Côte d’Ivoire: Ban welcomes results of presidential poll, congratulates President Ouattara

2 November - Welcoming the publication of the final results of the presidential election in Côte d’Ivoire by the Constitutional Council, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today congratulated President Alassane Ouattara on his re-election, as well as the people and Government of the West African nation on the successful conclusion of the electoral process.

“He applauds the Independent Electoral Commission for having organized and carried out the elections in a professional manner in accordance with the law and the Constitution of Côte d’Ivoire,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson.

“He also wishes to acknowledge the role played by the different electoral observation teams, including from the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States,” it added.

In addition, Mr. Ban acknowledged, in particular, the “commendable engagement” of civil society, which he underlined as having contributed to enhancing the transparency and credibility of the elections.

“The Secretary-General believes the successful conduct of these polls confirms that Côte d’Ivoire is returning towards lasting peace and stability,” the statement noted.

“He commends the Ivorian leadership and people for their tireless efforts over the past five years to consolidate peace, and
promote democracy and the rule of law. He is hopeful that the same democratic and peaceful spirit will prevail in the conduct of the upcoming legislative elections.”

The UN chief also said he looks forward to working closely with President Ouattara and the people of Côte d'Ivoire in defining the future role of the UN in support of the consolidation of peace, stability and democracy in the country.

**Cycle of impunity must end, Ban declares on International Day, honouring journalists killed in line of duty**

2 November - Marking the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is honouring journalists and media workers who were killed in the line of duty for merely ‘reporting the truth’ and is underscoring the importance of protecting their rights and ensuring they can report freely.

“More than 700 journalists have been killed in the last decade – one every five days – simply for bringing news and information to the public. Many perish in the conflicts they cover so fearlessly. But all too many have been deliberately silenced for trying to report the truth,” said Mr. Ban in a message on the second World Day.

Noting that only 7 per cent of cases involving crimes against journalists are resolved and less that one crime out of 10 is ever fully investigated, he stressed that such impunity deepens fear among journalists and enables Governments to get away with censorship.

“We must do more to combat this trend and make sure that journalists can report freely. Journalists should not have to engage in self-censorship because they fear for their life,” said the UN chief.

Mr. Ban urged collective action to end the cycle of impunity and safeguard the right of journalists to speak truth to power.

Echoing the sentiment, the Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) said that she has consistently and publicly condemned each killing of a journalist and called for a thorough investigation.

“In the past six years, I have publicly and unequivocally condemned more than 540 cases of killings of journalists, media workers and social media producers who generate significant amounts of journalism,” UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in a statement.

“The near complete impunity for the perpetrators of crimes against journalists goes against everything that we stand for, our shared values, our common objectives,” she added.

Ms. Bokova stressed that each time the perpetrator of a crime is allowed to escape punishment, it emboldens other criminals and creates a vicious cycle of violence.

Further, she warned that as attacks on journalists are on the rise, UNESCO has spearheaded the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists and the Issue of Impunity, which is working to end impunity by promoting concerted action among United Nations agencies, working across the world with governments, civil society, academia and the media itself.

“This work is bearing fruit,” she said. “The United Nations General Assembly, the Human Rights Council, as well as the United Nations Security Council have all adopted landmark resolutions specifically addressing these obstacles – as has the Council of Europe at the regional level,” added Ms. Bokova.

She further said that more and more States are now establishing laws and mechanisms to tackle impunity and improve safety of journalists and added that the judiciary systems and security forces have increased their engagement on the issues.

However, Ms. Bokova stressed that efforts must be redoubled to ensure the end of impunity for attacks on journalists,
especially since societies are undergoing transformation at present.

She stressed that this must be necessitated to uphold Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states “right to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

Additionally, Ms. Bokova underscored that ensuring protection of journalists is also vital for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 16.10, which aims to facilitate public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements.

Lastly, she urged all countries to take measures through legislation, protection mechanisms and new sources to ensure that investigations and trials relating to crimes against journalists are undertaken.

“I urge everyone to stand up on November 2 and demand that the rule of law is fully applied when journalists are attacked and killed in the line of duty,” Ms. Bokova concluded.

The International Day, was proclaimed by the UN General Assembly to highlight the urgent need to protect journalists, and to commemorate the assassination of two French journalists in Mali on 2 November, 2013.

