Lessons from Millennium Development Goals ‘springboard’ for future UN agenda – Ban

6 July - The United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) galvanized the world to produce the most successful anti-poverty movement in history, helped lift more than one billion people out of extreme poverty, made inroads against hunger and enabled more girls to attend school than ever before. However, despite remarkable gains, it will take more to ensure the poorest and most vulnerable people are not left behind.

This is according to the final assessment of the MDGs, which range from halving extreme poverty rates to halting the spread of HIV/AIDS and providing universal primary education, all by the target date of 2015.

“The report confirms that the global efforts to achieve the Goals have saved millions of lives and improved conditions for millions more around the world,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the launch of the report in Oslo, Norway.

“These successes should be celebrated throughout our global community. At the same time, we are keenly aware of where we have come up short,” he added.

Data and analysis prove that even the poorest countries can make dramatic and unprecedented progress with targeted interventions, sound strategies, adequate resources and political will, says the report, which reflects the global and regional progress of the eight MDGs over the past 15 years that has been monitored and analyzed annually by data compiled by more
than 28 UN and international agencies.

“The MDGs worked at all levels – global, national and local, rallying not just diplomats and technocrats in conference buildings but communities gathering in village squares,” said Mr. Ban, who was joined at the launch by MDG Advocates Erna Solberg, Prime Minister of Norway, and Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda.

“The MDGs measured what mattered to people. As we look ahead, we must do more to reach those who are most vulnerable, are not counted and have not shared the improvements of the past 15 years.”

The report – whose launch coincides with the opening in New York of the high-level segment of the 2015 session of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the three-day Ministerial Meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development – found that the 15-year effort to achieve the Goals was largely successful across the globe, while acknowledging shortfalls that remain.

“Enormous progress has been made towards achieving the MDGs. Global poverty continues to decline,” the report said. “More children than ever are attending primary school. Child deaths have dropped dramatically. Access to safe drinking water has been greatly expanded. Targeted investments in fighting malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis have saved millions.”

“The MDGs,” it added, “prove that goal setting can lift millions of people out of poverty, empower women and girls, improve health and well-being, and provide vast new opportunities for better lives.”

The report drew attention to climate change and environmental degradation that undermine progress achieved, and noted that conflicts remain the biggest threat to human development and the greatest obstacle to progress in achieving the MDGs.

The emerging post-2015 development agenda, including the set of sustainable development goals that will be adopted at a summit at UN Headquarters in September, strives to reflect these lessons, build on the successes and put all countries, together, firmly on track towards a more prosperous, sustainable and equitable world.

“As we reflect on the MDGs and set our sights on the next 15 years, I am confident that we can deliver on our shared responsibility to end poverty, leave no one behind and create a world of dignity for all,” Mr. Ban said at the launch.

Breaking down the progress made on each of the eight MDGs, the report found that:

**On Goal 1** – eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – the world has seen the most successful anti-poverty movement in global history, which has contributed to a reduction in the absolute number of people living in extreme poverty by more than half in 2015 since 1990;

**On Goal 2** – to achieve universal primary education – in sub-Saharan Africa, the implementation of the MDGs has helped increase the primary school net enrolment rate by 20 percentage points since 2000, compared to only 8 percentage points between 1990 and 2000, and the MDGs achieved ground-breaking success in the number of out-of-school children of primary school age, from 100 million in 2000, to 57 million in 2015;

**On Goal 3** – which sought to promote gender equality and empower women – women are now having significantly stronger representation both in parliaments around the world and as a workforce outside of the agricultural sector and substantial achievements have been made in gender equality in education. For instance in southern Asia, there are now even more girls than boys enrolled in primary school, as compared with 74 girls for every 100 boys in 1990;

**On Goal 4** – to reduce child mortality – the MDGs were most successful in the reduction of child mortality. Between 1990 and 2015, the annual rate of reduction of under-five mortality has more than tripled globally;

**On Goal 5** – to improve maternal health – with the help of the MDGs, more mothers can rely on the assistance and treatment they need during pregnancy and after, and the maternal mortality ratio has been reduced by nearly half worldwide. Nowadays three-quarters of births are assisted by skilled health personnel globally;
On Goal 6 – to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases – lower infection rates of HIV of 40 per cent, an immense increase in antiretroviral therapy, tremendous declines in malaria deaths and incidence rates as well as superior success in tuberculosis treatment prove that the MDGs work to defeat diseases;

On Goal 7 – to ensure environmental sustainability – the MDGs have significantly increased access to improved drinking water for more than 90 per cent of the global population, and since 1990, ozone protection efforts have virtually eliminated ozone depleting substances;

And Goal 8 – to cultivate a global partnership for development – official development assistance (ODA) from developed countries increased by 66 per cent in real terms between 2000 and 2014.

