US leadership, support vital to host of global issues, UN chief stresses at White House

4 August - The United Nations counts on the leadership and support of the United States on a range of critical issues, from climate change and sustainable development to resolving crises such as those in Syria and Yemen, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today, following a meeting at the White House with President Barack Obama.

Mr. Ban called the meeting between the two leaders “extremely constructive,” while noting it comes ahead of what is expected to be a “historic” General Assembly in September and follows a series of recent “diplomatic achievements” by Mr. Obama and the US Government such as the Iranian nuclear deal and the normalization of diplomatic relations with Cuba.

“All these are truly historic diplomatic achievements,” the Secretary-General said in remarks to the press following his meeting.

“The United Nations continues to stand working with you and the US Government. We really appreciate your strong leadership and support, and strong, generous humanitarian assistance to many places of conflict.”

On climate change, Mr. Ban highly commended Mr. Obama’s strong commitment “since day one in his office up to now,” and said he would continue to count on his leadership until countries are able to reach an international agreement on climate change in December in Paris.

In that regard, he congratulated the President on his “visionary and forward leadership” on the Clean Power Plan that he announced this week which aims to reduce carbon pollution from power plants and emphasizes the use of renewable energy sources.

“I think this Clean Power Plan powers economies and generates jobs,” said Mr. Ban, adding that it can also generate huge dividends in the US economy as well as impact other countries. The two men also discussed how to mobilize $100 billion for climate financing.
Turning to regional issues, Mr. Ban said that he and the President “are completely on the same page” and briefly touched on
the discussions on Syria and Yemen, reiterating with regard to the latter that there is no military solution and dialogue must
be the way forward.

Among other things, the Secretary-General also commended Mr. Obama’s leadership on South Sudan, saying that the
President’s recent visit to Africa and convening a leaders meeting on South Sudan “really made a big impact.”

**Donors urged to meet critical funding shortfall faced by UN agency assisting Palestinian refugees**

**4 August** - Voicing concern over the financial situation confronting the United Nations agency assisting Palestine refugees, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today called on all
donors to urgently ensure adequate and sustainable financing for vital services as soon as possible.

The UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is
facing what it has described as its “most severe financial crisis ever.” Presently, it requires
$100 million to begin the 2015-2016 academic year in some 700 schools for half a million
students across the Middle East.

A special report from the UNRWA Commissioner-General to the Secretary-General and the
General Assembly sets out the implications of the Agency’s $100 million deficit for 2015,
the measures it has taken to reduce costs, and the efforts to seek the necessary funds. It also
outlines urgent steps that could be taken to put UNRWA on a firm financial footing going forward.

Mr. Ban, in a statement issued by his spokesperson, expressed his deep concern over the financial situation confronting
UNRWA and the humanitarian, political and security consequences that will result if adequate and sustainable financing for
2015 and beyond is not made available immediately.

“The Secretary General emphasises that at a time when crises and human suffering are growing throughout the Middle East,
it is imperative that UNRWA, a pillar of stability for a registered population of some 5 million Palestine refugees, is
provided with the resources necessary to enable it to continue providing services including education for half a million
Palestine refugee children,” said the statement.

Mr. Ban, who has personally spoken to several world leaders in the past few weeks on this topic, called on all donors “to
urgently ensure that the $100 million required be contributed to UNRWA at the earliest possible date so that the children of
Palestine can begin their 2015-2016 school year without delay.”

UNRWA, which began its operations in 1950, provides assistance and protection for some 5 million registered Palestine
refugees in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip,

Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

As things currently stand, the Agency said it has enough money to maintain its services to protect public health, which
includes immunizations for children, primary health care, relief and sanitation and some emergency programmes through to
the end of 2015.
Millions left in need after funding shortage forces UN health agency to cut services in Iraq

4 August - The United Nations health agency was forced to suspend 84 per cent of frontline programmes in 10 governorates in Iraq in July due to insufficient funding, leaving almost three million people without access to urgently-needed healthcare services.

“Despite warnings about the imminent closure of health services and the revision of 2015 plans to focus on the most basic priority health needs, funding is very scarce,” Tarik Jasarevic, spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO), said today at a press conference in Geneva.

Only $5.1 million out of the $60.9 million required by the health cluster has been received so far, he noted.

“The closure of more than 184 health services resulted in millions of refugees, internally displaced people and host communities having no access to critical care, including trauma care, nutritional case, primary healthcare, outbreak detection and management, immunization services and reproductive health care services.”

WHO is trying to find money from other regional funds and carrying out advocacy with donors, Mr. Jasarevic said. So far, contributions have been received from a number of countries, as well as from the UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) and the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF).

