Mali: UN condemns attack which killed six peacekeepers

2 July - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned today the attack against a convoy of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), which killed six peacekeepers and injured five others.

“The Secretary-General reminds all parties that attacks against UN peacekeepers constitute a serious violation of international law and urges all those responsible to be brought swiftly to justice;” says a statement issued by a UN spokesperson. Earlier, MINUSMA chief Mongi Mamdi had also strongly condemned the attack and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

All of the killed and wounded peacekeepers are from Burkina Faso. Carried out in Goundam-Timbuktu axis, in the Timbuktu region, this attack brings the total number of casualties from hostile acts since the beginning of MINUSMA deployment on 25 April 2013 to 42 peacekeepers killed, including ten in 2015 alone, and 166 peacekeepers wounded.

“These attacks will not alter the determination of the United Nations to support the Malian people and the peace process, including through its assistance to the implementation of the Agreement for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali,” stresses the statement.

The Secretary-General, adds the Spokesperson, expresses his sincere condolences to the family of the victims and to the Government of Burkina Faso, and wishes a speedy recovery to the wounded.

“He commends the brave men and women serving in MINUSMA for their efforts to bring lasting peace to Mali under such difficult conditions.”
Caribbean States 'lighting path' towards sustainable future, says UN chief in Barbados

2 July - This is a year for global action, with international community in the final stretch of preparing a transformative post-2015 agenda for sustainable development that will be agreed in New York in September, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared in Bridgetown, where, two decades ago, the Barbados Programme of Action was adopted to tackle vulnerabilities facing small islands.

"I want to salute Caribbean countries for taking on ambitious renewable energy targets. By 2020, for example, Barbados will be one of the world's top five leading users of solar energy on a per capita basis. You are lighting the path to the future," Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said during a high-level symposium focused on sustainable development in the Caribbean.

This meeting was among the UN chief's first stops in Barbados, where later today he is expected to make opening remarks to the 2015 Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit, and where tomorrow, he will, among others, hold an interactive dialogue at the University of the West Indies.

"Twenty years ago, this very building was the site of the First Global Conference on Small Island Developing States that adopted the Barbados Programme of Action – the first compact between this group and the international community," he noticed.

For small island developing States, Mr. Ban added, this space is "hallowed ground."

Encouraged by the presence of so many leaders of governments, regional and international organizations, the private sector, academia, and civil society, the Secretary-General highlighted the "continuing Caribbean commitment to put our world on a safer, more sustainable and equitable pathway," a few days from the Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

"As leaders of some of the most vulnerable countries in the world, you don't need to be told that our planet is at grave risk. You are on the climate frontlines. You see it every day," he continued.

Convinced that sustainable development and climate change are "two sides of the same coin," the UN top official went on to say that this generation could be the first to end global poverty, and the last to prevent the worst impacts of global warming "before it is too late."

To get there, he underlined, the international community must make sure that the proposed sustainable development goals (SDGs) are "focused, financed and followed up – with real targets, real money and a real determination to achieve them."

Considering these goals as a sort of a "to-do list for people and the planet", Mr. Ban emphasized that it will take partnerships to make that happen. In that regard, he said, the Third International Conference on Small Islands Developing States in Samoa last year laid a pathway for collective action and success within the post-2015 development agenda.

But, as the world prepares for a new sustainability framework and the sustainable development goals, a number of critical partnership areas must be strengthened, in particular the need for capacity building; financing; access to technology; and improved data collection and statistics.

Member States also must continue working together to link the global agenda to regional agendas and to deepen regional integration and to address the "unique needs and vulnerabilities" of small island developing states and middle-income countries, such as the debt challenge.
"And we need to keep forging the way forward towards a low-carbon, climate-resilient development pathway that will benefit both people and the planet," the Secretary-General underlined.

He gave the assurance that, through the Green Climate Fund, and in working with world leaders, he will continue to insist that small islands and least developed countries are top funding priorities.

"My main message to you is to remain fully engaged and keep working with us to strengthen our partnership during this vital year for humanity. Together, we can build a better, more sustainable world, for all."

Later, in an address to an event on ending violence against women, the Secretary-General said the Caribbean has among the highest rates of sexual assault in the world. Three Caribbean countries are in the global top ten for recorded rapes.

Moreover, he noted that in the eastern Caribbean, UNICEF estimates that child sexual abuse rates are between 20 and 45 per cent – meaning at least one in five precious children are affected. Most are girls who have no choice but to live close to their attacker.