Lead in fruits, drugs in livestock among issues to be tackled by UN food standards body

The United Nations food standards body, the Codex Alimentarius Commission, today kicked off its latest session in Geneva, during which it will examine and adopt new food safety and quality standards, including limits on the use of drugs in food-producing animals.

The Commission is a joint intergovernmental initiative of two UN agencies – the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO). Comprising 185 countries and the European Union, it compiles annually the standards, codes of practice, guidelines and recommendations that protect consumer health and ensure fair practices in food trade.

Kicking off the week-long session, the Commission today adopted guidelines related to the Trichinella parasite that may be found in the meat of pigs and other animals.

It has also decided to make the Asian regional standard adopted in 2009 to ensure the quality of ginseng products a worldwide standard, as long as these products are used as a food or food ingredient.

During the session, the Commission will consider a number of other topics, such as the maximum levels for lead in fruits and vegetables as well as the standards for the safe use of food additives and pesticides, including recommendations to prevent residues of certain antibiotics in food of animal origin.

It is also expected to support the establishment by FAO and WHO of a new $3.3 million per year Codex Trust Fund to support the more active participation of developing countries in international food standards setting from 2016 to 2026.

At high-level forum, UN official calls for final push towards new sustainability agenda

The international community stands on the cusp of eradicating extreme poverty and reaching the world's most vulnerable people with “a chance to live a life of dignity,” the Vice-President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) declared today, as he appealed to delegates to strengthen the platforms for implementing the new development agenda that will be adopted in September.

“If we want to give the final touch to and implement a universal, transformational and people-centred agenda, we need to change our mind-sets. We cannot go on doing business as usual and expect different results,” affirmed Oh Joon in his remarks to the opening of the High-level Segment of ECOSOC's 2015 session.

“We have a responsibility to contribute, through our deliberation, to the process that will chart our way for the next 15 years
and beyond,” Mr. Oh continued. “If we get it right now, we will get it right for generations to come.”

The High-level Segment coincides with the Ministerial Segment of the 2015 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on Sustainable Development, which is meeting from 26 June through 8 July. The latter aims to foster debate between governments, the UN system and other organizations, scientists, major groups and other stakeholders of civil society on all aspects of surrounding the implementation of the new sustainability agenda and push to eradicate global poverty.

In September, Member States will adopt a set of sustainable development goals that build on the eight Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which had a deadline of 2015. The UN is working with governments, civil society and other partners to build on the momentum generated by the MDGs and carry on with an ambitious post-2015 development agenda.

Addressing the opening of the High-Level Political Forum last week, ECOSOC President Martin Sajdik told delegates that the session could ultimately realize three objectives, including taking stock of the international community's standing ahead of the impending Third International Conference on Financing for Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia; providing an opportunity to prepare for implementing the post-2015 development agenda; and designing a methodology to keep progress and implementation under review in each country and region.

In today's message to the Forum, Mr. Oh reiterated that sense of urgency, noting that Member States would need to discuss and determine “how to ensure that we build on strong foundations” while also uniting and integrating all efforts – at regional, national and global levels – towards a unified objective.

“An integrated agenda will require an integrated vision, particularly at the conceptual level of policy making,” Mr. Oh added. “We are on the verge of creating an exceptional deed. Let us get it right.”

Also speaking at the opening of the High-level Segment, Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson agreed with Mr. Oh, stating that the global community's legacy “will depend in no small part on whether the agenda we adopt at the September Summit is ambitious and transformative and whether we live up to it.”

“We are clearly heading in the right direction,” Mr. Eliasson continued. “The litmus test for the new agenda will be its implementation.”

The Deputy Secretary-General observed that 17 sustainable development goals proposed by Member States were, in fact, transformative and established “a holistic vision of development focussed on people.”

At the same time, he said, one of the lessons from the MDGs is that the world cannot work in silos, focusing on one goal, without considering the links to other goals.