**Trade slows in Asia-Pacific as economies adjust to lower global growth, says new UN report**

2 November - The regional trade and investment flows in Asia and the Pacific is decelerating as the economies in the region adjust to cyclical and structural changes resulting from the global economic downturn and the expected reduction in China’s growth rate, says a new United Nations report launched today.

However, the Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2015, compiled by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), said that the Asia-Pacific remains the most dynamic region of the global economy and will continue to hold its position as the largest trading region in the world.

According to the report’s analysis of the latest regional trade and investment outlook in the region, total exports and imports from the region grew by only 1.6 per cent in 2014. When China is excluded from the regional total, exports from the Asia-Pacific region registered a decline of 0.4 per cent.

The report further states that any possibilities of a merchandise trade recovery could suffer if the sluggish pace of trade and investment growth in the region continues.

Despite the slow pace, the report says the Asia-Pacific region stands out for its significant and sustained achievements in leveraging trade and investment flows for development.

The report, launched in Bangkok by ESCAP Executive Secretary Shamshad Akhtar, underscores the importance of reviving trade and investment to implement and meet the recently adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

“The data and analysis in the 2015 Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report will help to mainstream trade considerations, as we work towards achieving the new Sustainable Development Goals,” said Ms. Akhtar.

She added that the production fragmentation across the world as part of Global Value Chains (GVCs) has opened new opportunities for developing countries to integrate in global trade.

“In order to prosper in this globalized environment, countries will need to boost competitiveness and productivity to attract inward investment and technology, and find areas where they can successfully integrate in these value chains,” said Ms. Akhtar.
According to the report, Asia and the Pacific accounted for nearly 40 per cent of global exports and imports in 2014, while intra-regional imports remained at a little over 50 per cent of the total in 2014, with intra-regional exports at 54 per cent.

Further, the report indicated that the outlook for regional services trade was better than for merchandise trade as exports of services in the region increased at 5.1 per cent in 2014, compared to 4 per cent in 2013.

The report evaluated that exports of travel and other commercial services were especially strong, supported by growing demand for travel by China.

Additionally, the report shows that trade facilitation measures, including implementation of the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement, can help reduce trade costs as many countries in the Asia-Pacific region are getting on with implementing trade facilitation measures ahead of the Agreement’s ratification.

The report assesses that such changes when incorporated will help reduce regional trade costs but stressed that much more still needs to be done, especially in landlocked countries and it suggests that a regional agreement on paperless trade would mark a substantial breakthrough in this regard.

Further, the report reinforces the importance of countries maintaining open trade regimes, and avoiding implementation of trade-restrictive measures.

It highlights that increasing use of trade-restrictive measures such as non-tariff measures have detrimental consequences for the region’s least developed countries, presenting particular obstacles to small- and medium-sized exporters.

The report also contained analysis on the challenges and opportunities posed by the rise of GVCs as a major trading factor as recent years have seen increased fragmentation of production across national boundaries with all its attendant benefit, supported by improving logistics, communication technologies and lower barriers to trade.

However, the report finds that despite the region being central to the development of GVCs, which is now at the heart of many global and regional supply chains, most countries in the region have not fully benefitted from the expanded flows of trade and investments associated with them.

These countries remain excluded from their potential benefits, particularly low-income countries, as 90 per cent of GVC-related trade is found to occur in just ten regional economies, the report stated.

**Global fight against corruption crucial to achieving sustainable development, UN forum told**

2 November - Ending corruption is vital to efforts to achieve sustainable development, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the world’s largest anti-corruption forum, which began today in St. Petersburg, Russia.

“The world counts on you to take bold decisions and act decisively to strengthen the global fight against corruption and bribery,” Mr. Ban told more than 1,000 participants gathered for the Sixth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption.

In a message delivered by the Executive Director of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Yury Fedotov, the Secretary-General underlined that ending corruption and bribery is crucial for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in September by Member States to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate over the next 15 years.

“The 17 Sustainable Development Goals contain the promise of a better collective future for people and planet, and they address the potential challenges that can impede our progress,” he stated. “One such threat is highlighted in Goal 16, which calls for substantial reductions in corruption and bribery in all its forms.”
He also noted that across the globe, corruption and bribery “devastates lives.”

