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## UN chief, Security Council denounce ‘appalling’ murder of Jordanian pilot by ISIL

3 February - For the second time in as many days, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations Security Council have jointly condemned the brutal killing of a civilian by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) – this time deploring the group’s murder of Jordanian Royal Air Force pilot Lt. Muath Al-Kasasbeh.

According to media reports, the terrorist group released a 22-minute video today purporting to show the execution of the Jordanian pilot by burning him alive. This latest murder comes on the heels of Saturday’s beheading by the group of a Japanese journalist.

In a statement read out to the press at Headquarters by UN spokesperson Stephanie Dujarric, the Secretary-General condemned the killing, referring to ISIL as Da’esh, an Arabic acronym for the group.

Mr. Ban said his thoughts are with Mr. Al-Kasasbeh’s family and loved ones, and added that he shares their sorrow and stands today in solidarity with the Government and people of Jordan in denouncing this appalling act.

The UN chief also urged all Governments to strengthen their efforts to combat the scourge of terrorism and extremism within the bounds of their human rights obligations. Groups like ISIL have “no regard for human life,” he added.

In a separate statement expressing equally strong condemnation, the Security Council said the “heinous and cowardly murder…once again demonstrates the brutality of ISIL, which is responsible for thousands of crimes and abuses against people from all faiths, ethnicities and nationalities, and without regard to any basic value of humanity.”

Underlining the need to bring the perpetrators of such reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice, the Council stressed that
those responsible for the killing of Muath Al-Kasasbeh shall be held accountable, and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Government of Jordan and all other relevant authorities in this regard.

“The members of the Security Council stressed that such a crime by ISIL demonstrates that terrorism is a scourge impacting all of humanity and people from all regions and religions,” the 15-nation body continued in its statement, which stressed again that ISIL must be defeated and that the intolerance, violence and hatred it espouses must be stamped out.

The members of the Council further emphasized that such continued acts of barbarism perpetrated by ISIL do not intimidate them but rather stiffen their resolve that there has to be a common effort amongst Governments and institutions, including those in the region most affected, to counter ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al-Qaida, as the Council resolved in its resolution 2170 (2014).

Further to their statement, the members of the Security Council demanded the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all those who are kept hostage by ISIL, Al-Nusra Front and all other individuals, groups, undertakings, and entities associated with Al-Qaida.

‘Youth lens’ brings development challenges into sharper focus at UN forum

3 February - The emerging United Nations-led sustainability agenda, to be crafted around a set of sustainable development goals, must be inspired by and inspiring for the world’s young people, said the President of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as he closed the Council’s annual Youth Forum with a call for young people to amplify their voices and become more involved in building “the future we want.”

“Our challenge now, dear young colleagues, is to continue these efforts well beyond 2015, with the same enthusiasm we have seen during these two days,” said Martin Sajdik, commending participants for placing a ‘youth lens’ on the multiple development challenges facing young people today, especially in Africa.

The fourth annual ECOSOC Youth Forum coincides with the 20th anniversary of the World Programme of Action for Youth as well as the 20 year review of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for action, which addressed challenges facing women and girls.

“This year’s Forum is a timely opportunity to advance the global development agenda with youth at its centre,” Mr. Sajdik continued. “Young people across regions now have had opportunities to contribute to the discussion on what it will take to effectively transition from the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) to the SDGs (sustainable development goals),” he said, drawing attention to the landmark, largely anti-poverty targets adopted in 2000 and the set of successor goals – to be focused on people and the planet and underpinned by human rights – currently being negotiated.

Mr. Sajdik said that he intended to issue an ECOSOC Presidential Statement which captures the “key messages and bold suggestions” spotlighted by the young participants in the Forum, that can help the international community achieve a truly transformative sustainable development agenda.

Among those, he highlighted the Global Youth Call, which was first presented by the Secretary General’s Envoy on Youth during the 2014 Youth Forum; the continued gender discrimination and key challenges faced by young women and girls in all spheres of life; the continuing youth unemployment crisis and the urgent need to address the transition from school to work; and the need to back all efforts to arrive at an effective framework of targets and indicators for the post-2015 development agenda that duly reflect the needs and priorities of youth.

In her closing remarks, Helen Clark, Administrator, of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) said this year’s Youth Forum had “special significance” because of its timing, just before agreement of a sustainable development agenda which would set global priorities for development for the coming 15 years and several other ongoing global processes and
anniversaries related to development. 2015 would be a “once in a generation year” she said, stressing the importance of youth engagement in all processes and dialogues.