“We need more than a new toolbox of policy measures. We need an essential 'rethink' of the way we make and implement policies. We must learn how to shape, implement and review development plans reflecting both economic, social and environmental dimensions,” Mr. Eliasson stated. “That is why we need an integrated vision of implementation, in which interlinkages are well understood and utilized.”

Meanwhile, Sam Kutesa, the President of the General Assembly, similarly underscored the need to “redouble efforts” to bring the negotiations on the post-2015 development agenda to “a successful conclusion” while also scaling up mobilization of resources and renewing and enhancing global partnerships for development.

“It is self-evident why successful outcomes from all of these processes will be critical towards achieving sustainable development and putting our world on a safer, more equitable, and sustainable pathway,” Mr. Kutesa told those gathered.

“The deliberations at this session of the HLPF will deepen understanding of critical issues related to the post 2015 development agenda, and the vital role the Forum will play in ensuring that the new agenda is understood, communicated and achieved by the engagement of all actors.”
UN chief says further probe needed to ‘finally establish the facts’ of Dag Hammarskjöld’s death

6 July - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced today that “a further inquiry or investigation would be necessary to finally establish the facts” of the death of the second Secretary-General of the United Nations, Dag Hammarskjöld, in a plane crash in Northern Rhodesia, now Zambia, along with 15 others more than 50 years ago.

A statement by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson said the three-member Independent Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary-General found “new information relating to ‘crew fatigue’ which contributes to one or more of the hypothesis. Most importantly, the Panel found new information, which it assessed as having moderate probative value, sufficient to further pursue aerial attack or other interference as a hypothesis of the possible cause of the crash.”

Mr. Hammarskjöld served from April 1953 until his death in a plane crash in September 1961. At the age of 47 years, he is the youngest to have held the post and was awarded a posthumous Nobel Prize.

Mr. Ban has conveyed the report of the Independent Panel of Experts to the President of the General Assembly, along with his own observations on the progress made and on the way forward in the search for the truth about the death of the late Secretary-General and of the 15 members of the party accompanying him.

“The Panel has made significant progress in the search for the truth about the events of 17 and 18 September 1961,” said today’s statement.

The panel consisting of Mohamed Chande Othman of Tanzania, Kerryn Macaulay of Australia and Henrik Larsen of Denmark, examined and assessed the probative value of new information relating to the various hypotheses of the cause or causes of the crash, it added.

Based on its findings, the Secretary-General is of the view that “a further inquiry or investigation would be necessary to finally establish the facts. Such an inquiry or investigation would, however, be in a better position to reach a conclusive finding regarding the tragic events of 17 and 18 September 1961 with the benefit of the specific information requested by the Panel from the Member States concerned.”

Mr. Ban “will pursue the pending requests for specific information made by the Panel to certain Member States, and urges all Member States to declassify or otherwise make available any information they may have in their possession related to the circumstances and conditions resulting in the deaths of Dag Hammarskjöld and the other members of the party accompanying him.”

He also recommends that the General Assembly “remain seized of the matter and that it reiterate its encouragement to Member States to provide any relevant records or information.”

Mr. Ban appointed UN Legal Counsel Miguel de Serpa Soares to engage with the Member States concerned to follow up on the unfulfilled aspects of the Panel’s request.

The panel’s report “constitutes an indispensable step towards fulfilling our shared responsibility to establish the facts after these many years,” according to the Secretary-General. “This is our solemn duty to the distinguished former Secretary-General, Mr. Dag Hammarskjöld, to the other members of the party accompanying him, and to their families.”

Mr. Ban will report to the General Assembly on any further progress made before the end of its 70th session, which opens in September 2015.
UN: cholera outbreaks can be controlled thanks to vaccines, water and sanitation

6 July - Use of oral vaccines is proving to be an effective tool to control outbreaks of cholera, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said today, adding that the deadly water-borne disease is a major public health concern from Tanzania to South Sudan, and Nepal to Yemen.

The use of Oral Cholera Vaccines (OCV) must be both supported by local authorities and used hand-in-hand with focused, sustainable water and sanitation actions in targeted communities, the agency recommends in a press release.

A global stockpile of vaccines, funded by a number of international organizations and foundations, initially made 2 million doses of the vaccine available. In 2015, with additional funding from the GAVI Alliance, the number of doses available for use in both endemic hotspots and emergency situations is expected to rise to around 3 million.