“No country is immune; everyone suffers,” he stated, adding that the malicious impact of corruption makes people’s lives more expensive; it erodes consumer confidence and business credibility; it depletes public funds and destroys prospects for a fair society. Corruption also facilitates other crimes, including human and illegal wildlife trafficking, and terrorism.

“Our ultimate goal must be to turn hands thrust out in hope of payment into hands joined together against this pernicious crime,” he continued. “Let us forcefully convey the message that when bribes are paid, everyone counts the cost.”

Adopted in 2003, the UN Convention against Corruption is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument. The treaty, which currently has 177 States Parties, covers five main areas: prevention, criminalization and law enforcement measures, international cooperation, asset recovery, and technical assistance and information exchange.

In his opening address, Mr. Fedotov stressed that there was need to ensure that public resources go where they are supposed to go. He also underscored the Convention’s strength as “a solid platform for engaging the private sector as a key partner in the fight against corruption and in global action to achieve sustainable development outcomes.”

Other speakers at the forum included the Chief of Staff of the Executive Office of the President of Russia, Sergey Ivanov, who delivered the statement of President Vladimir Putin, and Russian Minister of Justice Alexander Konovalov, as well as a number of other ministers and high-level delegates from across the world.

Over the course of this week, more than 30 side events are scheduled to be held on the margins of the conference on how to better tackle corruption.

Prior to the official opening of the conference, participants observed a moment of silence for those who died in Saturday’s plane crash in Egypt’s Sinai region. The plane was travelling between Sharm el-Sheikh and St. Petersburg when it went down.

**Powerful cyclone Chapala headed towards war-torn Yemen, warns UN**

2 November - A strong and rare tropical cyclone, named Chapala, is heading towards the southern coasts of Oman and Yemen and is expected to make landfall on the eastern provinces of Hadramout and Shabwa in war-torn Yemen early Tuesday, the United Nations warned today.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the governorates of Shabwah and Hadhramaut have a combined population of about 1.8 million people, 1.4 million of whom are already considered in need of humanitarian support.

“OCHA and UN agencies are monitoring, planning and pre-positioning relief in preparation for the landfall of the storm,” UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

A press release from the UN Office for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR) said that Chapala originated in the Indian Ocean on 28 October and intensified during the following days to Category 4, becoming the strongest tropical cyclone in the Indian Ocean.

Additionally, the UN agency reports that the sea was very rough with a maximum wave height of 10 meters, heavy rains and very strong wind, measuring up to 170 km/hr and added that the Omani and Yemeni Governments have issued warnings and urged residents to evacuate coastal areas as cyclone Chapala approaches.

According to the press release, Chapala has the potential to bring three or four times the average yearly rain in just a day or two over parts of eastern Yemen and southwest Oman.
However, UNISDR noted that tropical cyclones are extremely rare in the region and only a few have hit the Arabian Peninsula since reliable records started, the last of which was Keila, which struck Oman and Yemen in 2011.

UNISDR added that in 2008, a rare tropical cyclone brought devastating flooding to Yemen and killed at least 100 people, displaced an additional 20,000 in the south of the country and over affecting the livelihoods of over 50 per cent of the total population.

At the same time, it recalled that cyclone Gonu hit Oman in 2007, causing over 50 deaths.

**Food safety and trade should improve nutrition and boost development – UN agencies**

*2 November* - The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) agreed today to strengthen their cooperation to promote international food trade and safety in ways that improve nutrition and allow small-scale producers to have better access to international agricultural markets.

“We look forward to ensuring fair trade of agricultural and food products through this stronger (FAO-WTO) cooperation,” FAO Director-General José Graziano da Silva said in remarks at an event at the agency’s headquarters in Rome.

“On the one hand trade is likely to play an increasing role in meeting the growing demand from food-deficit countries. On the other hand, greater trade openness may undermine the capacity of local people to produce their own food,” he added.

According to a press release issued by FAO, Mr. Graziano da Silva warned that failure to reach a balanced solution on issues relating to production and trade of agricultural products could derail the international community's recently agreed sustainable development goal to eradicate world hunger.

