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DR Congo humanitarian crisis must not ‘fall off’ world’s radar – UN deputy relief chief

4 September - Wrapping up a four-day mission to the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Kyung-wha Kang, called strongly today for creative ways to reignite donor engagement and ensure that one of the world’s most protracted crises does not “fall off the humanitarian radar.”

Ms. Kang, who is also the UN Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, travelled to the DRC to assess the scope of the humanitarian crisis, better understand the challenges faced by humanitarian actors in the response, and ensure the DRC crisis remains on the agenda of donors and the greater international community.

Ms. Kang’s trip included a visit to the Mugunga 3 camp for internally displaced people (IDPs), in the outskirts of Goma in North Kivu, one of the oldest in the country. The camp, “home” to some 5,000 displaced people, is a symbol of the impact of the dwindling support for and attention to the DRC humanitarian crisis.

Although needs for all residents in the camps remain significant, only the most vulnerable among them receive food rations, and this is only 50 per cent of the required amounts. Moreover, the camp’s only health facility has been closed for months, given the shortage of funds to keep it operational.

“I’ve seen many IDP camps during my many missions around the world, but Mugunga is one of the worst because the environment and living conditions are so harsh. UN agencies and NGOs [non-governmental organizations] are doing their
best to provide the much needed assistance but, in order to enhance the response, they require additional financial resources,” Ms. Kang said.

She added that Mugunga 3 was also a strong symbol of resilience and hope due to the determination of the IDPs to improve their living conditions, as shown by the 100 women benefiting from an income-generating soap-making project that she visited on the site.

While in the eastern city of Goma, the senior humanitarian official also held discussions with the Governor of North Kivu, notably on the issue of IDP camp closures. They agreed that closer dialogue would be held regularly between the authorities and the humanitarian community to ensure that any camp closure be carried out in line with international principles, including the Kampala Convention ratified by DRC, and in full respect of the wish of the people to be affected.

The need to work together on durable solutions for IDP returns was also raised, and the necessity to better link humanitarian and development programming in specific areas and contexts.

Ms. Kang also travelled to the neighbouring province of South Kivu where she visited Lusenda, the newly established camp for refugees from Burundi, home to 8,000 out of the 15,000 people who have crossed into the DRC since the beginning of the Burundi crisis. The other 7,000 have been living with host families who very generously share their limited resources with the refugees. However, capacity is overstretched and the spectre of financial constraints is looming. While the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) has given $6.8 million to provide an emergency multi-sectoral response, if additional resources are not made available soon, many of the operations in Lusenda would have to close down, Ms. Kang said.

In Kinshasa, Goma and Bukavu, Ms. Kang, who last visited DRC two years ago, held very productive discussions with the Congolese authorities who expressed their willingness to move the country forward on the path to economic growth and development.

In that framework, Ms. Kang stressed the necessity to ensure that “no Congolese is left behind” in the efforts to advance the country, as development cannot be sustainable unless the needs of the most vulnerable people are adequately addressed.

“We need new creative ways – a new compelling narrative to ensure continued support by the donors and international community, to what remains one of the world’s most complex and protracted emergencies.”

‘We are making progress’ on Libya political agreement, UN envoy reports

4 September - The United Nations envoy facilitating efforts to restore peace in Libya said today that real progress was being made as the participants wrapped-up the latest round of the political dialogue process, which has been taking place in Geneva.

Speaking to journalists after the latest discussions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Libya and Head of the UN Support Mission in the North African country, known as UNSMIL, Bernardino León, said that the day’s talks had been fruitful.

“We have clarified a number of points with the different delegations, and particularly with the GNC [General National Congress] delegation,” he said. “And I think we have clarified all these points. We still have a couple of issues that the GNC will have to consult with their colleagues and that we also will discuss inside the team in order to make proposals.”

The GNC, said Mr. León, was still very much a part of the political dialogue.

The envoy added that some names had been proposed for the Prime Minister and Vice Prime Minister.