“Today’s generation of youth is the largest the world has ever known,” she continued, adding that most of those young people live in developing countries and outlining the challenges faced daily, including disproportionate unemployment – with 75 million unemployed globally, a large number of young people affected by war and conflict, a lack of rights enjoyed by LGBTI people and a general and widespread lack of access to education and other services.

“Put simply, young people deserve a better deal,” the UNDP chief said. “And let’s hope the post-2015 development agenda delivers that.”

She stressed that young people are among countries’ greatest assets and need to be embraced, nurtured and development in order to reap a “huge demographic dividend,” and she called for the empowerment of youth to enable them to join in building stronger, more inclusive structures.

Describing UNDP’s Youth Strategy for 2014-17 and its vision for youth empowerment, she described examples of the agency’s work to involve youth in development. That included in Liberia, where, as part of the Ebola response, 1,300 young people volunteered to help raise awareness of the disease and the basic public health measures that could stop it in its tracks. Praising that effort, she noted the credit assigned to community mobilisation efforts in turning the tide of the outbreak.

Also addressing the Forum, Ahmad Alhendawi, the Secretary-General’s Special Envoy on Youth, told participants at the closing that “it’s not every day that delegates sit side by side with young people.” This growing trend must become the norm, he said as he proposed that delegates include at least one young person to attend with them the upcoming Summit on sustainable development to be held at UN Headquarters in September.

The Youth Envoy said it is critical for more mechanisms to include youth participation at all levels. The international community must acknowledge young people as solutions to the most pressing global issues instead of as problems. “Young people are an opportunity for development not a liability,” he added.

“I’m so proud of your engagement,” said Mr. Alhendawi, congratulating both delegates and youth participants on sharing “candidly” during the two-day Forum what has worked and what has not in their respective countries.

Also making closing remarks, Navid Hanif, Director of the Office of ECOSOC Support and Coordination, speaking on behalf of Wu Hongbo, Under-Secretary-General for UN Economic and Social Affairs, said the two-day Forum provided an important platform through which young people could discuss issues that are important to them as regards sustainable development. As this very important year got under way, their voices and actions would be vital to ensuring that a development agenda with people and planet at its core becomes a reality.

“As we work towards the special summit is September, where world leaders will adopt [this agenda], we must bear in mind the 17 sustainable development goals recommended by the Open Working Group, which set forth the foundations of a transformative agenda,” he continued, drawing attention to the efforts carried out during the UN-led intergovernmental negotiations over the past year.

“Young people are vital to the achievement of all these goals. Your voice has the power to transform the world in which we live. As we continue our work, we need your ideas, innovation and gumption over the next year,” emphasized Mr. Hanif, adding that as Member States move from planning to implementation, they will rely on the voices of the world’s youth “if, on the road to victory, we take a wrong turn. It will be you, the youth in this room and across the globe, who lead us to the future that we all want.”
UNESCO deplores ‘cultural cleansing’ of Iraq as armed extremists ransack Mosul libraries

3 February - The head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) voiced alarm today over the reported destruction of thousands of books in museums, libraries and universities across Mosul – the northern Iraq city currently controlled by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

According to the UN agency, the books – on topics ranging from philosophy and law to science and poetry – have been “deliberately burned” over the past several weeks in what may be “one of the most devastating acts of destruction of library collections in human history.”

“This destruction marks a new phase in the cultural cleansing perpetrated in regions controlled by armed extremists in Iraq,” UNESCO Director-General, Irina Bokova, declared in a press release issued earlier today. “It adds to the systematic destruction of heritage and the persecution of minorities that seeks to wipe out the cultural diversity that is the soul of the Iraqi people.”

UNESCO has been taking stock of the “cultural cleansing” perpetrated by armed groups in Iraq over the past several months and has repeatedly condemned the targeting of cultural heritage sites as well as minorities.

Drawing comparisons with recent book burnings by Islamist extremists in Mali, Ms. Bokova said that the act constituted “an attack on the culture, knowledge and memory” and was evidence of “a fanatical project, targeting both human lives and intellectual creation.”

“UNESCO was created 70 years ago to combat this type of violence, through education, science and culture, using the tools of dialogue and peace,” she continued. “Such destruction is a cruel reminder that the nations of the world must remain united to combat such fanaticism today.”

Ebola: UN health agency says large-scale vaccine trials under way in Liberia

3 February - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) announced today that the Ebola vaccine trials now under way in Liberia would start soon in Guinea and Sierra Leone, the two other most-affected countries in West Africa.

