South Sudan: UN agency warns of catastrophic food shortages if conflict continues

4 February - The ongoing conflict in South Sudan is sharply reducing food supplies and slowing humanitarian access to people in need, the United Nations children’s agency (UNICEF) said today, urging warring groups in the country to follow up quickly on the ceasefire deal agreed on Monday.

Without such commitment, the country’s conflict areas face potentially catastrophic food shortages, UNICEF warned, pointing to the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) group of experts’ report, which is released this week, and to its own latest nutrition survey, which supports the IPC’s findings.

“UNICEF needs access to remote areas made inaccessible because of the fighting,” the agency’s Representative in South Sudan, Jonathan Veitch, said. “This is where the crisis is forming. Both parties to the ceasefire need to reach a long-term settlement or face a growing food crisis by the end of the dry and lean season.”

Mr. Veitch said UNICEF and its partners are starting to see large numbers of people on the move in conflict areas because of food shortages. At least 229,000 children are estimated to be suffering from severe acute malnutrition in South Sudan – a number that has doubled since the start of the conflict just over a year ago.

“We remain on edge, and any increase in violence will see supply routes cut, markets disrupted and humanitarian access denied. This would be catastrophic for acutely malnourished children and could quickly lead to high levels of mortality.”
Working with the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF continues to step up aid for malnourished children across South Sudan. UNICEF and partners provided therapeutic feeding treatment for almost 100,000 severely malnourished in 2014 and are aiming to reach 137,000 children under five suffering from severe acute malnutrition in 2015.

UNICEF and WFP are also flying in expert teams to remote locations that are cut off from humanitarian aid, in what is called Rapid Response Missions. During these missions, UNICEF screens children for malnutrition and refers and treats those who are moderately and severely malnourished.

Staff will also register unaccompanied children in order to reunify them with their families, provide basic health and education services, and deliver supplies to provide safe water. More than 600,000 people, including over 142,000 children under the age of five, have been reached through 37 missions to date.

UNICEF is urgently appealing for additional funding of $34 million to continue to boost its nutrition response in South Sudan in 2015.

UN-hosted aviation safety conference recommends aircraft tracking every 15 minutes

4 February - Member States of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) have recommended the adoption of a 15-minute aircraft tracking standard that “will be an important first step in providing a foundation for global flight tracking.”

The recommendation was made Tuesday by the more than 850 participants at the United Nations aviation body's 2015 High-Level Safety Conference at ICAO headquarters in Montreal, Canada.

Concerns over aircraft tracking and risks to civil aviation arising from conflict zones were brought to the fore in the wake of the 2014 downing of a Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine, and the disappearance of another Malaysian Airlines flight upon take off from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

“This new Standard will be an important first step in providing a foundation for global flight tracking and the future implementation of the more comprehensive ICAO Global Aeronautical Distress and Safety System (GADSS),” ICAO Council President Dr. Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu said in a press release.

“Through an expedited process, it will now be sent to our Member States before the end of the month for formal comment and we’re anticipating its adoption by the [ICAO] Council as early as this fall,” Mr. Aliu explained.

The Member States on Tuesday also supported developing a prototype online resource for conflict zone risk assessments.

“Under the Chicago Convention, each State is responsible for assessing civil aviation conflict zone risks in their territories, and for making that information promptly available to other States and airlines,” according to Mr. Aliu.

“The Task Force we convened after the loss of MH17 identified that both States and airlines could benefit from greater information sharing on conflict zones, including risks assessments for a given conflict area, and that a centralized online resource could help facilitate the exchange of information needed to achieve that objective,” he said, referring to the last year’s downing of a Malaysia Airlines flight.

According to the agency, “the intention is for this central repository to be hosted by ICAO and to serve as a single source for up-to-date risk assessments from States and relevant international organizations.”