In response to a question from reporters, he clarified that he had received the names from the House of Representatives but
not yet from the GNC. He said that he very much hoped that the GNC delegation will join the talks next week, together with others who had proposed names.

Mr. León expressed optimism that “we really have a chance to reach a final agreement in the coming days and we cannot afford – Libya cannot afford – to miss this opportunity.”

He added that there was the possibility to reach an agreement and have it endorsed and signed by 20 September.

Celebrities join UNICEF and Global Goals to launch ‘World’s Largest Lesson’ on sustainable development

4 September - The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the Global Goals campaign today launched the World’s Largest Lesson, an initiative to teach children in more than 100 countries about the new Sustainable Development Goals that will be adopted by the UN General Assembly later this month.

The Global Goals campaign was launched just yesterday at UN Headquarters, and aims to reach the 7 billion people on earth to make the world body’s new development targets “famous.”

“The World’s Largest Lesson will do more than teach children about the global goals. It will engage them in the effort to achieve those goals – educating them about the challenges that are shaping their futures and encouraging them to drive change in their own communities,” said UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in a press release.

“Young people can help achieve the global goals by holding their leaders accountable for the promises they are making – and by holding themselves accountable for building a better future for everyone,” he added.

UNICEF announced that the initiative has already attracted support from influential leaders and public figures including Queen Rania Al Abdullah of Jordan, Lebanese singer Nancy Ajram, tennis star Serena Williams and the Brazilian footballer Neymar. In addition, Government leaders from a number of countries will be teaching and participating in lessons.

The UN estimates that a potential 500 million girls and boys between the ages of 8 and 14 will have the chance to learn about the Global Goals. These range from ending extreme poverty, to tackling climate change, and giving all children the opportunity to gain a quality education.

“By making the Global Goals famous we can give them the best chance of working around the world – and help make us the first generation to end extreme poverty, the most determined generation in history to end injustice and inequality, and the last generation to be threatened by climate change,” explained Richard Curtis, filmmaker and founder of the Global Goals campaign.

The World’s Largest Lesson will be held in classrooms on every continent during the week of 28 September.
The head of the United Nations humanitarian wing today released an emergency allocation of $15 million to help alleviate the “almost incomprehensible” scale of human suffering in Yemen where a “shocking” four out of every five Yemenis are lacking in such basic items for survival as clean water, food, fuel, and medicines.

“The civilian population is bearing the brunt of the conflict: a shocking four out of five Yemenis require humanitarian assistance and nearly 1.5 million people are internally displaced,” said Stephen O’Brien, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, who is also the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Meanwhile, the World Food Programme (WFP), which is trying to expand assistance in Yemen to reach the more than 6 million people who require food aid announced today that enough wheat to feed more than 1 million for two months has arrived.

WFP said the wheat from the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) arrived at the Al-Saleef port in north-western Yemen and is being milled into flour at the port.

The announcement by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported that Mr. O’Brien released an additional $15 million from the UN Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), bringing support for humanitarian operations in Yemen to more than $44 million in 2015.

According OCHA, the provision of basic services, including water, sanitation and healthcare, has been severely disrupted.

“Despite these immense challenges and safety concerns, relief organizations on the ground are working hard to reach people in need,” according OCHA.

“This latest allocation from CERF will help reduce the risk of communicable diseases through waste clean-up, the provision of clean water and urgent supplies for health facilities,” it said “CERF funds will be used for demining and the removal of unexploded ordnance, which will increase the safety of civilians and expand humanitarian space to reach people in need. People who have fled their homes will also receive household supplies such as mattresses, blankets, kitchen sets and water buckets.”

The conflict in Yemen intensified in March this year and aid agencies have since received over $44 million from CERF for critical assistance, including the provision of fuel, medicine, clean water, sanitation services and nutrition, OCHA said.

The CERF grants have been used to scale-up humanitarian air services and improve port facilities, facilitating the delivery of lifesaving assistance to affected communities.