The agency also announced in Geneva today the appointment of Dr. Bruce Aylward as its Special Representative for Ebola Response.

Dr. Aylward will be expected to also work more closely with the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), the African Union, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and other partners to support the Ebola affected countries to control the epidemic.

Also today, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) told reporters in Geneva that, following the reopening of schools in Guinea on 19 January, Liberia is preparing to reopen its schools on 16 February.

UNICEF spokesman Christophe Boulierac said the agency and its partners are assisting in developing relevant safety protocols, for example: equipping every school with hand washing equipment at entrances and in every bathroom; ensuring upon entry to the schools and on a daily basis that the temperature of every child, teacher and employee is normal; and ensuring that every school has enough water, given that only 45 per cent of schools previously had access to water.
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The vaccine trials in Liberia are being run by the Liberian Government in partnership with the United States National Institutes of Health (NIH) and would involve 30,000 volunteers in clinics and hospitals.

“They plan to test both leading candidate vaccines and compare both with a placebo group,” said WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris, adding that a smaller trial is taking place first that would test the acceptability, tolerability and the immune response in the trial currently taking place.

In Guinea, a so-called ‘ring vaccination trial’ for Ebola would take place based on the approach that was used to eradicate the smallpox virus, she noted.

Ms. Harris explained that when a case of contamination was discovered, the person contaminated and a ‘ring’ of people around them would be vaccinated, to see if that prevented further cases occurring.

In Sierra Leone, a different approach would be taken. Ms. Harris said.

Teams would carry out vaccinations in one area, then a few weeks later, vaccinate in another place. The idea behind the process, she explained, was that there should be fewer cases in the place where the first vaccinations took place, and show whether the vaccine was truly protective or not.

The focus in Sierra Leone would be on health care and frontline workers, mainly in the western areas where there were still tremendous levels of transmission, she said.

The WHO spokesperson emphasized that it is important to note that the vaccine is a preventive measure, not a cure or a drug treatment for Ebola, which has affected 22,444 people with 8,959 deaths.

“It would be a tool to prevent outbreaks of Ebola, however, in the future,” Ms. Harris said, adding that everyone involved in the trials was a volunteer and understood they had volunteered to be part of a scientific trial.

“Trials have been carried out with animals, with non-human primates, who have had a very good reaction when exposed to Ebola and did not catch it,” according to Ms. Harris.

‘Power-sharing formula’ vital to sustain peace in South Sudan, UN chief urges political rivals

3 February - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged South Sudanese President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President, Riek Machar to put the interests of their people ahead of their own in order for peace to flourish in the war-torn country.

Mr. Ban’s call comes on the heels of press reports that the latest round of talks between President Kiir and his former deputy wrapped up over the weekend with a deal on a ceasefire between the two leaders and their respective factions, but without a broader agreement on running the world’s youngest country, which has been engulfed by war for more than a year.

The Secretary-General took note of the outcome of the negotiations and called on the leaders to prepare for the next round of talks that would focus on expeditiously ending the conflict.

“[Mr. Ban] regrets that neither of them compromised on a mutually acceptable power-sharing formula,” said a statement issued earlier today by the Secretary-General’s spokesperson.

The UN chief also called once again on both parties to “urgently and strictly” adhere to the Cessation of Hostilities agreement signed on 23 January 2014. Both leaders agreed to meet for negotiations in the agreement they signed in Addis-Ababa on 2 February 2015.
Now that the latest round of talks is complete, Secretary-General underscored the urgent need for both the President and former Vice President to agree on a comprehensive and inclusive peace agreement.

Such a pact will have to address key institutional reforms, including economic governance, reconciliation, and accountability for the crimes committed since the beginning of the conflict in a manner consistent with international standards, said the statement.

Mr. Ban commended the efforts of mediators and Heads of State and Government of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) for tireless efforts and commitments to broker a peace agreement. The UN chief said that the UN stands by ready to assist in efforts to engage all involved parties.

The security situation in South Sudan has steadily deteriorated since political in-fighting between President Kiir and his former deputy, Mr. Machar, started in mid-December 2013. The hostilities subsequently turned into a full-fledged conflict that has sent nearly 100,000 civilians fleeing to United Nations bases around the country.

According to UN estimates, some 2.5 million people could be in need of food assistance in through March of 2015, especially if hostilities in the country continue through the dry season.