Other priorities supported by the conference, which ends tomorrow, include the harmonization of terminology used for risk assessments, a comprehensive review of existing requirements and message formats, and industry led-initiatives to share operational information and be more transparent with passengers on conflict zone risk methodologies being applied.
ICAO, a specialized UN agency tasked with coordinating and regulating international air travel, sets rules of airspace, aircraft registration and safety, and undertakes compliance audits, performs studies and analyses.

**Armed groups to be ‘neutralised’ says UN DR Congo envoy after massacre near Beni**

4 February - The head of the United Nations Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) has today strongly condemned massacre of civilians that took place in the area of Beni town in the vast country’s restive northeast.

“Nothing will deter MONUSCO from its purpose to neutralise all armed groups terrorising the population,” said Mission chief, Martin Kobler, who is also the Secretary-General’s Special Representative in the country. “We will support the Congolese authorities to ensure that everything is done to prosecute the perpetrators of these atrocious killings and bring them to justice.”

Civilians in the village of Mayangose-Kibidiwe, northeast of Beni, were attacked with machetes, Mr. Kobler said, adding that elements of MONUSCO, the DRC’s armed forces (FARDC) and the national police were dispatched to the site and an investigation was launched.

Mr. Kobler also referred to a separate attack in Kasu, in Eastern Province, where several villagers were beheaded by people from outside.

“We will continue our active support for security operations by the FARDC, so tranquillity can return to Beni and throughout eastern DRC,” he said.

**UN food aid agency condemns ISIL’s ‘manipulation’ of desperately needed food in Syria**

4 February - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) is “extremely concerned” about images circulating on social media showing WFP food boxes bearing Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) labels.

The Programme says it is trying to verify the authenticity of the photographs, where they were taken and the circumstances surrounding this incident.

“WFP condemns this manipulation of desperately needed food aid inside Syria,” Muhannad Hadi, WFP’s Emergency Regional Coordinator for Syria, said in a statement this week.

“We urge all parties to the conflict to respect humanitarian principles and allow humanitarian workers including our partners to deliver food to the most vulnerable and hungry families,” he added.

The photos seem to have been taken in Dayr Hafr, in eastern rural Aleppo governorate about 50 kilometres from Aleppo city. The Programme last reached Dayr Hafr on 5 August, 2014, through a cross-line convoy that delivered 1,700 food rations, enough to feed 8,500 people for one month.

Last September, ISIL raided WFP’s partner the Syrian Arab Red Crescent (SARC) warehouses there where undistributed WFP food rations may have been stored.

The WFP warns that all areas controlled by ISIL are security hot spots, which severely limits the ability to monitor food distributions.

The Programme has operated in Syria since the start of the crisis without interruptions, delivering assistance to more than 4
million people every month – in addition to over 1.8 million refugees in the neighbouring countries.

**Libya: UN mission condemns attack on oilfield, calls for immediate ceasefire**

*4 February* - The United Nations Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) has strongly condemned the attack carried out by armed groups operating under the Alshuruq Operation in the ‘oil crescent’ area, causing many deaths and undermining the recent efforts of Libyan leaders to reach a peace pact.

“The attack constitutes a major break in the public pledges made by the main commanders to refrain from actions that could harm the political process at a time when the Libyan parties are working intensively to build bridges of cooperation,” said an UNSMIL statement today.

Media reports suggest that yesterday’s attack on a central Libyan oil field left four people dead.

“This attack also undermines efforts to reach a political solution and endangers the oil resources that belong to the Libyan people,” the Mission continued, reminding all armed groups that the majority of Libyans want peace and stability restored to their country.

Armed groups must act in good faith in accordance with their earlier commitment to a ceasefire and to disengage their forces as proof of their commitment to the political process, the Mission said.

“Parties should not take advantage of the ceasefire to mass forces or launch attacks,” it emphasized, also stressing that all sides must exercise maximum restraint and refrain from taking any action that could further escalate the situation.

Over the past few weeks, Libyan stakeholders had gathered in Geneva under the auspices of the UN to commence a Libyan-Libyan political dialogue. To that end, the Mission reminded all parties to the conflict that they need to be aware that the “eyes of the world are on them.”

