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**COP21: UN joins France and private sector partners for action on electro-mobility**

3 December - Recognizing that transportation has the highest growth of carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions of any industrial sector, transport representatives at the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) presented 10 initiatives today that aim to reduce these emissions and build more sustainable transport systems.

Among the events was the launch of the Paris Declaration on Electro-Mobility and Climate Change & Call to Action. Endorsed by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Energy Agency, as well as Tesla Motors and Michelin Nissan-Renault, it reportedly builds on commitments from companies, cities, States and associations that have undertaken decisive efforts towards sustainable transport electrification.

“Of course I think the sector of transport is one of the most important to succeed in fighting climate,” Ségolène Royal, the French Minister of Ecology, Sustainable Development and Energy told the UN News Service.

“So I announced three concrete initiatives,” she explained. “First, an open bid about less expensive electric cars – less than 7,000 dollars [per car]; second, an initiative for towns to build a plan of mobility inside the cities; and third, roads with positive energy which [would see thruways] covered with panel and would solve the problem between agriculture areas and road areas.”

With energy-related CO2 emissions expected to jump from one quarter of total energy-related emissions today to one-third by 2050, the actors that are part of the Lima to Paris Action Agenda (LPAA) are underlining that significant changes can be made in transport to keep the global average temperature rise below 2 degrees Celsius.

The LPAA was launched one year ago at the the previous UN climate change conference in Peru, and aims to strength
climate action beyond COP21.

The effort comes as demand for public and freight transport is projected to grow rapidly, especially in emerging and developing countries. Yet, projections reveal a 50 per cent reduction of transport CO2 emissions compared to a “transport-as-usual” scenario can be achieved by 2050, without hampering sustainable economic growth.

Moreover, according to the International Energy Agency, if global warming is to be limited to 2 degrees or less, at least 20 per cent of all road vehicles (cars, two and three-wheelers, trucks, buses and others) must be electric-powered by 2030, in conjunction with the low-carbon production of electricity and hydrogen.

Other announcements today at COP21, which centered around the themes of ‘Transport’ and ‘Building,’ included new efforts to stabilize emissions from the aviation industry by 2020. The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), said it has received 74 action plans to advance the implementation of mitigation measures by States, which accounts for 80.6 per cent of global CO2 emissions from international flight.

COP21: digital map launched by UNICEF helps young people tell their climate change stories

3 December - A digital mapping project called ‘Act now for tomorrow,’ which was recently launched by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is helping young people around the world identify climate issues in their communities and find ways to address them.

“The global climate map is engaging 500 young people from 65 countries,” Zayn Abaakil, a UNICEF child engagement coordinator, told the UN News Centre in one of the conference halls of the UN climate change conference (COP21) where dozens of innovative climate projects are being showcased over the next two weeks.

The idea behind the project, she said, is for young people to show the link between climate issues and the impacts they see every day, which are affecting their health and access to education.

The UN agency recently reported that more than half a billion children live in areas with extremely high flood occurrences, while 160 million are in high drought severity zones.

“They see all the contributions from other young people,” explained Ms. Abaakil, and “they understand that the issue is a global one, that they are all connected around the same problem, but also learn from each other, look at the best practices that have been done from different places, and connect.”

Seven UNICEF youth ambassadors have travelled from all corners of the globe to attend COP21, display their findings, and exchange stories – this time in person. One of them is Andozile Simwinga, a driven 18-year old Zambian student who said the impacts of climate change on his country are affecting his self-esteem.

“Things, they don’t actually move the way they’re supposed to move and young people are not happy the way they should be,” he said energetically.

Despite talking about an issue that clearly causes him distress, Mr. Simwinga couldn’t hide the enthusiasm he feels being in Paris and contributing to this global event.

 “[The effect of climate change] has really made me feel low – I go out of my house every day and I look at the environment. People have cut down trees, there’s deforestation everywhere. I want to do environmental studies but what am I going to address? What am I going to talk about? What am I going to tell […] my children and also the future generations? We had trees here; we had different types of animals. So it really has affected my self-esteem.”

Meanwhile, 22-year-old old Bellinda Raymond traveled from Malaysia to attend the Youth Conference prior to heading to
the UN climate conference. She described herself as an active citizen, someone who engages with members of her indigenous community, especially ahead of major weather events that have the potential to destroy homes and vital surroundings. She said her grandparents weren’t affected by climate change in the ways she is today.

“As an indigenous person, we depend on the forest and rivers for our daily life – and we also have our traditional system, also related to the climate. The weather is now unpredictable and we need to adapt to the environment that’s changing,” Ms. Raymond said.

Asked what the worse effect of climate change has been on her community, she answered floods.