"They desperately need our help. Too many women are afraid to seek help. One study showed that up to two thirds of all victims suffer without ever reporting the crime. I am outraged by this. Shame belongs to the perpetrators – not the victims. We have to change mindsets – especially among men," declared the UN chief.

In that light, he said he was proud to be the first man to sign onto the UN's HeForShe campaign, and he invited more men to take the HeForShe pledge.

"I encourage you to join UNICEF's End Violence global campaign. And every day, I count on all of you to work for true equality."

The Syria crisis has dramatically reduced family livelihood opportunities and impoverished millions of households in the region, children are working primarily for their survival, and a spiralling number of children are employed in harmful working conditions, risking serious damage to their health and wellbeing," according to UNICEF.
“Child labour hinders children's growth and development as they toil for long hours with little pay, often in extremely hazardous and unhealthy environments,” Dr. Peter Salama, UNICEF Regional Director for the Middle East and North Africa, said. “Carrying heavy loads, being exposed to pesticides and toxic chemicals, and working long hours – these are just some of the hazards working children face every day around the region.”

The report, Small Hands, Heavy Burden: How the Syrian Conflict is Driving More Children into the Workforce found that three out of four working children surveyed in Jordan's vast Za'atari refugee camp have reported health problems at work, and another 22 percent of children employed in the agricultural sector have also been injured while working.

“Moreover, children who work are more likely to drop out of school – adding to fears of a “lost generation” of Syrian children,” according to the report.

UNICEF and Save the Children called on partners and champions of the so-called “No Lost Generation” Initiative, the wider international community, host governments, and civil society to undertake a series of measures to address child labour inside Syria and in countries affected by the humanitarian crisis including making more funding available for income-generating activities, providing quality and safe education for all children impacted by the crisis and ending the worst forms of child labour.

UNICEF said that Syria was a middle-income country before the war in 2011. The country's economy was capable of providing a decent living for most of its people; almost all children in Syria went to school, and literacy rates were over 90 per cent.

But four and a half years into the conflict, the country is beset with destitution and misery, with four in five people in Syria estimated to be living in poverty and 7.6 million internally displaced with an estimated two million children are now living outside Syria as refugees, the agency said, and unemployment rates in Syria surged from 14.9 per cent in 2011 to 57.7 per cent.

**Adequate, targeted financing key to people-centred sustainable development – UN official**

2 July - In 2002, the global community came together in Monterrey, Mexico, to address key financial issues affecting global development. The International Conference on Financing for Development, the first United Nations gathering of its kind, resulted in a landmark global agreement in which developed and developing countries recognized their responsibilities in key areas such as trade, aid, debt relief and institution-building.

In less than two weeks, world leaders will gather once again, this time in the Ethiopian capital of Addis Ababa, to launch a renewed and strengthened global partnership to finance people-centred sustainable development. They will aim to ensure that resources go where they are needed most to promote economic prosperity and improve health, education and employment opportunities while protecting the environment.

The Third International Conference on Financing for Development comes at a critical time. Its outcome – still being negotiated by UN Member States – will be an important milestone on the road toward the adoption of a new sustainable development agenda in New York in September and a universal climate change agreement in Paris in December.

“The implementation and success of our new global agenda will rely on a robust financing framework, which will be adopted in Addis,” said Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

Mr. Wu, who is also the Secretary-General of FFD3, as the Conference is informally known, added that success in Addis will leverage strong political momentum for the September summit that will adopt the post-2015 development agenda and the UN Paris climate conference, known as COP 21, where Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change are expected to agree a new accord to keep global warming below 2°C.
“If we fail in Addis, the post-2015 development agenda cannot be successful,” he said in an interview with the UN News Centre. “If we fail both in the post-2015 development agenda and financing for development, I think the COP 21 negotiations will be adversely affected.”

Wu Hongbo shares his outlook for the Third International Conference on Financing for Development with UNTV. Credit: UN DESA

“As many of the ambassadors put it well, ‘we cannot afford to fail’,” he stressed.

The Addis Conference will engage countries and businesses to channel their investments to improve people’s lives while protecting the environment. It is expected to result in concrete commitments on finance, trade, debt, governance, technology and innovation for the next 15 years.

One of the most important issues discussed in Monterrey, as well as at the follow-up conference held in 2008 in the Qatari capital, Doha, was official development assistance (ODA), which remains crucial even today, especially for the world’s 48 least developed countries.

The ‘Monterrey Consensus’ urged developed countries to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) as ODA to developing countries. Five countries have exceeded this target – Denmark, Luxembourg, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

While net ODA flows increased significantly after Monterrey, from $84 billion in 2000 to about $134 billion in 2013, preliminary data for 2014 indicate a decline.