**'It's now or never' for Central African Republic, UN warns urging more support to end crisis**

*4 February* - The Head of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Africa, Abdoulaye Dieye, began today a week-long visit to the Central African Republic (CAR), calling on international partners to intensify their support for the country's ongoing transition process.

“It's now or never for partners who are willing to help CAR to break the cycle of violence and poverty,” said Mr. Dieye in a press release issued at the start of his visit.

“Central Africans must engage on a path of dialogue to restore the rule of law, fight impunity, build stronger institutions and revive the economy to provide citizens with the livelihoods they need.”

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the crisis in CAR has led to the displacement of over 438,000 people within the country and forced more than 423,000 people to flee to Cameroon, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Republic of Congo. More than half of the country's population, the equivalent of about 2.5 million people, are in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, while more than 60 percent of the population continues to live in extreme poverty.
The transitional Government has adopted a roadmap, giving priority to supporting the political dialogue, national reconciliation and the organization of elections, support for the process of restoring peace and security, community recovery and humanitarian assistance.

During the visit, UNDP and its partners on the ground will reiterate their support for the Government as it vies to restore the authority of the State and advance the country's reconciliation process. The discussions will also feed into a national reconciliation forum to be held in the capital, Bangui in March.

It will also provide an opportunity to discuss with the authorities and other partners the organization of the upcoming elections and the redeployment of the administration across the country. UNDP has helped the Government to conduct a nationwide survey, mapping out specific needs for redeploying local administrations, infrastructure and services.

As part of its efforts to safeguard core government services, UNDP also worked with the UN Peacebuilding Fund and the World Bank to resume the payment of salaries for civil servants.

During his visit, Mr. Dieye will meet with the Government bodies responsible for overseeing the transition, including the Head of State, Catherine Samba-Panza, the Prime Minister, the President of the Transitional Parliament, and government ministers. He will also meet bilateral missions and the Head of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), Babacar Gaye.

UN Somalia envoy ‘excited and worried’ about political progress in year ahead

4 February - Underlining the importance of the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations in Somalia, which he called “unique, strong and essential for success,” the top UN official there briefed the Security Council today on the challenges lying ahead for the country in 2015.

“This year will be decisive in whether and how Somalia can become a unified, peaceful and federal State,” said Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Somalia Nicholas Kay, expressing excitement but also worry over risks on the horizon. “Delays and setbacks will have an even greater impact this year than last.”

Mr. Kay said federalism and the Government’s ‘Vision 2016’ initiative are vital to the plan for the year ahead, but he acknowledged that repeated political crises have shortened the timelines for their fulfilment significantly. Momentum gained in 2014 had to be maintained, particularly building the capacity of Interim Regional Administrations and establishing such bodies where none exists.

The review of the Constitution, including important discussions on power and resource sharing, would need to be completed this year, with a Constitutional Referendum planned for early 2016. Other key decisions and preparations for that exercise and for elections also had to be made. Of particular importance was establishment of the National Independent Electoral Commission and the Boundaries and Federation Commission.

“We must continue to support and build the Federal Government’s leadership and capacity,” Mr. Kay continued. “But inclusive political processes will be the key. Somalia’s regions must play a full part in State-building and peacebuilding processes.”

He also stressed the importance of involving minority and marginalized groups, as well as women in the processes and he underlined the need to avoid political infighting, divisions and distractions.

“I worry that tensions will rise as the 2016 elections get closer,” noted Mr. Kay, stressing that it is up to Somalia’s political leaders to guide the process responsibly, build confidence among all groups and put aside narrow interests. “A spirit of compromise is the hallmark of strength, not weakness.”
He paid tribute to the work of the AU Mission in Somalia (AMISOM) and the Somali National Army, as well as the UN Support Office for AMISOM (UNSOA), looking forward to advances in the campaign against Al-Shabaab and improvements to the security situation for Somali civilians.