**With more heavy rains forecast for Malawi, UN highlights need for donors to fulfil aid pledges**

3 February - Saturated soils in Malawi are expected to get more rain in the coming days as heavy downpours are aid in the region’s forecast, a spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP) told journalists during a briefing in Geneva today.

The situation in flood-hit areas is expected to get worse said Elisabeth Byrs, adding that the agency has continued scaling-up assistance as it tries to reach 370,000 people affected by floods.

A total of 1,530 metric tonnes of food is in position to reach approximately 230,000 people in seven districts but more would be positioned to reach other flood-affected areas.

“The flood-affected areas are still cut off from markets and other food supplies,” Ms. Byrs said, adding that crops are suffering greatly. “Damage to crops is expected to have long-term consequences on food security.”

Ms. Byrs described the challenges associated with reaching the worst-hit areas, particularly damage and destruction of roads and bridges, and she added that a WFP helicopter had been deployed in the country on 23 January to support delivery of food and other humanitarian relief cargo to areas that remain inaccessible.

She said she hopes the agency would take delivery of another helicopter, some four-wheel drive vehicles and boats, but that depends upon contributions received in support of logistics efforts. Ms. Byrs underlined the need for States to honour their pledged donations, stressing that without money, WFP will be unable to purchase food assistance or anything else.

So far, $10.2 million worth of pledges has been received but an urgent requirement remains for $17.5 million to purchase approximately 26,000 metric tonnes of various commodities and to augment its logistics operation.

“There are concerns about sanitation and hygiene risks in the camps,” Ms. Byrs noted. “There have been reported cases of scabies among flood-affected populations, along with increased cases of malaria and diarrhoea. Cases of malnutrition have also been seen in camps and are expected to rise steadily.”
UN rights chief warns escalation in Ukraine fighting ‘catastrophic’ for country’s civilians

3 February - The ongoing conflict in Ukraine is proving “catastrophic” for the country's civilians amid escalating violence, indiscriminate shelling, and harsh winter conditions which have made life increasingly precarious for millions of civilians, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, warned today.

A recent uptick in fighting in eastern Ukraine between Government and anti-Government forces has seen casualty figures spike with 224 civilians killed and 545 wounded in the three weeks leading up to 1 February. According to the UN Office for the High Commissioner (OHCHR), the overall death toll now exceeds 5,358 people, with another 12,235 wounded since mid-April last year.

“Bus stops and public transport, marketplaces, schools and kindergartens, hospitals and residential areas have become battlegrounds in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions of Ukraine – in clear breach of international humanitarian law which governs the conduct of armed conflicts,” Mr. Zeid announced in a press release.

“Any further escalation will prove catastrophic for the 5.2 million people living in the midst of conflict in eastern Ukraine.”

In late February 2014, the situation in Ukraine transcended what was initially seen as an internal Ukrainian political crisis into violent clashes in parts of the country, later reaching full-scale conflict in the east. Despite the Minsk cease-fire, the situation in Ukraine has since continuously deteriorated, with serious consequences for the country's unity, territorial integrity and stability. Recent media reports have suggested a potential worsening of the situation amid claims of a massive recruitment campaign by anti-Government groups.

Mr. Zeid voiced concern about the armed groups' declarations, overtly rejecting the Minsk ceasefire agreement and vowing to scale up their offensive against Government installations, and stated that such affirmations were “extremely dangerous and deeply worrying.”

Against that backdrop, the civilian death toll from the fighting has been particularly high in the residential areas of both Government-controlled territory, such as the towns of Avdiivka, Debaltseve, Popasna and Shchastia and the settlement of Stanytsia Luhanska, as well as the cities of Donetsk and Horlivka controlled by the armed groups. In the single most deadly incident involving civilians, at least 31 people were killed and 112 wounded in Mariupol, following two attacks by multiple launch rocket systems, the OHCHR press release added.

“The protection of civilians by all parties to the conflict must be of the utmost priority,” continued the High Commissioner. “All violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law must be thoroughly investigated and perpetrators must be promptly brought to justice.”

The High Commissioner also lamented the “worrying developments” in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea, where “multiple violations” of the rights of Crimean Tatars were being documented.

Last week, the premises of ATR, the only television channel broadcasting in the Crimean Tatar language, were raided by armed, masked men in unmarked military clothing, and the Deputy Head of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Ahtem Ciygoz, was detained, the OHCHR reported. He faces up to 10 years in prison for creating “mass disturbances.”
Amid US measles outbreak, UN health agency urges parents to vaccinate children

3 February - Parents in the United States must vaccinate their children against measles in order to maintain the high levels of immunity necessary in keeping outbreaks of the aggressively contagious virus small and contained, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) announced today.

