the International Criminal Court,” elaborated the Deputy Secretary-General.

Those who take civilian populations hostage – consciously spreading fear and using intimidation to reach their goals – must never succeed.

Mr. Eliasson closed by reiterating that attacks against humanitarian workers and facilities were part of a deeply disturbing trend. “I think of the increase in unacceptable and cowardly attacks against civilians in armed conflict, and the sadly growing lack of respect for international humanitarian law. Let us not accept, but let us stop, the growing deficit of humanity,” he pressed.

On World Humanitarian Day, the Deputy Secretary-General encouraged everyone to honour the victims. “Let us protect the heroes on the frontlines of disaster and war, and let us do everything we can to help them – and to help us all – to alleviate human suffering in a difficult time of turmoil and violence in the world,” he concluded.

As South Sudan crisis grows, Ethiopia becomes Africa’s largest refugee host

19 August - Ethiopia has surpassed Kenya in hosting the most refugees in Africa, sheltering 629,000 refugees as of the end of July, the United Nations refugee agency announced on Tuesday.

“The main factor in the change in the situation is the increased numbers of refugees fleeing the conflict in South Sudan,” Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told journalists in Geneva today.

That conflict, which erupted in mid-December, has sent 188,000 refugees into Ethiopia since the beginning of 2014, he said.

Kenya, however, is still a major country hosting more than 575,000 refugees and asylum-seekers.

According to UNHCR, there are 250,000 South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia, making them the largest refugee population in the country, followed by Somalis and Eritreans. Over the last seven months, nearly 15,000 Eritreans and more than 3,000 Somalis have also arrived in Ethiopia.

“UNHCR, together with the Ethiopian Government and other partners, are providing protection and humanitarian aid across 23 refugee camps and five transit sites around literally all sides of the country,” said Mr. Edwards, adding that “three of the camps and three transit sites are new… [and] are at capacity, and UNHCR is developing two more.”

Despite continuing humanitarian efforts, heavy rain in Ethiopia remains an urgent challenge, which not only deteriorates the water and sanitation situation, but it also threatens some low-lying sites, with Leitchuor Camp being the most seriously flood-hit shelter.

Some 10,000 refugees, more than one-fifth of its population, have been affected by the underwater tents and shelters and collapsed latrines.

UNHCR and its partners are working to drain the accumulated rainwater into a nearby small stream as quickly as possible, according to Mr. Edwards. “UNHCR continues to work with the Government and the federal and regional authorities to identify additional sites that were less susceptible to flooding,” he said.

With about 25,000 refugees arriving every month in Ethiopia, Mr. Edwards further stressed that most are vulnerable children. To that end, UNHCR is girding up its loins to tackle Hepatitis E, which have spread across South Sudan in the last
few years and have appeared in camps in Ethiopia.

In mid-December 2013, conflict sprang from a political impasse between President Salva Kiir and former Vice President Riek Machar, leaving an estimated 1.5 million people uprooted and on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe.

**Ebola: UN health agency reports encouraging signs in Nigeria, Guinea**

**19 August** - While the trends of the outbreak of Ebola in Nigeria and Guinea, where the virus made its first appearance in West Africa last December, have shown encouraging signs, the United Nations health agency today expressed concern about the situation in the Liberian capital of Monrovia.

Meanwhile, the UN World Health Organization (WHO) reported that as of August 16, the total number of Ebola cases was 2,240 with 1,229 deaths in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

The UN System Senior Coordinator on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) Dr. David Nabarro told reporters this afternoon at UN Headquarters that he and Dr. Keiji Fukuda, WHO Assistant Director-General for Health Security, would be heading to the Ebola-affected region this week after first visiting Washington, D.C., to establish how best the United Nations can support affected communities in West Africa and enable health workers to their jobs.

Dr. Nabarro said he will be travelling to Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Nigeria in that order with a stopover in Senegal at the beginning and end of the trip.

In addition to supporting the health sector to avoid, cope and prevent further transmission, he noted that the current Ebola outbreak has humanitarian and political and potentially a security impact, requiring “a really comprehensive support” from the UN system.

In response to a question about the shortage of health workers in the Ebola-affected region of West Africa, he noted that the number of health workers needed was “many many more than is available right now.”

And on a question about concerns about misinformation, Dr. Nabarro said: “Making sure that people have the best possible information is our duty,” adding “It is vital that all of us, use all our powers, to share correct information.”