“Stabilisation has to work this year,” he said. “I look forward to greater implementation of the Federal Government’s stabilization strategy, particularly local reconciliation and peacebuilding activities.”

With the country remaining one of the most dangerous in which the Security Council has mandated operations, Mr. Kay, who heads of the UN Assistance Mission there, known as UNSOM, praised the vital work of the UN Guard Unit, which allowed the UN to expand its presence in Mogadishu. That expansion, however, pushed the Unit to the limits of its capacities and with demands upon it set to increase further as more effort was made to achieve stabilization and to fulfil Vision 2016, the Unit needed strengthening.

Welcoming Somalia’s recent ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, he stressed the need for improved human rights for children and women and for the building of institutions like the Human Rights Commission. He also warned against complacency about the humanitarian situation.

“Somalia is still teetering on the edge,” Mr. Kay said. “In 2015, we must see concerted action by the Federal Government and international partners to pull it back from the brink.”

**Role of health emerges as vital concern ahead of UN disaster risk reduction conference**

4 February - As Member States accelerate efforts to finalize the successor to “the world’s most encompassing framework” on disaster risk reduction ahead of a critical United Nations conference in Japan next month, the role of health in building community resilience has suddenly come front and centre in the negotiation process, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) said today.

The Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), the outcome of the 2005 World Conference on Disaster Reduction, is the first plan to detail the work required from all different sectors and actors to reduce disaster losses.

Looking to update that landmark agreement at the upcoming Third UN World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction, world leaders will head to Sendai, Japan, in mid-March to broker the “HFA2” and chart a global course on disaster risk reduction for the coming decade. Sendai lies at the heart of Japan’s Tohoku region, which bore the brunt of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami that led to the Fukushima meltdown.

But while measures to counter the devastation wrought by earthquakes and other natural disasters have formed the bulk of disaster risk reduction efforts until now, health issues are increasingly occupying a prominent space in global discussions.

“The human, social, and economic impact of epidemics such as Ebola, bird flu or HIV/AIDS can be as serious as an earthquake,” the UN agency explained on its website. “Health challenges also go hand in hand with other challenges that increase vulnerability to disasters, such as poverty and climate change.”

The establishment of health protections and awareness, UNISDR continued, can help communities strengthen their ability to weather the most comprehensive and forceful hazards and complement already outlined disaster risk mitigation efforts.

Last week, UN Member States met for a round of negotiations aimed at smoothing out differences in the HR2 draft ahead of the Sendai conference and reiterated four priorities to be detailed in the new framework, including understanding disaster risk; strengthening how institutions manage it; increasing investment in resilience; and enhancing preparedness to make response and recovery more effective.

In addition, delegates identified seven specific targets: reduce the disaster death toll; cut numbers affected by disasters; rein...
in economic losses; stem damage to critical infrastructure; scale up national risk reduction strategies; increase funding and international cooperation; and improve public access to early warning and disaster information.

Both the priorities and the targets, UNISDR said, would apply to health emergencies as well as other emergencies.

“We’ve never had quantitative targets before, and now we’re getting very close to such targets for economic losses and mortality,” Margareta Wahlström, Head of UNISDR, added. “There’s also an interesting discussion on defining affected people.”

First UN conference on tourism and culture opens in Cambodia, seeks to build partnerships

4 February - Aimed at bringing together Ministers of Tourism and Ministers of Culture to identify key opportunities and challenges for stronger cooperation between the fields, two United Nations agencies launched the First World Conference on Tourism and Culture today in the shadow of the legendary Angkor Wat temple, in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The Conference, run by the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ( UNESCO) aims to address the overlap between culture and tourism, tackling the question of how to harness the power of tourism and culture to alleviate poverty, create jobs, protect natural and cultural heritage and promote international understanding.

“Today, cultural tourism – the world’s mosaic of art forms, heritage sites, festivals, traditions, and pilgrimages – is growing at an unprecedented rate,” said Taleb Rifai, UNWTO Secretary-General. “Humanity’s curiosity about cultural heritage is the element that truly differentiates one destination from another.”