For his part, Director-General Roberto Azevêdo stressed that at the WTO, “we seek to ensure that the global trading system works for all, that it is fair and balanced,” in a way “which supports growth and development and allows people to access the goods and services that they need” including food.

“When I visit developing countries, especially in Africa...business people tell me about the difficulties they face in meeting the required standards,” he said, adding that it is essential to provide capacity building for producers in developing countries, an area of work where his Organization and FAO are seeking to deepen their collaboration.

Mr. Azevêdo referred to the 10th WTO Ministerial Conference in Nairobi scheduled for December, where the role of agriculture – especially in development and in improving the lives of people in least developed countries – will be high on the agenda.

Issues for discussion include addressing trade restrictions that impact imports, such as the lowering of tariffs, the need to minimize domestic agricultural subsidies, and the “distortions these programmes produce,” Mr. Azevêdo said, as well as the need to eliminate export subsidies.

The WTO Director-General expressed hope that some agreement would be reached in Nairobi on the issue of export subsidies. This, he said, would mark “an extremely significant breakthrough,” and would be especially important for developing and least developed countries.

Meanwhile, both leaders underscored the increase in cooperation between FAO and the WTO. This includes deepening their collaboration on trade and food safety, including a joint publication in 2016 which would deal with sanitary and phyto-sanitary (SPS) measures that curb the spread of plant and animal diseases during the transport for trade of agricultural products.
Other areas where the two bodies are seeking to reinforce their joint efforts include the Standards and Trade Development Facility; capacity development initiatives to assist countries in the implementation of the Codex Alimentarius or “Food Code” which develops harmonized international food standards that protect consumer health and promote fair practices in food trade; and country level assistance to facilitate trade in safe and nutritious food.

**UN calls on Libyan political stakeholders to redouble efforts to reach agreement**

2 November - The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) called today on the main political stakeholders in the country to redouble their efforts in bringing the political dialogue process to a successful conclusion, which would allow for an agreement to form a Government of National Accord and for the resumption of Libya’s democratic transition.

Libya has been plagued by factional fighting since the 2011 revolution, with the situation continuing to deteriorate in recent months amid significant political fragmentation and violence.

Following broad consultations facilitated by the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, Bernardino León, it was announced in mid-October that a national unity government could be proposed.

In a statement issued today, the Mission recalled that immediately after the conclusion of the dialogue, it transmitted the Libyan Political Agreement to the main stakeholders for their endorsement.

“Following this, the Mission has undertaken extensive consultations with parties across the Libyan political spectrum on ways of addressing some of the concerns with respect to the configuration of the Presidency Council, especially those related to fair and adequate representation for the east, more specifically Benghazi,” the statement noted.

“These are primarily focused on the need for a formula that safeguards Libya’s historical traditions of geographical and regional balance and representation,” it continued.

Meanwhile, UNSMIL also underlined that all parties were in consensus regarding the legitimacy of these demands, and the need to expand the configuration of the Presidency Council from six to nine, to include the Prime Minister, five Deputy Prime Ministers, and three senior ministers.

“While underscoring the need to reflect this newly proposed revision of the Presidency Council in the text of the Libyan Political Agreement, all parties recognised that the successful implementation of this reconfiguration would require an increased level of cooperation and partnership among members of the Presidency Council, mainly between the Prime Minister and his deputies, but also including the larger group forming the Presidency Council,” the statement explained.

According to UNSMIL, parties also stressed that this would inevitably need to be reflected in provisions governing the decision-making process in the Presidency Council.
On visit to East Jerusalem, UN officials call for respect of health premises, right to health care

2 November - Officials from a number of United Nations agencies have stressed the need to ensure respect for health premises as well as the right to health, following recent actions by the Israeli security forces at a hospital in East Jerusalem.

“Actions that undermine the ability of health workers to provide care to those in need are violations of international law. The conduct by the Israeli security forces during several entries into Makassed hospital this past week is unacceptable and must not be repeated,” said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Robert Piper. Robert Piper. UN Photo/Loey Felipe

Yesterday, Mr. Piper – who is also Deputy UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process – and senior officials from a number of UN agencies visited the hospital, which armed police forcibly entered on 27 and 28 October to reportedly obtain medical files and security camera footage relating to a child who had been treated there and is currently in Israeli custody.