When asked about the stigma recovering patients face, he said it is “not appropriate that people should be shunned this way.”

“Making sure people have the best possible information is our duty and the duty of all people who work at the United Nations. I think it is vital that all of us use all of our powers to share what we believe is the truth. It is only when people have that information and trust that it is correct will they feel comfortable in being able to tackle this disease.”

“This outbreak has major societal and economic consequences that will be felt for years,” he said, emphasizing that Governments should seek support in a way that empowers them to deal not just with this outbreak but future outbreaks.

“It’s good to be prepared. The reality is that when these threats happen we always say why don’t we invest in preparedness, but when they go away we put our attention to other things. Preparedness for infectious diseases really matters in our world,” he stressed.

“We’ve got to go on learning because often the thing around the corner is much nastier that what we have just dealt with,” he said.
In its latest assessment, WHO said at present, no cases have been confirmed anywhere else in the world outside the four affected countries – Guinea, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Nigeria.

“The situation in Lagos, Nigeria, where the first imported case was detected in July, looks reassuring,” WHO said. “At present, the city’s 12 confirmed cases are all part of a single chain of transmission” and so far, no cases have been identified outside that chain and the 21-day incubation period has lapsed.

“The full recovery to date of one infected contact is additional good news,” it said. “It counters the widespread perception that infection with the Ebola virus is invariably a death sentence.”

WHO also reported that the outbreak in Guinea is less alarming than in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Public awareness of the facts about Ebola is higher there than in the other affected countries and innovative solutions are being found, the agency said. “For example, respected community leaders have been used to secure the cooperation of 26 villages that were highly resistant to outside help,” it said.

“However, the outbreak is not under control.” It said and cautioned recent experience shows, progress is fragile, with a real risk that the outbreak could experience another flare-up. A case in a previously unaffected area was reported last week, indicating continuing spread to new areas.

WHO Spokeswoman Fadéla Chaib told a press briefing in Geneva earlier today that the UN health agency was working with the United Nations, especially with the World Food Programme, to ensure people in the quarantine zones received regular food, aid and other non-medical supplies. Quarantine zones have been set up in areas of high transmission, including severely affected cities such as Guékédou in Guinea, Kenema and Kailahun in Sierra Leone and Foya in Liberia.

Ms. Chaib said that WHO was encouraging countries to scale up their response to the Ebola outbreak; it was requesting them to help with medical teams, equipment and financial resources, and had made an appeal for more than $100 million of which about 70 per cent was funded to date.

Concerning the situation in Liberia, and in Monrovia specifically, where many clinics have been shut down, Ms. Chaib said that in the country there were 834 cases including 466 deaths and stressed that the situation in Monrovia was of concern to WHO.

Communities in Liberia are being encouraged to set up temporary facilities in schools and other places in order to provide care for people who might be infected with Ebola and so avoid infecting their families, prior to the move of Ebola patients to specialized clinics, she said.

WHO also used the occasion of World Humanitarian Day today to draw attention to the threats and harassment of health workers in West African countries have also been a worrying element of the Ebola outbreak. These professionals are taking personal risks to provide critical medical care, but have been threatened, shunned and stigmatized.

“Doctors, nurses and other health workers must be allowed to carry out their life-saving humanitarian work free of threat of violence and insecurity,” said WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan.
Amid unprecedented destruction, Gaza needs ‘new deal’-style recovery plan – UN official

19 August - Concerned by the many civilian casualties and the unprecedented scale of destruction in the latest military conflict between Israel and Palestinian militants, a senior United Nations official urged today the international community to “rethink the Gaza paradigm.”

“On World Humanitarian Day, let us put politics aside and focus on the human impact, on the utmost urgency of delivering a new deal for all those affected by the Gaza conflict,” said Pierre Krähenbühl, Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA).

“The lesson of the last month is that millions of civilians deserve better. We now have an opportunity. Let us seize it,” he said in a statement.

Continuing, he said that UNRWA estimates around 17,000 destroyed or damaged homes, rendering 100,000 people homeless and stressed that Gaza needs a “new deal: recovery and reconstruction.”

Mr. Krähenbühl arrived in Gaza on 16 August to review the situation, while the parties agreed to cease-fire and to continue Egyptian-mediated talks. During his 2-day visit, the UN senior official met with representatives from the National Consensus Government, civil society groups, families of the 11 UNRWA personnel lost during the conflict, and visited some of the agency’s shelters.