Mr. Rifai described the growth of international tourism since the 1950s and the socio-economic contribution made by tourism, accounting for one out of every 11 jobs worldwide, as well as contributing nine per cent to global gross domestic product (GDP) and 30 per cent contribution to total global exports.

Irina Bokova, UNESCO Director-General, joined Mr. Rifai in looking forward to building a new, sustainable partnership that unites tourism and culture and said her goal was to create a positive mutually reinforcing dynamic between the two, working to build sustainability and to benefit local communities.

“Our starting point is to safeguard culture under all its forms, from monuments to living heritage, encompassing traditions, festivals and the performing arts,” said Ms. Bokova. We do so, because culture is who we are. It shapes our identity and is a means to foster respect and tolerance among people.”

She underlined the need to safeguard cultural heritage while moving ahead with sustainable tourism and said she believed that was the Conference’s core message, citing that vision as the route to promoting culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development.

Cambodia’s Minister of Tourism, Thong Khon, also welcomed delegates, looking forward to the event’s contribution to sustainable conservation and development of tourism and culture.
UN rights experts urge Bahrain to release arrested opposition leader

4 February - A group of United Nations human rights experts are urging the Government of Bahrain to release opposition politician and religious figure Sheikh Ali Salman who was arrested in December 2014 on charges that include inciting change of regime by non-peaceful means.

“The charges appear to stem from the Government's dissatisfaction with opinions that Sheikh Salman expressed in public speeches and televised interviews, in which he called for the establishment of a democratic regime and for Government accountability,” the human rights experts said in a press release issued earlier today.

“If this is indeed the case, his arrest and prosecution would amount to a breach of his fundamental human rights to freedom of expression, freedom of association and freedom of religion or belief,” they continued. “We have asked the Government of Bahrain to clarify the situation and to provide more information on these allegations.”

Sheikh Salman's arrest came only two days after his re-election for a fourth term as the Secretary General of Al Wefaq National Islamic Society, Bahrain's main opposition political party. The UN experts voiced further concern at allegations that his hearing on January 28, when he was denied bail, did not take place in accordance with due process standards as his legal representative was allegedly not allowed to examine the evidence to prepare for his defence.

The experts commenting on the matter include Mads Andenas, Chair-Rapporteur of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; David Kaye, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression; Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; Heiner Bielefeldt, Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; and Maina Kiai, Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association.

On a number of occasions, UN experts have expressed grave concerns to the Bahraini Government concerning the harassment and arrest of human rights defenders, including the sisters Maryam Al-Khawaja and Zainab Al-Khawaja, and Ghada Jamsheer – three women human rights activists exercising their rights to free expression and free association.

In addition, the Organization's human rights experts have repeatedly urged the authorities to review Bahraini laws and practices to be compliant with the country's obligations under human rights law, especially the freedoms of expression and association and the right not to be arbitrarily deprived of liberty.

Meanwhile, in their press release today, the UN experts said indications that peaceful demonstrations in support of Sheikh Salman had been disbanded by the authorities through the use of force were “particularly worrying,” citing reports that at least 150 people were arrested and around 90 were injured during the protests and in clashes with the police. At the same time, another 72 people had their Bahraini citizenship revoked in what the experts said was “yet another attempt by the Government of Bahrain to clamp down on opponents.”

“We urge the Government of Bahrain to promptly release all those who have been detained for peaceful expression of their views,” the UN experts declared.

UN human rights experts are part of what is known as the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. They are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.
UN agency boosts aid for Malawi’s flood victims, as Member States are briefed on situation

4 February - The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has announced today that it is scaling-up its efforts in Malawi, following weeks of devastating floods that have displaced large numbers of people and presented complex challenges for that country’s Government.

Also today, UN Member States were briefed on the unfolding humanitarian situation in the southeast Africa country. Speaking on behalf of General Assembly President Sam Kutesa, Assembly Vice-President, Denis Antoine, urged the international community to consider giving more to address the growing needs in Malawi.