“Because last time, when the rain came, it was still okay for us, but now just two hours of rain [and] it’s already flooding and has caused a lot of damage; people cannot go to work, and it’s difficult to access the outside.”

As youth ambassadors celebrated ‘Young and Future Generations Day’ at COP21 on Thursday, government delegations continued to negotiate a new climate agreement which the world’s people hope will be ambitious enough to limit global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius, and prevent further degradation of the planet.

**Ban delivers favourable report card on early-stage talks at Paris climate summit**

3 December - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon gave a favourable report card today to the early stages of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) in Paris, while at the same time urging both developed and developing countries to do more to reach universal agreement to mitigate the threat.

“I was very encouraged by what I saw and I heard during the opening days of COP21,” he told a news conference at UN Headquarters in New York. “World leaders did precisely what they were meant to do: give strong impetus to the negotiations. Almost all countries have submitted climate action plans, known as INDCs [Intended Nationally Determined Contributions],” he said.

“Major economies have made significant commitments to cut emissions. Many developed countries have made new financial commitments to help poor and vulnerable countries adapt to climate impacts. Philanthropists and entrepreneurs are making exciting new commitments and investments,” he continued, citing the Breakthrough Energy Coalition announced by Bill Gates.

Mr. Ban, who warned some 150 world leaders on the opening day on Monday that they must move much farther and faster to limit the global temperature rise to below 2 degrees Celsius, is returning to the French capital tonight for COP21Action Day to showcase the huge number of climate partnerships and initiatives involving cities, the private sector, and civil society.

Even the sought-after 2-degree rise will have serious consequences for food and water security, economic stability and international peace as climate change unleashes more devastating floods, disastrous droughts and violent cyclones and storms, and rising seas inundate low-lying island States and shorelines where many major cities are located.

“In the global economy, the transition to a low-emissions future is well under way,” Mr. Ban said today, yet, he stressed that in the negotiating room, “there is still a lot of work to do. Key issues remain unresolved, and there is not much time left.”

“I continue to press developed countries to recognize their responsibility to take the lead, while urging developing countries to do more in line with their growing capabilities. The world has gone too long without a universal climate agreement that includes all countries as part of the solution. We cannot delay any longer,” he said.

“There is no perfect agreement. But our goal is clear: an agreement that truly addresses climate change, and puts the world on track for long-term prosperity, stability and peace. That is what the days ahead in Paris can and must deliver,” noted the
Turning to the issue of terrorism and the refugee crisis, which has seen hundreds of thousands of Syrians, Iraqis and Afghans flee to Europe, Mr. Ban said the conflict in Syria was a principal cause, citing plans to launch an initiative in early January involving both intra-Syrian political talks and a nationwide ceasefire.

“Closed doors and discrimination are worsening the plight of forcibly displaced people across the world,” he said, adding: “I am especially concerned about misplaced suspicions about migrants and refugees, and widespread anti-Muslim discrimination and bigotry.”

“The world must also be united against terrorism. No grievances or cause can justify the atrocious violence we have seen in recent weeks. The world’s response needs to be robust, and always within the rule of law and with respect for human rights. We cannot be ruled by fear,” the Secretary-General stressed.

Fundamental change needed to address women’s health in conflicts, disasters – UN

3 December - Of the more than 100 million people in need of humanitarian aid this year due to conflict and natural disasters, 26 million are women and adolescent girls of reproductive age, yet efforts to meet their desperate needs are seriously underfunded, a United Nations report warned today, calling for fundamental change in the situation.

“One of the weakest areas of resilience currently is among women and girls, and the institutions that serve them,” the UN Population Fund (UNFPA) said in its annual State of World Population Report, this year, entitled Shelter from the Storm: A transformative agenda for women and girls in a crisis-prone world.

“As long as inequality and inequitable access short-circuit their rights, abilities and opportunities, women and girls will remain among those most in need of humanitarian assistance and least equipped to contribute to recovery or resilience,” it added.

“The demand for humanitarian assistance has grown every year since 2011, but funding has not increased at the same pace, leaving unprecedented gaps, translating into inadequate or insufficient responses for millions of people in need,” according to the report.

In a foreword, UNFPA Executive Director Babatunde Osotimehin noted that every day, 507 women and adolescents die from pregnancy and childbirth complications in emergency situations and in fragile States, despite the “remarkable progress” of the past decade to protect their health and rights.

“Together we must transform humanitarian action by placing the health and rights of women and young people at the centre of our priorities,” he wrote.

“Together we must strive for a world where women and girls are no longer disadvantaged in multiple ways but are equally empowered to realize their full potential, and contribute to the development and stability of their communities and nations – before, during or after a crisis,” he added.