“CERF continues to provide a lifeline for humanitarian operations in Yemen, but more funds are urgently needed,” Mr. O’Brien said. “I urge donors to continue supporting relief efforts in Yemen.”

The Fund pools donor contributions in a single fund so that money is available to start or continue urgent relief work anywhere in the world. Since its inception in 2006, 125 UN Member States and dozens of private sector donors and regional authorities have contributed to the Fund. CERF has allocated more than $4 billion in support of humanitarian operations in 95 countries and territories.
Citing marginal gains, UN human rights chief warns Central African Republic still ‘gripped by fear’

4 September - The human rights situation in the Central African Republic (CAR) is far better than it was at the height of the conflict in late 2013 and early 2014, but is still a cause of anxiety for both the country’s own inhabitants and the United Nations, the world body’s human rights chief said today.

“At the end of a fairly short visit, I will not attempt to cover all aspects of the human rights situation here, but I would like to focus on certain key areas where I believe there are opportunities that should be seized and a need for urgent attention,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein speaking at a press conference in the capital, Bangui.

CAR has been in the grip of a civil, political and humanitarian crisis with the latest UN figures estimating the number of internally displaced people at nearly 1 million. It began with a coup in 2013 by a rebel coalition known as Séléka that ousted President François Bozizé.

Although the Séléka disbanded and a transitional government has been set up, the country still faces major challenges from armed militias. In addition, the conflict has taken on a religious dimension with sectarian fighting taking place between Christians and Muslims.

Mr. Zeid, who arrived on 1 September for a four-day visit, said the transitional Government can claim a number of “baseline achievements,” including local consultations launched in January, which involved people from 16 prefectures, all eight districts of Bangui, and displaced people. In May, this process was taken to another level by the Bangui Forum.

“This produced an important set of recommendations […] for CAR to follow as it attempts to establish peace and security, justice and reconciliation – all of which are essential if the country is to make a definitive and durable break with its turbulent, poverty-stricken and at times exceptionally violent past,” the High Commissioner explained.

He also welcomed the decision of the Constitutional Court on refugees’ right to vote in upcoming elections, reversing a previous decision by authorities.

On the security front, the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR, MINUSCA, has amassed 9,200 troops and 1,580 police, in addition to a sizeable civilian staff. Mr. Zeid noted that this is the most significant effort by the UN in the history of this country, and that although “far from ideal” the security situation has nonetheless improved.

However, he described the country as still “gripped with fear”, after a conflict that tore apart the existing social, cultural, political and economic structures. Local civil society groups told the top UN official during a meeting that the UN and the Government “can and should do better.” Mr Zeid said he agreed.

“[Armed groups] may not be killing people on the scale they have done in the past, but they are still killing people from time to time,” he warned. “They are still looting civilian property and the country’s mineral resources, raiding and killing cattle, and preying on civilian populations in other ways as well. Their impact on the economy has been devastating.”

He insisted that the various anti-Balaka and ex-Séléka forces, the Lord’s Resistance Army (LRA), and the myriad other armed groups need to be shown that their “lawless behaviour” will no longer be tolerated by the Government and the international forces.

“Some members of the Government whom I’ve met this week have been very frank about the persistent weaknesses of the State, especially in the areas of justice and accountability,” Mr. Zeid revealed.
During his first official trip to CAR, the High Commissioner visited two of the most emblematic and worrying Bangui locations: the over-crowded and surrounded PK 5 neighbourhood, a Muslim enclave – the last major Muslim presence in the capital – and the Mpoko camp for internally displaced people abutting the main international airport.

“Their future, and the future of PK 5 are inextricably linked, as many of the almost exclusively Christian displaced people in Mpoko come from the 3rd District which includes PK 5, and are afraid to go back to what is now a mostly Muslim enclave, whose inhabitants are equally afraid of them,” Mr. Zeid explained.

He said the Muslims in PK 5 are often too afraid to leave the enclave, and as a result, they have nowhere to bury their dead, and are deprived of schooling and job opportunities.