“While we may not be able to prevent disasters from taking place, we can do much more to mitigate their impact on people and economies,” Mr. Antoine told the Assembly this morning at a meeting organized by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). The world must not let the “increasing humanitarian crises around the world” take away from addressing a very serious situation unfolding in Malawi, he added.

“Since the beginning of the rainy season last October, more than 100,000 people in southern Africa region have been displaced or affected by floods and storms,” said Mr. Antoine. Although countries in the region are leading humanitarian efforts with the assistance from the UN and its partners, the international community must do more to “support a full recovery.”

Malawi’s Minister of Lands and Housing also participated in the briefing via video link from his country’s capital, Lilongwe. Also joining in was the UN Resident Coordinator in the country and other members of the UN country team who provided details on the situation on the ground.

The situation is expected to get worse before it gets better, with downpours forecast for the next several days. This year’s rains have come ahead of their usual schedule, repeatedly bursting the banks along the Shire and Ruo rivers.

In a note, WFP today said more resources are urgently required to fill the funding gap. The Programme is currently working to bring food to an additional 160,000 people who have been affected by the floods. This week alone, it plans to dispatch food to Mangochi, Thyolo, Chiradzulu, Blantyre, Salima and Balaka districts.

It is delivering maize, beans, vegetable oil and ‘Super Cereal’ (a flour-fortified with vitamins and minerals). Meanwhile, it has also provided 28 metric tons of High-Energy Biscuits to more than 34,000 people in Chikhwawa and Nsanje districts. The fortified biscuits are often used in emergencies when people have no access to cooking facilities.

The WFP has been able to reach hard-to-reach areas of the hardest hit areas of Chikhwawa and Nsanje using its own helicopter. By the end of January, it had reached nearly 210,000 people with more than 1,500 metric tons of food assistance in eight districts.
**On World Cancer Day, UN says ‘goal must be equitable access for all patients, in all countries’**

*4 February* - As the international community pauses on World Cancer Day to remember the millions of preventable deaths caused by the disease, the head of the UN agency that contributes nuclear techniques to fight cancer said today that a huge percentage of the world’s cancer deaths occurring in developing countries can be prevented.

“The goal must be equitable access for all patients, in all countries, to the highest standards of cancer care, regardless of their country's level of development,” said Yukiya Amano, Director General of the UN Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

“Around 70 percent of the world's cancer deaths occur in developing countries. Many of those deaths could be prevented if the right facilities, and trained staff, were available,” he told an IAEA-hosted event in Vienna, Austria, marking World Cancer Day to demonstrate that cancer control is ‘Not Beyond Us’ – slogan of this year’s campaign.

To mark the occasion of World Cancer Day, which is marked each year on 4 February, the IAEA’s Programme of Action for Cancer Therapy (PACT) hosted a roundtable panel discussion with notable speakers from around the world to address some of the issues regarding comprehensive cancer control in developing countries.

IAEA also focused on the growing problem of cancer in Afghanistan.

“Like in most developing countries around the whole world, cancer is a growing problem in Afghanistan said the agency in a news release describing how it is helping the country to establish a cancer care centre with in-patient and out-patient facilities that include oncology services.

The first and second phases of the project will focus on the population of Kabul and the area surrounding the capital, which is estimated to benefit millions of people.

The IAEA, best known for its work as a the UN nuclear watchdog, said it has been working for decades with a global network of partners such as the UN World Health Organization (WHO) to help countries establish comprehensive cancer control programmes that cover diagnosis, treatment and palliative care.

According to the Geneva-based World Health Organization (WHO), there are 14 million new cases of cancer and over 8 million people die from cancer every year, with 60 per cent of deaths in Africa, Asia and Central and South America.

This year, WHO held a Twitter chat with its cancer expert as part of its activities to raise awareness, and shined the spotlight to recall that tobacco is the single biggest cause of cancer in the world and the leading cause of preventable deaths.