“We are really trying to encourage all the donor countries, both in the OECD [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development] and outside, to take a very serious look at what they’ve been doing in providing official development assistance and trying to scale up their efforts to meet their commitments as early as possible,” said Mr. Wu.

At the same time, given that ODA alone will not generate the necessary resources, additional or innovative sources of financing will be crucial to achieve global development goals. An example of an innovative mechanism is the international solidarity levy on air tickets, the funds from which help to develop drugs to treat HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.

Experts believe the necessary financial resources do exist, with some $22 trillion a year in global savings, but the resources are currently not allocated adequately. The funds must be unlocked, mobilized, channelled and used more effectively for sustainable development.

“We are trying to help the Member States to find their own way to finance the sustainable development agenda,” Mr. Wu stated. “We are trying to tell the international community how to help those who are in need, who are most vulnerable, with the financial support.”

According to the Under-Secretary-General, the Addis Conference should produce three key outcomes: a holistic financing framework for sustainable development; concrete deliverables, particularly in areas such as poverty eradication; and a strong follow-up process that leaves no one behind.

He believes political and finance leaders must take the responsibility and “rise to the challenge” when they meet in Addis from 13 to 16 July.

“The Addis Ababa Conference on Financing for Development will be a test to make finance work for people and the planet.”
South Sudan: UN deplores deadly attack as tensions in country simmer

2 July - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has condemned a deadly attack against a United Nations 'protection-of-civilians' site in South Sudan amid a renewed flare-up of violence in the newfound nation.

The attack – which occurred yesterday against the UN compound outside the city of Malakal – resulted in the shooting deaths of one internally displaced person (IDP) and the injury of six others, according to sources with UNMISS, the Organization's Mission in the country.

According to UNMISS' account of the events, three members of forces belonging to either the Sudan People's Liberation Army In Opposition or the allied militia led by General Johnson Olony opened fire on IDPs at the recently opened 'protection-of-civilians' site. UN peacekeepers reportedly returned fire against the assailants and are currently seeking to identify the perpetrators of what the Mission is describing as an “unprovoked attack.” UNMISS added that the exact circumstances surrounding the shooting incident “remain unclear.”

In a statement released late yesterday evening by his spokesperson, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called on former Vice President Riek Machar and General Olony “to conduct an immediate investigation into this incident and hold to account those responsible.”

“[The Secretary-General] reminds the parties that they must respect the inviolability of UNMISS premises, including protection of civilian sites, which are now host to more than 140,000 IDPs,” the statement continued.

Mr. Ban's spokesperson said the Secretary-General also reiterated that there is no military solution to the conflict in South Sudan and that he called on all parties to immediately cease the hostilities and make the necessary compromises to urgently conclude the negotiations facilitated by the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

Yesterday's shooting is just the latest outburst of violence to afflict South Sudan as the country's 18-month conflict continues to smoulder amid brutal violence against civilians and deepening suffering across the country.

Some 120,000 South Sudanese are sheltered in UN compounds while United Nations estimates suggest that the number of people in need for 2015 will include an anticipated 1.95 million IDPs and a projected 293,000 refugees.

Yemen: amid unfolding humanitarian “catastrophe,” Ban calls for end to hostilities

2 July - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon repeated yesterday his call for an immediate end to the fighting in Yemen to help stem the unfolding humanitarian “catastrophe” in the country.

“He calls on the parties to agree, at the very minimum, on an immediate pause in hostilities until the end of the holy month of Ramadan, so that humanitarian aid can be delivered into and across Yemen and reach people cut off from vital supplies for months,” says a statement issued by the UN Spokesperson.

The UN chief emphasized that the parties to the conflict must adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law, protecting civilians and enabling humanitarian workers to deliver life-saving assistance.
“The Secretary-General reaffirms the commitment of the United Nations, as expressed through the efforts of his Special Envoy, Ismail Ould Sheikh Ahmed, to support Yemen in the search for a political solution — the only viable solution — to the conflict.”

In the past three months, some 3,000 Yemenis have been killed, half of them civilians, and 14,000 injured. Over a million people have had to flee their homes and 21 million need immediate help, close to 13 million people are unable to meet their food needs, 15 million people have no healthcare and outbreaks of dengue and malaria are raging unchecked.

Humanitarian partners have reached 4.4 million people with aid in the past three months, but this is a fraction of those in need, says the UN Spokesperson. The United Nations, the Red Cross/Red Crescent movement and international NGOs working together have now activated the highest level of emergency response.

“But without access to all parts of the country, children, women and men will continue to die for lack of food, clean water and healthcare,” warns the statement.