Meanwhile, the Christians displaced to Mpoko also in most cases have nothing to return to, as most of their houses were burned to the ground, their water supply is contaminated by the presence of dead bodies in wells.

“For the Christians to return home, and for the Muslims to accept them, there must be strenuous efforts to bring about reconciliation, and greatly increased security,” the High Commissioner urged.

He said he was alarmed to hear that the Government has told the remaining inhabitants of Mpoko camp they must leave by 15 September.

“This would be a very dangerous step, as it could inflame the existing tensions among both groups, and would very likely end in violence,” he warned.

As for the upcoming elections on 18 October, Mr. Zeid said the conduct of those polls will be a crucial test of CAR’s progress towards peace and democracy.

In addition, following another alleged case of sexual abuse or exploitation by a foreign soldier yesterday, Mr. Zeid reiterated that there is “no excuse, no mitigating circumstances, nothing at all to justify the acts themselves or the failure to apply punishments that fit the crime.”

“We simply have to do better. And States must help us,” continued the High Commissioner, explaining that over the years, many proposals have been made to improve the way the issue “that so often bedevils peace-keeping operations” is handled – not least ways to deter and prevent these appalling acts against defenceless people we are supposed to be protecting – but unfortunately, UN Member States had “repeatedly refused to adopt proposed measures to radically reduce the occurrence of sexual abuse by peacekeepers.

“I believe it is high time to revisit these ideas, and to do so as a matter of urgency,” he said.

Echoing this message to the press was Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, the new Head of MINUSCA. Speaking to reporters, he said he had taken the leadership of the Mission to spearhead peace in CAR and champion collective efforts to end sexual abuse and exploitation by forces in the country.

The Head of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous, is scheduled to arrive tomorrow in Bangui for a three-day visit.
UN urges Europe to admit 200,000 refugees from Syria, Iraq and other war zones

4 September - Declaring that Europe is facing “a moment of truth” with hundreds of thousands of people risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea, the head of the United Nations refugee agency today urged the European Union (EU) to admit up to 200,000 asylum-seekers fleeing conflict zones like Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan.

“Europe cannot go on responding to this crisis with a piecemeal or incremental approach. No country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part,” the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said in a statement laying out a set of six guidelines ahead of a key round of emergency EU meetings on the crisis.

Mr. Guterres said the biggest influx of refugees into Europe for decades required a “massive common effort” and break with the current fragmented approach, which he said has led Europe overall to fail to find an effective common response.

“More than 300,000 people have risked their lives to cross the Mediterranean Sea so far this year. Over 2,600 didn't survive the dangerous crossing, including three-year-old Aylan, whose photo has just stirred the hearts of the world public,” the refugee agency chief said, referring to what UNICEF called a “heart-breaking” incident in which the young Syrian boy’s body washed ashore in Turkey two days ago.

Mr. Guterres praised some exemplary and “truly inspiring” examples of generosity and moral leadership on the part of some countries and many private citizens, but reiterated his appeal for a collective strategy including a renewed drive to settle conflicts.

“A very preliminary estimate would indicate a potential need to increase relocation opportunities to as many as 200,000 places,” he recommended. “This can only work if it goes hand in hand with adequate reception capacities, especially in Greece. Solidarity cannot be the responsibility of only a few EU member States.”

“Europe is facing a moment of truth,” Mr. Guterres said, spelling out five other fundamental principles he said should be borne in mind in all efforts to resolve the issue:

1. This is a primarily refugee crisis, not only a migration phenomenon. The vast majority of those arriving in Greece come from conflict zones like Syria, Iraq or Afghanistan and are simply running for their lives. All people on the move in these tragic circumstances deserve to see their human rights and dignity fully respected, independently of their legal status.
2. Europe cannot go on responding to this crisis with a piecemeal or incremental approach. No country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part. It is no surprise that, when a system is unbalanced and dysfunctional, everything gets blocked when the pressure mounts. This is a defining moment for the European Union, and it now has no other choice but to mobilize full force around this crisis.
3. Concretely, this means taking urgent and courageous measures to stabilize the situation and then finding a way to truly share responsibility in the mid to longer term. The EU must be ready, with the consent and in support of the concerned governments – mainly Greece and Hungary, but also Italy – to put in place immediate and adequate emergency reception, assistance and registration capacity.
4. Those who are found not to be in need of international protection and who cannot benefit from legal migration opportunities should be helped to return quickly to their home countries, in full respect of their human rights.
5. The only ones who benefit from the lack of a common European response are the smugglers and traffickers who are making profit from people’s desperation to reach safety. More effective international cooperation is required to crack down on smugglers. But none of these efforts will be effective without opening up more opportunities for people to come legally to Europe.
“This massive flow of people will not stop until the root causes of their plight are addressed,” Mr. Guterres said. “Much more must be done to prevent conflicts and stop the ongoing wars that are driving so many from their homes. The countries neighbouring war zones, which shelter 9 in 10 refugees worldwide, must be supported more strongly, along with the funding required.

**UN humanitarian air service in dire need of funds to continue life-saving work in Sudan – UN agency**

4 September - A lack of funding in Sudan could have serious repercussions on the ground, the World Food Programme (WFP) said today, warning that the United Nations Humanitarian Air Service, which serves as a vital aid link in the country, needs nearly $10 million to remain operational.

Speaking at a press conference in Geneva today, WFP spokesperson Bettina Luescher said that, without the necessary financial assistance, the Programme’s ability to deliver food assistance to millions of people in the region, as well as to provide the air transportation that enables aid workers to reach them, could be seriously compromised.

The ongoing conflict in Darfur, which has entered its twelfth year, has caused humanitarian needs in the region to be alarmingly high, with millions of conflict-affected people requiring food assistance and other humanitarian aid.

The WFP currently provides food assistance to the people of Sudan and also runs the UN Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS). From January to June 2015, WFP flew 20,000 aid workers to areas that were previously unreachable by other means.

Ms. Luescher said the Service is underfunded and without $9.9 million in financial support, it will have to close down by the end of this month.

WFP is urging donors to come forward to make sure the people in Darfur and other regions can continue to receive the assistance they need. Without the Service, people will suffer, said Ms. Luescher, noting that in 2015 alone, WFP has helped three million people in the region receive badly needed food assistance.

UNHAS currently provides essential humanitarian passenger services to several countries, including Afghanistan, Chad, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Somalia/Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Yemen. In response to the Ebola outbreak, it also launched an operation to support the humanitarian response in West Africa.

**Top musicians release ‘love song’ to Earth to inspire action at UN climate conference**

4 September - Internationally renowned artists have released a song urging world leaders to reach a global agreement during the United Nations climate conference in December to limit the impacts of climate change.

Twelve musical acts, including Sir Paul McCartney, Jon Bon Jovi, Leona Lewis and UN Goodwill Ambassador Angelique Kidjo, released the single ‘Love Song to the Earth,’ which is now available to download from iTunes and Apple Music. The artists, producers and directors of the song – as well as Apple – are donating their respective proceeds to Friends of the Earth US and the UN Foundation.

Written by Toby Gad, Natasha Bedingfield, John Shanks and Sean Paul the single, *Love Song to the Earth* highlights the importance of taking care of the things we love.
Ms. Bedingfield said: “Many people turn a blind eye arguing that everything is ok environmentally. The song reminds us that having ownership of our world means taking care of it. With this song we wanted to talk about the environment in a way that would help people feel empowered to do something rather than be paralyzed by fear.”

The song aims to reach new audiences with the message that the time to act on climate change is now is meant to encourage people to “Share the Love Song” and “Take Climate Action Now” by signing a petition.

This petition will be delivered to world leaders at the beginning of the the 21st meeting of the parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), widely referred to as COP-21 in Paris in December. This petition is part of a unified global movement supporting the UN’s call for a meaningful, universal, global climate change agreement.