“Every year, 8.2 million people die from cancer; at least 1.6 million or 20% of these are tobacco-related. In total, more than 6 million people will die this year from tobacco-related diseases including cardiovascular diseases, chronic lung diseases and cancer,” wrote Dr. Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva, Head of the Convention Secretariat, Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

She noted that “televisions, billboards and magazines were covered in advertisements glorifying smoking. Concerts and sporting events were places for the tobacco industry to hand out free products and branded promotional items.

“On World Cancer Day, we must recommit to further reduce tobacco use so that a tobacco-free world becomes a reality,”
she said.

And the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) said nearly half of cancer deaths in the Americas are premature, yet many could be prevented by public policies that support healthy lifestyles and early detection and treatment.

World Cancer Day, organized by the Union for International Cancer Control is an opportunity to highlight the wide range of actions needed to effectively prevent, treat and control the many forms of cancer.

International community ‘will not tolerate’ obstacles to Burkina Faso transition, says UN political chief

4 February - The United Nations’ top political official said today that Burkina Faso’s transitional institutions must continue to respect the aspirations of the Burkinabe people and ensure full respect for human rights and the physical integrity of all citizens.

We all know that transitions are difficult; all transitions are fragile; there is no transition without difficulties,” Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman told journalists in the capital, Ouagadougou, today. “However, the international community will not tolerate any obstacle to the transition. Those who threaten the transition should be aware that the international community is watching and will hold them accountable.”

Mr. Feltman’s visit to Burkina Faso at the request of UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and was joined on his visit by Special Representative for West Africa, Mohamed Ibn Chambas.

Mr. Feltman said that he and Mr. Ibn Chambas met with the transitional authorities and representatives of political parties.

“I commended Michel Kafando, Transitional President of Burkina Faso, and transitional authorities for their determination to put in place a transitional process and organize elections in accordance with the timeline set out in the Transition Charter,” he said. “I encouraged the transitional authorities to do everything possible to implement the Transition Charter in an inclusive manner and in a spirit of national cohesion.”

Mr. Feltman said he underlined the UN’s commitment to providing Burkina Faso with the necessary support to organize free, transparent and democratic elections, saying that the Mr. Chambas would continue to use good offices to support, in close cooperation with regional and international partners, the efforts of national authorities during the transition.

In early November 2014, thousands of Burkinabé protesters took to the streets in the capital of Ouagadougou, facing off with security forces outside the presidential palace amid deadly violence that included the ransacking of Government buildings and the state television headquarters.

Following the violence, former President Blaise Compaoré announced his resignation, ending his 27-year stay in office, and handed power over to the military. By the end of that month, the country officially marked the transfer of power to Transitional President, Michel Kafando. A 26-member transitional government was subsequently appointed, and throughout, the Secretary-General called on all appointed leaders to work in a “collaborative and harmonious manner.”
Security Council condemns death of Spanish peacekeeper in Lebanon

4 February - The United Nations Security Council has strongly condemned the death of Lance Corporal Francisco Javier Soria Toledo of Spain, killed last week while deployed at a UN position in Lebanon along the border with Israel on the “Blue Line.”

According to UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), with whom Mr. Soria Toledo was stationed, on 28 January at around 11:30 a.m., it observed six rockets launch towards Israel from the vicinity of Wazzani north of Maysat in the UNIFIL area of operations. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) returned artillery fire in the same general area. During the course of the developments, Mr. Soria Toledo sustained serious injuries that resulted in his death.

In a statement to the press today, the 15-member Council expressed its deepest sympathy to the family of the fallen peacekeeper and to the Government of Spain. The Council said that it looked forward to the immediate completion of UNIFIL’s full and comprehensive investigation to determine the facts and circumstances of the incident.

Last week following the incident, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon expressed his concern over the serious deterioration of the situation in Southern Lebanon and the violations of the cessation of hostilities agreements, which called for the end to the month-long 2006 war between Israel and Hizbollah in Lebanon.