The report noted that in a fragile world, women and girls pay a disproportionate price due to discrimination and gender inequality that see them enjoying less of almost everything – income, land and other assets, access to health services, education, social networks, a political voice, equal protection under the law, and the realization of basic human rights.

“By many measures, more countries are considered fragile than five or six years ago, leaving them more vulnerable to conflict or the effects of disasters,” it stressed. “When a crisis strikes, women and girls are disproportionately disadvantaged and less prepared or empowered to survive or recover.”
It called for moving sexual and reproductive health to the centre of humanitarian action. “A fundamental shift is needed: away from reacting to disasters and conflicts as they unfold and sometimes linger for decades, towards prevention, preparedness and empowerment of individuals and communities to withstand and recover from them,” said the report.

“Wherever feasible, humanitarian assistance can challenge existing forms of discrimination, such as through providing comprehensive services for survivors of gender-based violence. It can enlist men and boys in building acceptance of new social norms, such as around women’s inherent rights and the peaceful resolution of differences,” according to the report.

“The health and rights of women and adolescents should not be treated like an afterthought in humanitarian response,” Dr. Osotimehin said, adding: “For the pregnant woman who is about to deliver, or the adolescent girl who survived sexual violence, life-saving services are as vital as water, food and shelter.”

**Children under five account for one third of deaths from foodborne diseases – new UN report**

3 December - Diarrhoeal diseases are responsible for more than half of all foodborne diseases globally and of all those who fall ill after consuming contaminated food, 420,000 people die – almost third of them children under the age of five, the World Health Organization said today in its first ever report on the issue.

“Until now, estimates of foodborne diseases were vague and imprecise. This concealed the true human costs of contaminated food. This report sets the record straight,” said WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan upon release of the Estimates of the Global Burden of Foodborne Diseases – the most comprehensive report to date on the impact of contaminated food on health and wellbeing.

“Knowing which foodborne pathogens are causing the biggest problems in which parts of the world can generate targeted action by the public, governments, and the food industry,” Dr. Chan explained.

According to the report, which estimates the burden of foodborne diseases caused by 31 agents – bacteria, viruses, parasites, toxins and chemicals – each year, as many as 600 million people, or almost one in 10 worldwide, fall ill after consuming contaminated food.

Of these, 420,000 people die, including 125,000 children under the age of five years, accounting for almost a third of all deaths from foodborne diseases, the report said.

The WHO report added that diarrhoeal diseases are responsible for more than half of the global burden of foodborne diseases, causing 550 million people to fall ill and 230,000 deaths every year.

The health agency also reported that Africa and South-East Asia regions have the highest incidence and highest death rates, including among children under the age of five.

“Based on what we know now, it is apparent that the global burden of foodborne diseases is considerable, affecting people all over the world – particularly children under five years of age and people in low-income areas,” said Dr. Kazuaki Miyagishima, Director of WHO’s Department of Food Safety and Zoonoses.

Children are at particular risk of foodborne diarrhoeal diseases, with 220 million falling ill and 96,000 dying every year, WHO said, adding that diarrhoea is often caused by eating raw or undercooked meat, eggs, fresh produce and dairy products contaminated by norovirus, Campylobacter, non-typhoidal Salmonella and pathogenic E. coli.

Other major contributors to the global burden of foodborne diseases are typhoid fever, hepatitis A, *Taenia solium* (a tapeworm), and aflatoxin, which is produced by mould on grain that is stored inappropriately.

“The risk of foodborne diseases is most severe in low- and middle-income countries, linked to preparing food with unsafe
water; poor hygiene and inadequate conditions in food production and storage; lower levels of literacy and education; and insufficient food safety legislation or implementation of such legislation,” the report said.

The report’s findings underscore the global threat posed by foodborne diseases and reinforce the need for governments, the food industry and individuals to do more to make food safe and prevent foodborne diseases, WHO said.

WHO is working closely with national governments to help set and implement food safety strategies and policies that will in turn have a positive impact on the safety of food in the global marketplace, the agency said.

“Food safety is a shared responsibility,” WHO said.

**On International Day of Persons with Disabilities, UN urges inclusion, access for people of all abilities**

3 December - The United Nations is marking this year’s International Day of Persons with Disabilities today with the theme “inclusion matters” to raise awareness and mobilize support for some one billion people living with disabilities who remain one of the most marginalized groups in the world.

“Building a sustainable, inclusive world for all requires the full engagement of people of all abilities,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message on the Day, which has been celebrated on 3 December since 1992.