The United States is currently facing a swelling measles outbreak with over 100 people from across the country reported as having contracted the disease – a peak in contagion rates since the Government declared measles to be eliminated in 2000.

At a press briefing in Geneva today, WHO spokesperson, Fadéla Chaib, explained that the disease had resurfaced in large part due to a misinformation campaign waged by certain groups regarding the importance of vaccination. She added that the UN agency recommended two doses of measles vaccines to ensure immunity and prevent outbreaks, confirming that the vaccines that have been in use for over 50 years are, in fact, “safe and effective.”

Responding to a question, Ms. Chaib noted that millions of vaccinated children had been saved from the disease over the past five decades due to the “cheap, effective and proven vaccine” and emphasized the importance of continuing vaccination campaigns in order to not only save children but also the lives of adults suffering from immune problems.

In developing countries, it costs around $1 to vaccinate a child against the disease, making the measles vaccine one of the best buys in public health.

At the same time, Christophe Bouluerac, a spokesperson for the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), told the Geneva press conference that measles was a disease that required a continued focus on mobilization.

During 2013, 205 million children were immunized against measles through large-scale campaigns in 34 countries, including Cambodia, Cape Verde, Ghana, Jordan, Senegal, and Sudan amid the disease’s re-emergence.

Progress is stalled in the WHO Eastern Mediterranean region, where weak health systems, conflict and population displacement have hampered vaccination efforts. Meanwhile, the European region has also seen measles return with outbreaks in a number of countries including Georgia, Turkey and Ukraine.

The fourth Millennium Development Goal (MDG 4) aims to reduce the under-five mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. Recognizing the potential of measles vaccination to reduce child mortality, and given that measles vaccination coverage can be considered a marker of access to child health services, routine measles vaccination coverage has been selected as an indicator of progress towards achieving that target.
International Court of Justice dismisses genocide claims by Croatia and Serbia

3 February - The International Court of Justice (ICJ), the main judicial body of the United Nations, today rejected claims made by Croatia and Serbia accusing each other of committing genocide during the Balkan wars of the 1990s, a decision that is “without appeal” and binding.

It its judgment, the ICJ rejected (by 15 votes to 2) Croatia's claim and Serbia's counter-claim unanimously (by 17 votes to 0). The Court also rejected (by 11 votes to 6), the second jurisdictional objection raised by Serbia and to follow on that, found that its jurisdiction to entertain Croatia's claims extends prior to 27 April 1992.

In the proceedings under review, Croatia contended that Serbia was responsible for breaches of the Genocide Convention committed in Croatia between 1991 and 1995. In its counter-claim, Serbia contended that Croatia was itself responsible for breaches of the Convention committed in 1995 in the “Republika Srpska Krajina.”

On July 2, 1999, Croatia filed an application instituting proceedings against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in respect of a dispute concerning alleged violations of the Genocide Convention committed between 1991 and 1995. On 18 November 2008, the Court delivered a Judgment partially rejecting the preliminary objections raised by the respondent (which had then become Serbia). Serbia subsequently filed a counter-claim.

The Hague-based ICJ in its examination first looked at Croatia's claim against Serbia and found that the actus reus (or: “material acts perpetrated”) of genocide has been established. But the Court also found that the intentional element of genocide was lacking. The absence of intent rejects Croatia's claim in its entirety.

The Court then examined Serbia's counter-claim against Croatia and found that the actus reus of genocide was established. But again the intention element was lacking, therefore like Croatia's claim, the Court rejected Serbia's counter-claim in its entirety.

According to the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, genocide contains two constituent elements: the physical element or what the Court calls, actus reus, and the mental element. The “intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group as such” is the essential characteristic of genocide, which it distinguishes from other crimes. It is regarded as a dolus specialis, meaning specific intent, which must be present to establish genocide.

In its decision, the Court noted a raft of crimes committed during the time period in question, included widespread attacks against civilian populations and infrastructure, and reiterated its request to both parties to continue their cooperation with a view to settling as soon as possible the issue of the fate of missing persons. The ICJ also encouraged the parties to continue their cooperation with a view to offering appropriate reparation to the victims of such violations, thus consolidating peace and stability in the region.