There are several examples in which the vaccine has stopped cholera outbreaks in their tracks, such as in South Sudan in 2014, when thousands of displaced people who had found shelter in makeshift camps at UN sites were given the vaccine. This action almost certainly averted increased illness and death among the vulnerable camp inhabitants who had been at high risk, WHO noted.

But new outbreaks are ongoing in South Sudan and Tanzania, fanned by insecurity and additional displacement. Intensive control efforts are ongoing, and vaccination programmes have been rolled out to target communities at risk. In conflict-wracked Yemen and earthquake-ravaged Nepal, WHO has been working with national authorities and partners on the ground to prepare for any outbreak of cholera, as well as acute watery diarrhoea.

Cholera, according to WHO, is an acute intestinal infection caused by ingestion of food or water contaminated with the bacterium Vibrio cholerae. It has a short incubation period, from less than one day to five days, and produces an enterotoxin that causes copious, watery diarrhoea; vomiting also occurs in most patients. Cholera can quickly lead to severe dehydration and death without prompt treatment.

The WHO-led Global Task Force on Cholera Control aims to end cholera deaths by strengthening international collaboration and increasing coordination among partners in three of the main situations where cholera circulates.

The first is in endemic conditions, where the disease is entrenched in communities, such as in some regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Sudden outbreaks are another scenario, where an instant vaccination response is deemed most effective, such as in Guinea and Malawi. Finally, cholera can be a consequence of a humanitarian crisis, as it was the case in South Sudan in 2013, or in the recent outbreak in Tanzania when thousands of people displaced by fighting in neighbouring Burundi were successfully vaccinated against the disease.

Effectively controlling a disease means reducing new cases in defined locations to zero through targeted efforts, WHO emphasized. In the case of cholera, these include the use of oral cholera vaccine, improving water and sanitation practices, engaging the community in implementation of control measures, and sustaining control efforts to prevent its re-emergence.
Widespread and early heatwaves impact northern hemisphere, UN weather agency warns

6 July - Many parts of Europe have been impacted by a severe and unusually early heatwave since 27 June, the United Nations World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has said, warning of record-breaking temperatures and wildfires in North America and torrential downpours and widespread flooding in southern China.

“The heatwave is still ongoing and it is premature to say whether it can be attributed to climate change or whether it is due to naturally occurring climate variability,” stated Omar Baddour, who coordinates WMO’s World Climate Data and Monitoring Programme.

“But climate change scenarios predict that heatwaves will become more intense, more frequent and longer. It is notable that the time between major heatwaves (2003, 2010, and 2015) is getting shorter,” he pointed out.

In a press release issued over the weekend, WMO noted the extreme weather events currently taking place in the northern hemisphere.

An initial analysis conducted by WMO’s Regional Climate Centre in Europe shows that many parts of the continent will continue to see above normal temperatures and dry conditions. The heatwave is unusual because it is so early and so widespread, drawing comparisons with the 2003 and 2010 summers, during which tens of thousands of people died.

The difference is that the 2015 heatwave is much earlier and Europe much better prepared with heat-health action plans. WMO and the UN World Health Organization (WHO) on 1 July issued joint guidance on heat-health early warning systems, drawing to a considerable extent on the expertise and experience gained in Europe since the 2003 heatwave.

Many parts of the Western United States are also suffering from high temperatures, further drying out soils and increasing the risk of wildfires. This ranges from California to the states of Washington and Oregon in the northwest, parts of Washington State having seen temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius in the past week.

No less than 623 climatic stations broke daily maximum high records in the last seven days, and 17 broke all-time records for maximum temperatures, noted the press release.

The wildfire season in North America has gotten off to a very early start because of a number of factors including dry conditions, heat and lightning. In a 29 June report, the Alaska Wildland Fire Information said “June 2015 isn’t quite over, but our totals with one day left in the month are sobering: 399 fires have burned some 1,600,000 acres.”

“The wildfire situation this summer has mainly been triggered by repeated lightning storms tracking across an abnormally dry state. The lightning has been astonishing; on June 21-23, some 50,000 lightning strikes were recorded in Alaska.”

In Pakistan, the heatwave which caused more than 1,200 deaths in Karachi recently was aggravated by a low pressure system off the coast, which meant that the usual cooling coastal breeze was replaced by hot air coming from interior. According to the authorities, temperatures remain high, but the situation has stabilized. Parts of Pakistan have seen the onset of the monsoon.