Mr. Ban noted that earlier this year, the UN Third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction recognized the key role people with disabilities can play in promoting a more universally accessible approach in disaster preparedness and response.

And next year, he said, the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (HABITAT III) will discuss a new urban development agenda to make cities inclusive, accessible and sustainable.

“As we look ahead, we need to strengthen development policies and practices to ensure that accessibility is part of inclusive and sustainable development,” the UN chief said. “This requires improving our knowledge of the challenges facing all persons with disabilities.”

Among the commemorative events around the world, at UN headquarters, the Day will be celebrated with an event featuring panel discussions on such themes as ‘Accessible New Urban Agenda and inclusion of persons with disabilities’ and ‘Invisible disabilities.’

In Paris, the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization is hosting a conference at its Paris headquarters entitled ‘Inclusion matters: access and empowerment for people of all abilities.’

UNESCO Director-General Irina Bokova said in her message for the Day: “An inclusive society is one that defends the rights and dignity of every citizen, that empowers every woman and man to participate fully in every aspect of social, political, economic and cultural life.”

“We have seen progress across the world, but persons with disabilities remain one of the most marginalized groups today,” Ms. Bokova said.

Participating in the conference is Lenin Moreno, UN Special Envoy on Disability and Accessibility, and the event is expected to include panel discussions, a screening of short films showcasing the courage and determination of people with disabilities in overcoming the obstacles they face, and a jazz concert.

UNESCO said the estimated one billion people living with disabilities worldwide face many barriers to inclusion in key
aspects of society. Eighty per cent of them live in developing countries. One in three out-of-school children has a disability and fewer than two per cent of children with disabilities in developing countries are in school.

Yemen: Ban calls for prompt investigation after Saudi-led airstrikes destroy another health clinic

3 December - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon condemned the airstrikes carried out yesterday by the Saudi-led Coalition on a mobile health clinic run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) in Taiz city, Yemen, which injured seven people and destroyed the clinic.

“The Secretary-General underscores that medical facilities and medical personnel are explicitly protected under international humanitarian law. He calls for a prompt, effective and impartial investigation into today’s incident,” said a statement issued by his spokesperson in New York.

Mr. Ban had condemned an earlier incident on 27 October during which a hospital run by MSF in Sa’ada province was hit by airstrikes.

“The Secretary-General reminds all parties of the utmost necessity to respect their obligations under international human rights and humanitarian law to prevent attacks against civilians and civilian infrastructure,” the statement concluded.

UN refugee agency concerned by violence at Greek border, calls for improved security

3 December - As a result of restrictions imposed by the authorities along the Western Balkans route, tensions have been rising at the border between Greece and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, prompting the United Nations refugee agency to call on the authorities of both countries to manage the border in a manner consistent with human rights and refugee-protection principles.

Limitations are being placed on refugees and migrants from countries other than Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq along, causing tensions at Idomeni, on the Greek side of the border, which have led on several occasions to violence and a temporary closure of the border, according to a news release issued by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The agency expressed deep concern at the situation and added that it is saddened by the death of a Moroccan man at the border today under as yet unclear circumstances.

Further, UNHCR underlined the need for the authorities to take appropriate action and called on the Greek authorities to restore security as a matter of priority in order to ensure the protection of those in need and the safety of humanitarian workers and volunteers.

Additionally, UNHCR said transportation has been facilitated for the refugees and migrants who have been refused admission into the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to return to Athens, where reception facilities and assistance are available and UNHCR staff is present to offer individual advice and legal counselling on a case-by-case basis.

The agency reiterated concern over the consequences of border restrictions being implemented by several countries in the Balkans and recommended profiling people based on their protection needs as opposed to their nationality.

UNHCR and other organizations have called on the concerned states to re-establish coordination and response mechanisms agreed at the Western Balkans Summit on 8 October and the Leaders' Meeting on 25 October 2015.
Earlier this week, the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the International organization for Migration (IOM) reported that so far this year, there have been some 730,000 sea arrivals in Greece, with flows heading further into Europe through the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia.

**Food prices fall in November amid ‘robust’ global inventories – UN agency**

3 December - November saw a decrease in major food commodity prices as the cost of most globally-traded staples fell, the United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) reported today as it also warned of deteriorating food security in areas affected by conflict or severe weather.

“Except for sugar prices, which increased for the third consecutive month, all the other commodities included in the FFPI [The FAO Food Price Index] saw their prices drop, under the pressure of a strong dollar and generally abundant supplies,” said the FFPI November report released today.

The Index averaged 156.7 points in November, falling 1.6 per cent compared to October, and about 18 per cent below its value last year.