Established in 1945 under the UN Charter, the ICJ – widely referred to as the 'World Court' – settles legal disputes between States and gives advisory opinions on legal questions that have been referred to it by authorized UN organs or specialized agencies. ICJ Judgments are final and binding on the Parties involved in the legal disputes submitted to the Court.
UN expert urges Portugal to boost access to justice for country's most vulnerable people

3 February - Portuguese authorities must do more to ensure wider access to the country's justice system, enhancing its legal aid programmes amid growing poverty, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers has urged.

“One of the most serious concerns in Portugal is the increasing costs to access justice,” Gabriela Knaul stressed in a news release issued today, following her eight-day visit to the country.

“Legal aid exists in Portugal, but many don't qualify to receive it due to the restrictive requirements,” she continued. “Furthermore, the fragmentation of responsibilities in the delivery of legal aid can lead to excessive delays in obtaining such support.”

Ms. Knaul, an independent expert appointed by the Geneva-based Human Rights Council, explained that by ensuring greater access to the justice system, the Government of Portugal would also give attention to the situations of persons “particularly vulnerable to violence,” such as women, children or persons in detention.

She added that the “re-victimization” of women and children victims of violence through the justice system remained “unacceptable” and urged authorities to speedily implement measures to support and protect these victims.

The Special Rapporteur acknowledged that her visit – which took her from Lisbon to Porto and on to Coimbra – had come at a time of comprehensive structural reform for the Portuguese justice system but remained concerned about delays affecting the implementation of such reforms, including the recent collapse of the Courts' computer system.

To that point, she called on the Government to provide greater budgetary, financial, and administrative autonomy to the Courts and the Public Prosecution, warning that the concentration of administrative responsibilities under the Ministry of Justice appeared “to limit the possibilities of accountability of judges and prosecutors.”

“There must be a continuous dialogue between the government, judges, prosecutors, lawyers and representatives of civil society to ensure that the reforms bring the desired changes and increase the effectiveness of the justice system,” she concluded.

Security Council strongly condemns Boko Haram attacks in Nigeria, Cameroon

3 February - The United Nations Security Council today condemned in the strongest terms the continued escalation of attacks perpetrated by Boko Haram terrorists, pointing to an attack on 1 February in Borno State, Nigeria and to increasing attacks in the Lake Chad Basin region, including, on 29 and 30 January, against Chadian forces deployed in Cameroon near the town of Fotokol, which killed four Chadian soldiers and injured 12 others.

In a statement issued to the press in New York, the 15 members extended their condolences and sympathies to the families of those killed and injured, and to the peoples and the Governments of the Federal Republic of Nigeria and Chad.

Recalling their Presidential Statement of 19 January this year (S/PRST/2015/4), Council members reiterated their deep concern that the activities of Boko Haram are undermining the peace and stability of the West and Central African region. They urged the region to enhance regional military
operations and coordination to more effectively and immediately combat Boko Haram. In that regard, they commended the Chadian army's swift assistance in Cameroon, which resulted in neutralisation of 123 Boko Haram combatants and the capture of others.

Members of the 15-State body reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations, including the actions of Boko Haram, 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, whenever and by whosoever committed.

Reiterating their determination to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, members underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of acts of terrorism to justice. They also urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate with the relevant authorities in that regard.

The Council also 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, refugee and humanitarian law.

Global collaboration critical as humanitarian crises grow, says top UN relief official

3 February - International stakeholders will increasingly need to collaborate as they face down rising levels of humanitarian strife around the globe, Valerie Amos, the United Nations humanitarian chief, said today.

Speaking at the opening of a regional consultation meeting in Budapest ahead of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit, Ms. Amos, the UN UnderSecretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs observed that 78 million people in 31 countries worldwide continue to depend on humanitarian support to survive.

“They are the most vulnerable people in the world and that number will grow as natural disasters strike during the year,” she confirmed.

Humanitarian needs have more than doubled in the past decade and have reached “unprecedented levels” as crises in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and the Central African Republic have intensified, according to the Office of the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), which Ms. Amos heads.

These challenges are currently being addressed by representatives of governments, humanitarian relief organizations, the private sector and community organizations during a two-day consultation in the Hungarian capital. The event is the fourth in a series of worldwide consultations bringing together participants from Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

The results and recommendations will form a broad foundation for next year’s World Humanitarian Summit, scheduled to be held in Istanbul, Turkey, during which delegates will seek to set a forward-looking humanitarian agenda that keeps pace with the growing humanitarian needs of an increasingly fragile planet.

“Together we need to find new solutions to the way we respond to humanitarian crises, safeguard our principles, expand our partnerships, and ensure a firm policy and evidence base for our work,” Ms. Amos continued. “No one organization can do this alone.”