“I made my third trip to Gaza since the current round of fighting just a couple of days ago and I was struck by the extent of destruction on a scale unprecedented for Gaza in recent times.”

“We need to rethink the Gaza paradigm that has seen thousands of civilians killed and injured and wreaked so much destruction, in a pattern of violence that erupts every two or three years.”

Mr. Krähenbühl also reiterated his call for respect of international law and lasting peace in the region.

“Gaza must have its freedom; freedom of access, freedom of movement, freedom to import and export, freedom from aid dependency.”

Welcoming political progress, UN envoy warns of dire humanitarian situation in Central African Republic

19 August - With a month left to the before full deployment of the United Nations mission in the Central African Republic (CAR), the UN envoy for that country today said that while there have been pockets of improvements, the overall humanitarian and security situation in the country remains dire and “extremely volatile.”

Briefing the Security Council this afternoon, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in CAR, Babacar Gaye, welcomed the significant political progress made at the summit of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, and the meeting of the International Contact Group in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

“Holding the Brazzaville Forum and the signing of the ceasefire on 23 July marked the beginning of a political process, which is essential for lasting stability in the Central African Republic. This is an important
“step forward,” Mr. Gaye said.

“However, clashes in Batangafo and more recently in Mbres, are a stark reminder that the security situation remains extremely volatile and that civilians remain at risk in most parts of the country.”

The human rights situation remains dire. Although more limited in scope, sectarian violence and reprisals continue in many places in the country where State authority remains largely absent. Recalling a recent visit to Bambari, Mr. Gaye said local authorities underscored the high level of tension between Muslim and Christian communities.

The priorities of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSCA) include implementing provisions of the Agreement on Cessation of Hostilities, and setting up a mechanism to investigate violations. Ending impunity remains a key priority, Mr. Gaye said.

The peacekeeping mission will begin its operations in the country in four weeks with the transfer of authority from the current African-led International Support Mission to the Central African Republic (MISCA).

Mr. Gaye recalled that supporting the Government in the creation of a national jurisdiction will not only require the support of MINUSCA but that of the broader international community.

Humanitarian needs remained huge, the Special Representative continued, with some 2.5 million people, nearly half of the country’s population, in need of assistance.

“We have a moral duty to remain mobilized around the Central African crisis and the suffering of its people,” Mr. Gaye said.

**UN Member States receive report on finance for sustainable development**

**19 August** - The General Assembly formally received today an expert report setting out options that can be weighed by Member States on ways to finance the United Nations-driven sustainable development agenda, which will aim to improve people’s lives and protect the planet for future generations.

The report, Forwarded to the Assembly by the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing established that, with appropriate reallocation, a robust $22 trillion in annual global savings could meet the financing needs for sustainable development in the future.

Asserting that most resources were not allocated to where they are most needed, the Committee noted that even a small shift in appropriations would have an enormous impact – improving people’s lives and protecting the planet for future generations.

At the conclusion of the Committee’s fifth and final session at UN Headquarters, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo praised the body’s work and the leadership of its two co-chairs, Pertti Majanen of Finland and Mansur Muhtar of Nigeria, in guiding its efforts.

“I have not the slightest doubt that the report you have adopted will provide a significant contribution to the post-2015 development agenda,” he said.

The report outlines an analytical framework for financing sustainable development; proposes various policy options at the country level; and suggests advancing global partnerships for sustainable development.

World leaders have called for an ambitious long-term sustainability agenda to succeed and address the unfinished business
of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which are to be achieved by 2015 – beginning with the eradication of extreme poverty.

Building on MDG successes, in addition to promoting sustained and inclusive economic growth in poor countries to permanently wipe out poverty, the new agenda will also need to encompass sustainable development challenges, such as environmental degradation.

As part of the broader post-2015 development agenda, the Expert Committee’s report provides a foundation for continued intergovernmental discussions leading up to the third International Conference on Financing for Development – in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in July 2015 – and the Summit – in New York, September 2015 – where world leaders are expected to adopt the post-2015 development agenda.

To best meet diverse financial needs, the Committee suggests an approach built on key principles, such as: country ownership of sustainable development financing strategies; the public sector’s central role and the importance of official development assistance; efficiently blending domestic, international, public and private financing sources; and mainstreaming sustainable development criteria in financing and implementing strategies.

Based on these principles, the Committee suggests “a toolkit of policy options and financial instruments to be used within a cohesive national sustainable development strategy.” With a wide range of options proposed, the report says, “the choice of specific policy measures should be determined by domestic political considerations and other country-specific circumstances.”