Finally, southwest China has witnessed a heatwave with temperatures over 35 degrees for a widespread area, accompanied by exceptionally heavy rainfall and widespread flood, prompting the Chinese authorities to issue level 4 emergency alert, the press release stated.
At Oslo forum, Ban warns capacity to meet humanitarian needs under ‘unprecedented strain’

6 July - The capacity of the United Nations and its partners to meet humanitarian needs is under “unprecedented strain,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon warned today at a forum in Oslo, Norway, where he highlight the critical role civil society plays as part of the global effort to save lives, support livelihoods and protect people from violence.

“From the earthquakes in Nepal to avalanches in Afghanistan, from Ebola in West Africa to many other frontlines of conflict and disaster, civil society organizations are playing an ever growing role,” Mr. Ban underscored in his address to the forum, which focused on the role of civil society in humanitarian emergencies.

The Secretary-General highlighted the role of local organizations as a vital link between the government and global and grass roots associations, especially at a time when the UN and its partners are aiming to assist nearly 79 million people worldwide.

He pointed out that during a disaster, such organizations could be faster and more flexible than larger entities. Attuned to local context, culture, language and needs, civil society organizations provide bonds of solidarity and trust – with women’s groups playing a particularly valuable role in supporting a society’s economic and social fabric.

“Yet,” Mr. Ban remarked, “I am keenly aware that this service comes with great sacrifice. Last year, 88 per cent of all attacks against humanitarian workers were against local aid workers.”

He emphasized that the international community must do more to sustain the critical role of civil society. “As we create a more diverse, inclusive and truly global humanitarian system, we must use the strengths of all actors.”

In May 2016, the Secretary-General will convene the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, Turkey, at which civil society organizations would be important stakeholders.

As part of the lead-up to the Summit, civil society organizations have helped to organize eight regional consultations, reaching out to nearly 15,000 people in 135 countries.

“The rise of global humanitarian action is one of humanity’s greatest moral achievements,” Mr. Ban said. “Today our goal is a world where every woman, man and child in need can receive some form of assistance and protection from the impacts of disaster, conflict, displacement, hunger or disease.

“This world is now within our grasp. Together we can make this vision a reality.”

Also today, Mr. Ban addressed a “Partnership for Education” event, which focused on three critical issues: equity in education; closing the education gap and leveraging digital solutions; and ensuring education in emergencies.

“We need teachers and students. We need telecoms companies and civil society organizations. We need policy-makers and app developers. We need to stand strong,” he told the gathering.

“When we put every child in school, provide them with quality learning, and foster global citizenship, we will transform our future.

While in Oslo, Mr. Ban also met with the country’s Foreign Minister, Børge Brende, and thanked him for Norway’s strong and consistent support to the UN. He also briefed him on UN efforts to find a political solution in Syria and to achieve an end to the crisis in Yemen, including through a humanitarian pause.

In addition, the two leaders discussed the current state of the Middle East peace process, as well as the negotiations...
Global education targets at risk amid surge in out-of-school numbers, says UN report

6 July - The number of out-of-school children and adolescents around the world has risen to worrying levels, dealing a potential blow to education targets aimed at achieving universal primary and secondary education, a new United Nations report has warned.

According to the study released today by the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Education for All Global Monitoring Report (EFA GMR), 124 million children and adolescents are now out of school while international aid to education continues to remain below 2010 levels.

In addition, the latest numbers show that some 24 million children will never enter a classroom with girls remaining the most disadvantaged cohort figuring in the study. In South and West Asia alone, 80 per cent of out-of-school girls are unlikely to start school compared to just 16 per cent for their male counterparts.

In a press release accompanying the report's publication, UNESCO's Director General, Irina Bokova, pointed to warnings that unless countries “make serious commitments” towards increasing education aid, the ambitious targets made by the international community promising 12 years of free and equitable access to quality education “could remain elusive for millions of children and youth.”

The problem of education funding is of particular concern, the study adds. Despite a six per cent increase in aid to education, investment levels are four per cent lower today than in 2010 and risk stagnating for the next few years.

“Aid needs to be shooting upwards, not creeping up by a few percentage points,” declared Aaron Benavot, Director of the EFA GMR. “The world just set itself the huge goal of providing 12 years of free education. This simply won't happen unless donors get serious about funding.”