Among the major food commodity groups, FAO’s Vegetable Oil Price Index shrank most, with a 3.1 per cent drop, while the Meat Price Index pulled back the least at 1.6 per cent.

The decrease in the price of coarse grains due to favorable harvests of the world’s largest producer, the United States, is a main cause for the reduction in cereal cost.

Further, abnormal weather patterns brought by El Niño have a global impact on the drop of cereal production, according to FAO.

The cost of sugar, however, rose strongly for the third consecutive month, as a result of harvesting delay and weather-induced crop damages.

The approaching marketing season, however, would be “generally comfortable,” states the report, adding that world inventories should be sufficient until the end of the year.

Meanwhile, Food security, stressed FAO, is of great concern. People in some 33 countries, with the majority in Africa, have become food insecure either due to El Niño-caused drought and floods, or conflicts, particularly in Syria and Yemen.

The FAO Food Price Index is a monthly trade-weighted index tracking prices on international markets of five major food commodity groups: cereals, meat, dairy products, vegetable oils and sugar.
**COP21: UN emphasizes crucial impact of young and future generations to tackle climate change**

3 December - The halls of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) grew livelier today as hundreds of participants gathered to mark “young and future generations day,” an opportunity for youth to remind world leaders and negotiators of the need to reach an ambitious climate agreement to secure their future, according to the UN Envoy on Youth.

“As the UN Secretary-General has said, we are the first generation which can eradicate extreme poverty but also we are the last generation that could reverse climate change,” recalled Ahmad Alhendawi, speaking to the UN News Service in Paris, France on the margins of the global event.

“It’s the task of our generation to get it done,” he continued. “And my message is that this is our power. The people who are here [at COP21] represent the more active and the more engaged in this debate but my hope could only be that this will trickle down as well in their communities. We have to secure and claim the space for young people in this process.”

The process in which Mr. Alhendawi hopes more youth voices will be heard is the current talks happening in the 32 “negotiating rooms” of the 18 hectare conference centre locate north-east of the French capital.

Youth delegates – the ones the UN Envoy say represent some of the most active young climate advocates – attended the youth event on Thursday wearing t-shirts which read: “We must, we can, we will take action.” Some blew up large green balloons before letting them fly loose and deflate – a symbol of what their world could look like, should an ambitious agreement on climate change is not reached.

Taking the stage, Mr. Alhendawi was greeted with cheering from the crowd as he wished young delegates a “happy youth day.”

“This is one of the most important days – because what is at stake today is your present and future,” he said. “Nobody has the right to gamble with your future.”

Following his remarks, in which he highlighted the importance of even little actions to tackle the significant challenges of climate change, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the organizer of COP21 – thanked youth representatives for what they have achieved in their respective communities.

“Thank you for what you’re doing not just at the COP but also what you’re doing back home,” Christiana Figueres said. “That is where the rubber hits the ground.”

Echoing this message, Mr. Alhendawi said he is very proud of the youth movement around the world. “Young people were the mobilizers and the volunteers,” he exclaimed. “And they took to the streets reminding everyone that it’s time to take action on climate change.”

During the event, a manifesto called “Our communiqué: Act like a kid” was presented, which urges world leaders to include climate education in the universal climate agreement expected to be adopted at the end of next week.
Ban appoints senior officials for key roles in UN Agenda 2030 advisory board and peacekeeping operations

3 December - The United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of David Nabarro of the United Kingdom as Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

“Dr. Nabarro will work with Member States and other relevant stakeholders to galvanize action on implementation of the Agenda and also oversee the Secretary-General’s special initiatives, e.g. Every Woman Every Child,” said Mr. Ban in his wide-ranging address to the media at UN Headquarters in New York today.

Prior to this, Dr. Nabarro has served as Special Envoy of the Secretary-General on Ebola since September 2014, providing strategic and policy direction for the international response, and from 2005 to 2014, he was Senior Coordinator for Avian and Pandemic Influenza.

With over 30 years of experience in public health, nutrition and development work at country, regional and global levels, Dr. Nabarro has also held positions in non-governmental organizations, universities, national Governments and the UN system.

At the same press conference, Mr. Ban also announced the appointment of El Ghassim Wane of Mauritania as Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations.

“Mr. Wane brings extensive experience on peace and security issues and conflict resolution, particularly in Africa in partnership with international and regional organisations, at a time when United Nations peacekeeping has reached a historic high in terms of levels of deployments of civilian and uniformed personnel and complexity of mandates,” said Mr. Ban.

Mr. Wane will succeed Edmond Mulet of Guatemala, whom the Secretary-General has appointed as his Chef de Cabinet.

The UN chief reiterated his deep gratitude and appreciation for Mr. Mulet’s dedicated service in his former position.