“The support, engagement, and passion of the creative community are key to engaging new audiences in the call for a meaningful and universal climate change agreement. When UN Member States gather in Paris this December, the voices of everyone, especially the entertainment industry, will help ensure the best outcome possible for a better future for all.” said Aaron Sherinian, chief communications and marketing officer of the UN Foundation.

Released on the 4th of September, the song will eventually become available on all music platforms and streaming services worldwide as of September 11th.

Accompanying the song is a “lyric video” produced by Jerry Cope. This will also be released on the 11th of September and will feature breathtaking views from around the world. As well as this, scientists and celebrities will be shown holding up signs saying urging viewers to “Keep It safe” to encourage their fans to get involved.

“The climate crisis is near a global tipping point, we hope everyone who hears this anthem takes action to encourage our political leaders to keep our planet safe, by keeping fossil fuels in the ground and moving toward 100 per cent renewable energy,” said Erich Pica, president of Friends of the Earth US.

Other artists featuring on the track include Sheryl Crow, Fergie, Colbie Caillat, Natasha Bedingfield, Leona Lewis, Sean Paul, Johnny Rzeznik, Krewella, Angélou Kidjo (a UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador), Kelsea Ballerini, Nicole Scherzinger, Christina Grimmie, Victoria Justice and Q’Orianka Kilcher.

G20 nations weighed down by weak economic growth and lack of decent jobs – UN backed report

4 September - In advance of the Group of 20 (G20) meetings taking place this week in Ankara, Turkey, a United Nations-backed inter-agency report has warned that growth among the economies of those countries has slowed considerably over the last three years and unemployment rates remain unacceptably high.

The report G20 Labour Markets 2015: Strengthening the Link between Growth and Employment, compiled by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the World Bank Group, reveals that growth among G20 economies averaged 3.2 per cent over the last three years compared to 4.1 per cent from 2000 to 2007.

“A weak economic recovery continues to weigh heavily on G20 labour markets, while the persistent lack of decent jobs is in turn hurting the recovery,” said ILO Director-General Guy Ryder, who is set to participate in the G20 labour and employment ministers meeting and their joint meeting with finance ministers. The joint meeting will aid G20 leaders by integrating policy initiatives that work on both the demand and supply side of labour markets, he added.

The report also notes that the unemployment rate remains cause for concern. It rose from 5.1 to 6.0 percent between 2007 and 2009, and remains high at 5.8 percent in 2014. This has resulted in an estimated shortfall of 50 million jobs across the G20 (comprised of 19 countries and the European Union) compared to the start of the crisis.
It is not only the quantity of jobs that has fallen, but the quality, notes the report. Many G20 country jobs created between 2009 and 2014 are part-time, offering lower wages, less job security, and weaker social protection coverage.

Some 51 per cent of workers in emerging G20 countries were in “vulnerable employment” in 2014. The report notes that while this is an improvement, it is still an unacceptably high number. Wage growth, meanwhile, has suffered a significant slowdown, which, combined with the jobs gap, has led to a decline in the labour share of national income and rising inequality in most G20 economies.

“As this report clearly states, we need a comprehensive and multi-sectoral approach to reverse the current self-reinforcing cycle of slow growth, low job creation, weak wage and income growth and low investment,” said Mr. Ryder. “Policies that reverse the worrying trends towards greater inequality can both accelerate economic recovery and make growth more inclusive.”

Ukraine: UN agencies call for urgent action to stop spread of polio virus

4 September - The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) called today on parents in Ukraine to vaccinate their children following a confirmed polio outbreak in the country.

“The only effective way to protect children from polio is vaccination,” stressed UNICEF’s representative in Ukraine, Giovanna Barberis, in a press release. “The available vaccines supplied by UNICEF should be used as soon as possible to ensure children are protected from polio in Ukraine.”

Polio is an infectious disease that can cause paralysis or even death.