Estimates suggest that it will cost an extra $39 billion to provide the 12 years of education to everyone in low and lower-middle income countries. In order to fill this shortfall, however, UNESCO and EFA GMR note that donor countries must increase their aid to education six-fold.

“The Oslo Summit on Education for Development and the Third Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa next month present a real test of donor commitment,” Mr. Benavot continued. “Without it, targets and promises for progress are unlikely to be met.”
UN agency welcomes new proposals by Southeast Asian States on region’s refugee and migrant issues

3 July - The United Nations refugee agency today welcomed proposals by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) to set up a task force and trust fund to respond to the irregular movement of refugees and migrants in the region.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for refugees (UNHCR), recommendations were made during yesterday's Emergency ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on “Transnational Crime Concerning Irregular Movement of Persons in Southeast Asia” held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – the latest in a series of regional meetings to respond to the "boat crisis" that has seen thousands of Rohingya and Bangladeshi nationals stranded at sea in May this year.

More than 4,800 people have been disembarked in Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar and Thailand. Hundreds are still unaccounted for, although many could have landed discretely in recent weeks.

"We fully support law enforcement actions against smuggling and trafficking," said James Lynch, UNHCR's Regional Representative and Regional Coordinator for South-East Asia.

"Border security must be strengthened alongside the protection of human rights, including those of refugees. We need to ensure that victims receive prompt assistance and protection, and that alternatives to detention are found for people seeking asylum, especially children."

UNHCR reaffirmed that it stands ready to share its technical expertise in screening and seeking solutions for refugees, and to help mobilize support for ASEAN’s commendable efforts to address this regional challenge.

Yemen: despite major obstacles and insecurity, UN continuing to deliver aid to displaced

3 July - The United Nations is working to deliver humanitarian aid in war-torn Yemen despite widespread insecurity, port delays and severe restrictions on access, several of the Organization's agencies and partners confirmed today, citing efforts to provide everything from emergency shelters to food and other basic necessities to tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting and airstrikes.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that in May and June, the agency had been able to get basic relief to 56,369 people and plastic sheeting for emergency shelters to a further 7,000 families who had been staying in collective centres.

Aid had been going out across the eight governorates of Abyan, Aden, Amanat Alasimah, Amran, Hajjah, Hodeida, Sana'a and Taiz. Mr. Edwards said that in all, 84,166 displaced people had received non-food aid since the start of April, about 70 per cent of that coming directly from UNHCR and the rest from partners.

“The distributions came amid a worsening situation in many governorates. Al Hazm, the capital of Al Jawf governorate in the country's north, was hit by airstrikes for three consecutive days in late June causing the evacuation of an estimated 900 families,” he said, adding that most of the residents of the city's Al Matuma district had been seeking safety in Al Maton and Al Masloub districts.

Al Maton had been the first district in Al Jawf to receive displaced people from Sa'ada. At present there, were an estimated
2,470 internally displaced families there along with an additional 1,400 families from Amran and other governorates.

“The humanitarian response for those populations had been severely restricted due to ongoing fighting and the consequent problems with access,” said Mr. Edwards, explain that UNHCR is seeking to connect with its main operational partners who had networks in Al-Jawf, to provide additional help.

“UNHCR continues to call for unfettered access and movements of humanitarian workers and its supplies so that vital assistance can reach those in need,” he said, adding that currently, there are more than one million internally displaced people (IDPs) in Yemen, plus some 244,000 refugees. It is estimated that there are more than 21 million people in need throughout the country, concluded Mr. Edwards.

Echoing many of the same concerns, Elisabeth Byrs, spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP), said limited access due to constant insecurity remains a fundamental obstacle to the effective delivery of food commodities in Yemen.

Since 15 April, WFP had assisted 1.9 million Yemenis with food aid, through the distribution of 25,000 metric tons of food in 12 governorates, she said, adding that some three million tons of food and fuel on board seven ships were expected in Yemeni ports in the period between 3 and 9 July.

“Commercial shipping into Yemen is slowly increasing but remains constrained by port congestion and high fees due to the time spent by ships waiting to dock. Delays as long as 11 days have been reported at Hodeidah and Salif ports,” she explained.

“The food situation in Aden is very bad,” said Ms. Byrs, reporting that humanitarian agencies are facing serious difficulties to reaching the port. The security situation remained volatile around the port area and in most of the city, which is suffering from small shortages of clean water and power cuts. Most bakeries in Aden had reportedly shut down because of wheat and fuel shortages, she added.