A news release issued by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) added that on 29 October, Israeli security forces fired tear gas canisters and other projectiles inside the hospital premises when medical staff were holding a peaceful protest against the recent events. The search operations disrupted health services and caused panic among patients and medical staff.

In addition, medical services are being impeded by checkpoints recently established near Augusta Victoria Hospital, following the escalation in violence in East Jerusalem.

“These obstacles have delayed access of patients and staff, as well as medical referrals between Augusta Victoria and Makassed hospitals,” the news release stated.

“The right to health is a fundamental human right which Israel must respect and protect at all times,” stated Mr. Piper, who was accompanied by officials from OCHA, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

UN treaty-making body opens with focus on rapidly expanding radiocommunications

2 November - The United Nations World Radiocommunication Conference 2015 opened today in Geneva aiming to address the rapid evolution of information and communication technologies (ICT), to ensure the global management of the radio-frequency spectrum and satellite orbits, and to enable people to live and travel safely while enjoying high performance radiocommunications.

The Conference “will define new and better ways to regulate radio services and applications,” said International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Secretary-General Houlin Zhao in a press release.

International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Secretary-General Houlin Zhao addresses the UN World Radiocommunication Conference 2015 in Geneva. Photo: ITU/D. Woldu

“In a world where radiocommunications play an increasingly important role in connecting people, I am convinced that the outcome of the conference will contribute towards making the world a better place for all,” he added.

The Conference, known as WRC-15, will also review the international regulatory framework for radiocommunications, or Radio Regulations, and address a number of key issues challenging radiocommunications performances.
“With the relentless expansion of wireless services worldwide, all services relying on radio waves are competing for a share of the radio-frequency spectrum to support new applications, growing user numbers and exploding traffic,” said François Rancy, Director of ITU’s Radiocommunication Bureau.

Some of the issues that the Conference aims to address are the provision of additional frequencies to meet the rapidly growing demand for mobile broadband communications; the allocation of frequencies for disaster relief or emergency communications; new allocations for monitoring the environment and climate change; and spectrum allocation for unmanned aircrafts, wireless avionics systems and global flight tracking for civil aviation.

Further, participants will also discuss measures to improve road safety by allocating frequencies for short-range, high-resolution radars for collision avoidance systems in vehicles and enhance maritime communications systems by facilitating the use of on-board digital transmissions and automatic identification system on vessels for improved navigation safety.

“The deliberations at WRC-15 and its outcomes will ensure that we can maintain a stable, predictable and universally applied regulatory environment that secures long-term investments for a multi-trillion dollar industry,’ said Mr. Rancy.

Some 3,000 participants, representing more than 160 member States of the Geneva-based ITU are attending the Conference, which runs through 27 November. Additionally, 100 observers from among ITU’s 700 private sector members, along with international organizations, are also slated to attend.

Ban welcomes restart of key trilateral meeting between Republic of Korea, Japan, China

2 November - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon welcomed the Summit Meeting held between the Republic of Korea, Japan and China on 1 November in Seoul, and lauded the leaders for resuming the trilateral meetings.

“He hopes that the resumption of the trilateral meeting format will reinforce the collaboration among the three countries, and foster strengthened cooperation in north-east Asia,” said a statement issued yesterday by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson in New York.

The Secretary-General lauded Premier Li Keqiang of China, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe of Japan and particularly President Park Geun-hye of the Republic of Korea, who hosted the meeting in that country’s capital, for resuming the meetings after three and a half years.

“The United Nations encourages all parties to work closely together to promote mutual trust and cooperation for peace and prosperity in the region,” the statement added.
UN Security Council strongly condemns terrorist attack against Somali hotel

1 November - The United Nations Security Council today condemned “in the strongest terms” the attacks carried out today against the Sahafi hotel in Mogadishu, Somalia by Al-Shabaab, resulting in a number of deaths and injuries.

“The members of the Security Council expressed their deep sympathy and condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the people and Government of Somalia. The members of the Security Council wished a speedy recovery to those injured,” said a statement issued from the office of the UN spokesperson.

The Security Council members also paid tribute to the quick response of the Somali National Army in responding to the attack.