Aid organizations have been facing major challenges in getting access to the most vulnerable of an estimated 5 million people affected by conflict, which began in the region in April 2014.

The two cases of polio so far are children living in Zakarpatska oblast, one aged 10 months and the other aged 4 years, who were not vaccinated and have become paralyzed. The UN health agency said this occurred because of the chronically low immunization coverage in Ukraine.

However, it also underlined that these outbreaks can be stopped by rapidly immunizing children with the oral polio vaccines (OPV). Currently, the awareness among Ukrainians about the risks of the disease is reportedly low: only 18 per cent of Ukrainian mothers think that polio is an acute dangerous disease and only 27 per cent know that it bears the risk of paralysis, according to a UNICEF/WHO survey conducted last year.

“WHO recommends large-scale immunization activity. The quality of the polio vaccine provided to Ukraine is in line with WHO pre-qualification standards. It is safe and effective and ready to be distributed and used,” said Dorit Nitzan, Head of the WHO Country Office.

“I appeal to families to promptly bring their children for immunization, as soon as the Ministry of Health begins the immunization campaign over the coming days and weeks,” she added.

Indeed, UNICEF and WHO experts are working closely with the Ministry of Health to provide a “quick and robust” response in order to rapidly stop the circulation of the virus.

Half of the total amount of 4.8 million polio vaccines, provided by UNICEF with the support of the Government of Canada, are already in Ukraine and will shortly be distributed by the Ministry.
Ban appoints Zimbabwe national as Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security

4 September - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today announced the appointment of Fadzai Gwaradzimba of Zimbabwe as the Assistant Secretary-General for Safety and Security.

Ms. Gwaradzimba succeeds Ms. Mbaranga Gasarabwe of Rwanda, who was appointed as Deputy Special Representative for Mali in May.

Ms. Gwaradzimba brings more than 25 years of experience with the UN system to the role. She began her career with the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in Somalia in 1989 and worked with UNDP in New York as a Programme Manager and Senior Evaluation Advisor. She also served with UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) as a Deputy Municipal Administrator in Kosovo from 2000-2001.

She most recently held the position of Deputy Assistant Administrator and Deputy Director, Bureau of External Relations and Advocacy (BERA) for the UNDP in New York. Prior to that, she was Division Chief for South and West Asia for six years. She was also the Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in The Gambia, and Deputy Resident Representative in Malawi and Barbados.

Ms. Gwaradzimba has a wealth of experience in strategic management and leadership, coupled with in depth knowledge of international development, crisis prevention and recovery, evaluation design and practice and gender issues.

Ban appoints Pakistan national as Force Commander of UN Western Sahara mission

4 September - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced today the appointment of Major General Muhammad Tayyab Azam of Pakistan as the Force Commander of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO).

Major General Azam replaces Major General Major Imam Edy Mulyono of Indonesia. The Secretary-General is grateful to Major General Mulyono for his exemplary service and contribution to the work of MINURSO.

Major General Azam brings 30 years of national and international military experience to his new position. He has served as United Nations Military Observer in Democratic Republic of Congo from 2000 to 2001, commanded an infantry brigade from 2009 to 2010, and was Director General and Deputy Director of the Intelligence Services from 2010 to 2014.

He currently serves as Inspector General of the Frontier Corps, Pakistan.
Ban condemns terrorist attack on Yemeni mosque that leaves more than 30 dead

4 September - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has today strongly condemned the suicide attack against a mosque in the northern Jarraf district of Sana’a in Yemen.

“Such attacks against places of worship are not justifiable under any circumstances,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson in New York.

The attack, which took place on 2 September during evening prayers, left more than 30 people dead and almost 100 injured.

“The Secretary-General expresses his deepest condolences and sympathies to the families of the victims and expects that the perpetrators of these reprehensible acts will be swiftly brought to justice,” said the statement.

Yemen’s hostilities, which began in March 2014, have only exacerbated its existent humanitarian crisis; 80 percent of the country’s population is currently in need of critical aid.