The Committee also considered the most recent proposal of the UN General Assembly’s Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals for a set of goals on economic, social and environmental dimensions to improve people’s lives and protect the planet for future generations.

**Thai law on defaming monarchy has ‘chilling effect’ on free expression – UN rights office**

*19 August* - The United Nations rights office today expressed serious concern over the prosecution and harsh sentencing of individuals in Thailand under the country’s so called lèse majesté law and its “chilling effects” on freedom of expression.

In Geneva, Ravina Shamdasani, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), said that since the 22 May coup, at least 13 new lèse majesté cases have been opened for investigation while others where charges had previously not been laid, have been revived.

“Such measures are adding to the larger pattern of increasing restrictions on freedom of expression in Thailand,” she warned, adding that just last week, two university students were arrested for participating in a play in October 2013 that depicted a fictional monarch who was manipulated by his advisor.

The arrests followed a number of convictions and harsh sentences in lèse majesté cases, including that of Plutnarin Thanaboriboonsuk, who was also charged under the Computer Crime Act in relation to messages he posted on Facebook. He was sentenced on 31 July to 15 years in prison. That sentence came less than two months after charges were laid on 16 June, even though the investigation had remained pending for more than two years.

In another case, on 14 August, Yuthasak Kangwanwongsakul, a taxi driver, was sentenced to two years and six months in jail under the lèse majesté laws for a conversation he had with a passenger.

“We are concerned that more charges may be filed and that more harsh sentences may be issued in the coming weeks,” said Shamdasani.
In 2013, High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay indicated her support for amendments of Thailand’s lèse majesté law under its section 112 of the Criminal Code to address concerns related to the implementation of the law.

In 2011, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of expression and opinion also urged the amendment, stating that section 112 was too vague and prescribes long maximum sentences that are contrary to permissible restrictions on freedom of expression under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which Thailand has ratified.

“We reiterate our call to the military administration to ensure its compliance with Thailand’s obligations under international human rights law, especially the ICCPR,” Shamdasani said.

“The threat of the use of the lèse majesté laws adds to the chilling effects on freedom of expression observed in Thailand after the coup, and risks curbing critical debate on issues of public interest.”

**UN mission in South Sudan condemns ‘sustained gunfire’ near Bentiu base**

19 August - The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) today condemned the live gunfire by Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA) soldiers near the UN base in Bentiu, that wounded a child.

According to a statement, at approximately 9:45 am yesterday morning, 18 August, “sustained gunfire,” lasting for 30 minutes, was heard around the UNMISS compound in Bentiu, Unity state which houses thousands of displaced people.

“All indications are that the firing into the air was done in the direction of the UNMISS Bentiu base,” the Mission said, adding that it has recovered nine bullets which penetrated its accommodations and office blocks inside the protection of civilian area.

The source of the firing came from nearby Rubkona Airstrip, where SPLA soldiers are stationed. The Mission has been advised that the shooting was done by SPLA troops, who were “firing in the air, in celebration of war veterans’ day.”

The incident could potentially have harmed more civilians as well as UN personnel, the Mission said and called on the SPLA to desist with all live fire celebratory exercises in the vicinity of its bases and civilian sites.

The latest shooting comes on the heels of Friday’s outbreak of violence in Bentiu which caused hundreds of people to seek shelter at the nearest airport. The Mission reported hearing heavy, sustained small arms and artillery fire. Approximately 340 civilians took shelter with UNMISS troops at the airport, where they were protected and then escorted to the POC area.

Political in-fighting between President Salva Kiir and his former deputy, Riek Machar, started in mid-December 2013 and subsequently turned into a full-fledged conflict that also sent nearly 100,000 civilians fleeing to UNMISS bases around the country. Overall, the crisis has uprooted some 1.5 million people and placed more than 7 million at risk of hunger and disease.

These latest clashes come as the two rivals and their representatives fell short of the goal of reaching a power-sharing deal by 10 August, through talks in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, being facilitated by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

On a visit to South Sudan last week, the United Nations Security Council reiterated that it is ready to impose sanctions against anyone who undermines the ongoing peace talks.
Speaking in South Sudan’s capital of Juba last week, United Kingdom Ambassador Mark Lyall Grant, President of the Council for the month of August, said that all 15 members of the body agree that “there will be consequences for those who try to undermine agreements that are reached in the Addis Ababa talks.”