Further the Council reaffirmed its determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with the UN Charter.

“The members of the Security Council reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation, wherever and whenever and by whomsoever committed,” said the statement.

The Security Council members also highlighted the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice.

Further, they also urged all States, to cooperate actively with the Somali authorities, in accordance with their obligations under international law, and relevant Security Council resolutions.

“The members of the Security Council reminded States that they must ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights law, international humanitarian law and refugee law,” said the statement.

Lastly, the Council members reiterated its support for Somalia's transition to greater peace and stability, underlining that “neither this, nor any other terrorist attack would weaken that determination”.

South Sudan: UN mission secures safe release of all personnel taken hostage in Upper Nile state

1 November - The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) today successfully carried out an extraction operation securing the release of 13 UNMISS contractors, who were taken hostage and detained by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Opposition soldiers on 26th October.

According to a statement issued by the UN Mission, the released contractors were part of the 31 personnel, comprising of 18 UNMISS uniformed personnel and 13 Sudanese UNMISS contractors who had been crew on board a barge convoy transporting fuel to UNMISS' base in Renk, Upper Nile state.

A group of 18 international peacekeepers and Military Liaison Officers, who had also been a part of the barge convoy, were released earlier on 29 October, UNMISS said.

Last week, all the UN personnel were taken hostage by the SPLA in Opposition soldiers who confiscated the barge convoy, its equipment and cargo, including 55,000 liters of fuel.
The UN Mission added that the convoy equipment, a total of three vessels including the barge, have also been returned and are on their way to Melut, Upper Nile State.

Further, the statement said that while the barge was returned today, the fuel cargo, communications equipment, an inflatable boat, and seven of the 16 UNMISS weapons taken on 26 October were not returned.

UNMISS reiterated its call to the SPLA in Opposition for the immediate release of all its equipment and cargo.

Additionally, the statement included clarifications of media reports that questioned the UN Mission's questionable involvement in the transportation of weapons.

“The barge was not transporting weapons cargo of any kind, in fact, all fuel cargo was bound for the UNMISS base in Renk, as a resupply,” said Special Representative of the Secretary General, Ellen Loej strongly refuting the accusations.

“This while we, today, are relieved by the safe release of all UN personnel, the need for all parties to the conflict in South Sudan to fully respect unfettered free access and movement of UN personnel and assets cannot be underlined strongly enough,” she added, expressing hope that such an incident should not happen again.

UN chief concerned by continuous exercise of hate speech ahead of Myanmar elections

1 November - The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today expressed deep concern at the continuous resort to hate speech, provocation of communal hostilities and the abuse of religion for political purposes, incited by “extreme element among the majority community in Myanmar”.

“With the approaching elections on 8 November, he urges all concerned in Myanmar to eschew any kind of pressure, intimidation, dissemination of hatred or violence against individuals or organizations based on their ethnic identity, gender, religious persuasion or political views,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson in New York.

Mr. Ban noted the antagonism displayed in certain quarters against international organizations, including the United Nations.

“He is concerned that continued impunity for such behavior could gravely damage the international image of the country,” said the statement.

Additionally, the UN chief deplored the particularly the vulgar remarks recently directed, not for the first time, against the Special Rapporteur of the United Nations Yanghee Lee, for carrying out her mandate.

“The Secretary-General has addressed a letter to President U Thein Sein expressing his full confidence in and support for the important work being done by Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee,” the statement concluded.
Top UN officials ‘deeply saddened’ after Russian airline crashes, killing all on board

31 October - The United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today expressed deep sadness on learning of the Russian airline that crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 passengers and crew on board.

“The Secretary-General sends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims and to the people and Government of the Russian Federation,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

Echoing the sentiment, Taleb Rifai, Secretary-General of UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) also expressed sorrow after the Kogalymavia flight crashed in Central Sinai.

"It was with great sorrow that we learned about this tragic accident and we express our deepest condolences to the families and friends of the victims at this difficult moment”, said Mr. Rifai in a statement.

UNWTO conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the families and friends of the victims as well as to the Russian people on behalf of the international tourism community.

According to media reports, the crash was caused most likely due to an unidentified technical failure, as there is no indication of any terrorist action.