Mr. Jasarevic warned that 5.8 million children need to continue to be vaccinated against polio in 2015 and 2016. There had been two cases of polio in Iraq in 2014. While no case has been declared since April, “the immunization campaign has to continue for the next two years to be effective,” he insisted. The polio vaccination campaign has a funding gap of $45 million.

Overall, UN agencies and their partners are seeking $498 million to cover the costs of providing shelter, food, water and other life-saving services for the remainder of the year to those in need in Iraq. As of the end of July, only 15 per cent of this had been secured.

UN envoy on Yemen presses on towards political solution with meetings in Cairo

4 August - The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen met with officials in Cairo as part of the ongoing efforts to reach a political solution to a conflict that has led to just over 1,900 civilian deaths since fighting erupted in March and caused almost 100,000 people to flee the country.

Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed met with the Secretary-General of the Arab League, Nabil Elaraby, with whom he exchanged views on the situation in Yemen and the peace process, UN spokesperson Ahmad Fawzi told reporters in Geneva.

The Secretary-General said that “the League, when the time came, would consider seriously the question of monitors, in case of a ceasefire,” said Mr. Fawzi.

While in the Egyptian capital, the Special Envoy also met with the Secretary-General, the Deputy Secretary-General and key leaders of the General People’s Congress.

“The Special Envoy still feels, as he did in Geneva, that there is momentum for a political solution to be reached and he is
pushing all parties in that direction,” said Mr. Fawzi.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed will soon travel to Oman for meetings, followed by a visit to Saudi Arabia, before traveling to New York to brief the Security Council.

Meanwhile, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said today that almost 100,000 people have fled Yemen since conflict erupted there in late March, but the agency’s regional response to this outflow is just one fifth funded.

“With funding also low for operations inside Yemen, UNHCR is concerned that delivery of assistance there, as well as to refugees fleeing the country, will be at risk without additional funding soon,” spokesperson Adrian Edwards said at a press briefing in Geneva.

UNHCR requires $105.6 million for its emergency response inside Yemen. It has only received about 23 per cent of that.

Some 1.2 million internally displaced people and approximately 250,000 refugees continue to need assistance in extremely challenging conditions with severely restricted access, UNHCR noted.

The conflict continues to cause death, injuries and damage to homes and infrastructure. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) reported today that the civilian death toll in Yemen has risen to at least 1,916, with another 4,186 civilians wounded since the escalation of the armed conflict in March.

Also, over the past few weeks, there have been two “particularly devastating” attacks in residential areas, according to spokesperson Cécile Pouilly. On 19 July, 95 civilians, including 29 children, were killed and 198 injured in Aden in the Al Ghaleel Residential Area, which is home to members of the Al-Muhamasheen community, a marginalized group in Yemen. The attacks were reportedly conducted by the Houthi Popular Committees using mortar shelling. Fourteen civilian homes also incurred extensive structural damage.

Then on 24 July, at least 73 civilians, including 11 children, were killed and 93 injured, when two residential compounds in Taiz were hit. The compounds housed the families of workers of Al Mokha Steam Power Plant. According to eyewitness, the residential compounds were hit by nine missiles. OHCHR is working on verifying reports of the source of the attacks.

“We are also deeply concerned about attacks against civilian infrastructure, including places of worship, hospitals and schools,” Ms. Pouilly told reporters.

“We urge all parties, again, to ensure that they, at all times, distinguish between civilian and military targets, comply with the principle of proportionality when conducting military operations and take all feasible precautions to avoid, and in any event to minimise, the impact of violence on civilians.”

**Burundi: UN condemns assassination attempt on leading human rights defender**

4 August - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the United Nations human rights office have strongly condemned the assassination attempt on Pierre Claver Mbonimpa, a leading Burundian human rights defender who was shot and wounded by unknown assailants in the capital on Monday.

In a statement issued yesterday evening by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban wished Mr. Mbonimpa a full and speedy recovery and called for a prompt and transparent investigation to bring the perpetrators to justice.

“This incident, which comes only a day after the killing of General Adolphe Nshimirimana, is part of a growing pattern of politically-motivated violence in Burundi that must be
broken before it escalates beyond control.

“The Secretary-General stresses that accountability and the resumption of a genuine and inclusive political dialogue are the best response to such attempts to destabilize Burundi.”

According to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Mr. Mbonimpa was badly injured after being shot four times, including in the neck, by two people on a motorbike yesterday evening in Bujumbura while he was on his way home.