Ban, Red Cross chief voice concern over ‘brazen and brutal erosion’ of respect for humanitarian law

31 October - Warning of rising number of ‘deliberate’ attacks on civilians across the world, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged the international community to end the ‘callous disregard for human life’ and stressed on stronger commitment from Member States to bring perpetrators of such attacks to account.

“From Afghanistan to the Central African Republic, from Ukraine to Yemen, combatants and those who control them are defying humanity's most basic rules. Every day, civilians – ordinary women, men and children – are being deliberately or recklessly injured and killed, tortured and abducted. Every hour, people in dire circumstances are being denied the medical care, food, water and shelter they need to survive,” said Mr. Ban at a joint press encounter with Mr. Peter Maurer, President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Geneva.

The UN chief said that airstrikes are increasing in besieged populated areas and cited the killing of dozens of people yesterday, when Syrian government forces fired missiles into a marketplace in Douma and the continual indiscriminate firing of rockets in Damascus.

“Such deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian areas is a clear breach of international law. The continuing violence is a clear indication that a political solution to the conflict in Syria is desperately needed – the fighting must stop now. There is no military solution to the crisis – not in Syria or anywhere else,” said Mr. Ban.

Additionally, he deplored the attacks on healthcare facilities and reiterated that they hold a special protected status under international humanitarian law.
Mr. Ban said that the attack on a Yemeni hospital in Saada last week is the 39th health centre attack since March and added that more children may die in Yemen from a lack of healthcare and medicines than from bullets and bombs.

He also condemned the bombing of the Médecins Sans Frontières hospital earlier this month in Kunduz, Afghanistan and said that the supposed surgical strike “instead destroyed a surgical ward”.

“These violations have become so routine there is a risk people will think that the deliberate bombing of civilians, the targeting of humanitarian and healthcare workers, and attacks on schools, hospitals and places of worship are an inevitable result of conflict,” said Mr. Ban.

He sounded alarm over the constant flouting of international humanitarian law across the world and added that the international community should bring the attackers to account.

“Enough is enough. Even war has rules; it is time to enforce them,” said Mr. Ban. “The continued failure to act is a disgrace and a stain on the conscience of the world,” he added.

He stressed that protecting civilians in wartime is the cornerstone in the international system and the UN and added that indifference on such issues will only make the world less secure.

“Today, the United Nations and the International Committee of the Red Cross are calling for an end to impunity, an end to the callous disregard for human life, and a recommitment to international humanitarian law,” said Mr. Ban urging collaborative action from the international community.

He further called for all influential parties to “pressure all parties in conflict to treat civilians with humanity and to abide by the law” and initiate political and diplomatic measures by bringing referrals to national and special investigative tribunals or courts.

Mr. Ban also urged on ending the use of heavy explosive weapons in densely populated urban areas, causing deaths of civilians.

He also called for allowing humanitarian access in conflict-prone regions to help people who need aid and asked the international community to give additional support to displaced population and refugees.

He added that the UN and ICRC are taking immediate steps to address these issues and added that the one of the main themes of the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul next May will be protecting civilians in conflicts.

“But international humanitarian law is not a solution. It is a way to mitigate the damage caused by war. Most of all, we call for greater commitment and effective action to prevent and end conflicts. Long-term solutions lie in treating the root causes of war and in negotiating sustainable peace,” added Mr. Ban.

He called for stronger commitment and partnerships among the Member States to maintain peace and security failing which “we can expect only greater chaos and suffering”.

Additionally, in a separate statement, Mr. Ban said that he welcomed the talks on Syria that began yesterday in Vienna and said that it was encouraging to learn that participants have reached mutual understanding on a number of key issues, including the need to accelerate all diplomatic efforts to end the war.

He also commended the efforts and commitment of the 17 countries and the European Union (EU) for launching this much needed political process.

“This is the first meaningful understanding among international actors since the 2012 Geneva Communiqué, and the first one to have been reached in the presence of all the countries that hold the key to a resolution to the Syrian conflict.

Let me also praise the leadership of US Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov for
facilitating this outcome,” said Mr. Ban.

Lastly, he added that although substantial differences still remain between the conflicting parties, Mr. Ban expressed hope that further progress towards Syrian-led political solution to the crisis can be achieved in the near future.