OHCHR also voiced deep concern at the brutal arrest and ill treatment, on 2 August, of the RFI and AFP local correspondent, Esdras Ndikumana, by agents belonging to the Service national de renseignement (SNR), the national intelligence agency.

“Mr. Ndikumana was taking pictures on the crime site where General Adolphe Nshimirimana was killed on 2 August, when he was arrested and brutalized by SNR agents,” OHCHR spokesperson Cécile Pouilly told a news briefing in Geneva.

“They took him to their HQ in Bujumbura and reportedly subjected him to torture, claiming that he was a ‘journalist enemy’. Mr. Ndikumana is currently under medical care, suffering from a broken finger and psychological trauma.”

OHCHR called on the Burundian authorities to launch “prompt, transparent and thorough investigations” into these very serious incidents and ensure that those responsible are held to account, stressing that impunity for perpetrators of human rights violations must stop.

It also condemned the killing of General Nshimirimana and called for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. In addition, the Office voiced concern about the large number of arbitrary arrests over the last few months. More than 600 people have been arrested and remain in detention without charge, some of them since April.

In a statement to the press, the Security Council also condemned the killing of General Nshimirimana and the attack on Mr. Mbonimpa, calling on all actors to remain calm and to resume an inclusive dialogue.

“The members of the Security Council expressed concern that the security situation in Burundi is deteriorating rapidly, following an electoral period marked by violence and reports of violations and abuses of human rights,” added the statement.

Civil unrest erupted on 26 April in Bujumbura, Burundi’s capital, after the ruling Conseil national pour la défense de la démocratie-Forces pour la défense de la démocratie (CNDD-FDD) party elected President Pierre Nkurunziza on 25 April as its candidate for the then-scheduled 26 June presidential election, which was twice postponed.

Mr. Nkurunziza has been in office for two terms since 2005, and a broad array of actors warned that an attempt to seek a third term was unconstitutional and contrary to the spirit of the 2000 Arusha Peace and Reconciliation Agreement for Burundi that ended a decade of civil war in the country. He was re-elected on 21 July.

The mounting violence across Burundi has also provoked a widespread humanitarian crisis as refugees have spilled across the country’s borders and fanned throughout the region.
Cyclone Komen further burdens thousands of displaced people in western Myanmar – UN agencies

4 August - Sweeping across western Myanmar last week, Cyclone Komen has caused extensive damage in the region, hampering assessment and relief efforts, including to areas where thousands of displaced people are living, the United Nations refugee agency reported today.

“But our teams, as well as other UN and non-governmental organizations, have so far managed to reach camps for internally displaced people in Rakhine’s provincial capital Sittwe, as well as in nearby townships such as Pauktaw and Myebon,” Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told reporters in Geneva.

“In 24 camps assessed so far, a quarter of the temporary shelters are damaged, and more than 21,000 displaced people affected as a result. Several years on from their construction, many of these shelters had become fragile and unable to withstand severe weather,” he explained.

UNHCR and its partners are still assessing the impact on the existing displaced populations in Rakhine and Kachin states, with a view to identifying immediate needs and distributing relief. Rakhine state has been declared one of four 'natural disaster zones' by the Myanmar Government, alongside Chin state and Sagaing and Magway regions.

Assessment teams also have been deployed to the camps for the internally displaced in Minbya, Mrauk-U and Kyauktaw, which are only accessible by boat, after humanitarian workers had to clear debris from waterways.

UNHCR will distribute relief aid once the assessments are completed, Mr. Edwards said. It has already distributed aid such as tarpaulins, blankets, mats and buckets to those hosted in official reception centres, as well as others who have been affected.

He also noted that parts of Buthidaung township remain underwater. UN and non-governmental organization (NGO) staff have reached 68 villages so far and found over 18,000 people displaced by the floods. “As assessments continue, we are distributing tarpaulins and mats to those affected,” said Mr. Edwards.

UNHCR’s assistance to people affected by the cyclone and floods is part of a wider inter-agency response to support the Myanmar Government's relief efforts. UNHCR continues to work with the authorities to find longer-term solutions to situations of internal displacement.

The Myanmar Government reported yesterday that 39 people had lost their lives over the past week and over 200,000 people had been affected by heavy monsoon rains and flooding across the country.

Those figures were likely to rise in the coming days as more areas became accessible, according to Jens Laerke, a spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), who also briefed reporters in Geneva.

The Myanmar authorities, he announced, had today formally requested international assistance, although the UN and international humanitarian organizations had been working closely with the Myanmar authorities and supporting the humanitarian response since the beginning of the flooding on 30 July.