Moreover, a WFP-chartered vessel continued to be redirected to Hodeidah port, despite frequent attempts to deliver to Aden. “WFP had attempted several times to reach Aden with ships but the poor security situation around the port had forced the ships to turn back. However, WFP was still trying to deliver aid, by land and by sea.

In June, food for 80,000 people was distributed but this had not been nearly enough for the one million inhabitants of Aden, said Ms. Byrs, adding that by comparison, in April WFP dispatched food for 200,000 people and in May for 44,000 people.

“The situation in Yemen is dire, said Ms. Byrs, noting that WFP's operations from June to August were not fully funded and that $103 million is urgently needed.

At the same briefing, Fadéla Chaib, spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO), provided recent figures on violations to health facilities and staff in Yemen due to the conflict, as of 14 June 2015. So far there had been 54 total health facilities damaged, of which 20 had been fully damaged, and 13 health workers had been injured of whom three had been killed, she informed the press.

Ahmad Fawzi, Director, Ad Interim of the UN Information Service in Geneva, noted that United Nations Special Envoy on Yemen Ould Cheikh Ahmed is currently in Riyadh where he had reiterated both the UN Secretary-General's and his own call for a humanitarian pause, especially during the fasting month of Ramadan. The Special Envoy would next travel to Sana'a where he would continue to push all the parties, Mr. Fawzi added.
UN hails cooperatives as vehicle to make sustainable development a reality for all

4 July - Cooperatives will play an “invaluable role” in the international community's roll-out of a sustainable development goals, said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, who today marked the International Day of Cooperatives with an appeal for all to recommit to the business model, which could help make the vision of a sustainable future a reality for everyone.

“Inequality is a fundamental obstacle to development, depriving people of basic services and opportunities to build better lives for themselves and their children,” the Secretary-General declared in his message for the Day, which is on the theme ‘Choose Cooperatives, Choose Equality.’

“The cooperative model helps meet this challenge. Cooperatives strive to uphold the principles of equality and democratic participation,” says Mr. Ban

According to Cooperatives and Sustainable Development Goals, a recently-produced study by the UN’s International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), cooperatives contribute to sustainable development and hold the potential to do much more: from creating employment and enhancing gender equality to providing clean energy and financial inclusion to ensuring food security and extending social protection.

Cooperatives are strongly committed to the communities they serve, Mr. Ban continued.

“This business model, built on inclusion and sustainability, offers a pathway toward economic, social and political justice for all.”

At the same time, the UN has long noted that the benefits of the cooperative model expand well beyond its contribution towards sustainable development.

Ranging from small-scale to multi-million dollar businesses across the globe, cooperatives operate in all sectors of the economy, and provide 100 million jobs worldwide – 20 per cent more than multinational enterprises, according to 2011 figures from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN International Fund for Agriculture Development (IFAD) and the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

In 2008 alone, in the midst of the global financial crisis, the largest 300 cooperatives in the world had an aggregate turnover of $1.1 trillion, comparable to the gross domestic product (GDP) of many large economies.

In his message, the Secretary-General pointed to a wealth of research showing how cooperatives have helped lower wage difference between men and women and promote greater equality in the work place and training opportunities.

With an estimated one in every six people in the world either a member or client of a cooperative and some 2.6 million cooperatives employing 12.6 million people globally, the potential contribution to sustainable development is “enormous,” he added.

“In this crucially important year in which the world will commit itself to an inspiring new development agenda, including a set of sustainable development goals, let us recommit to the cooperative business model and use its many benefits to fulfil our vision of a life of dignity for all,” concluded Mr. Ban.

In his message message on the Day, Guy Ryder, Director-General of the International Labour organization (ILO) said that as people-centered, principle driven, member owned businesses, cooperatives have a long tradition of promoting equality. Their values of “equality and equity” are translated into members' equal voting rights and access to the products and services
of the cooperative, as well as to an equitable distribution of surpluses.

"In addition to creating a viable enterprise model that generates productivity and income, cooperatives are well placed to help tackle social inequalities, discrimination and exclusion based on gender, age, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation and differential abilities," he said, adding that not surprisingly, cooperatives have also proved to be effective vehicles for realizing decent work for all.

For example, Mr. Ryder noted that in the rural and informal economies “we have seen first-hand how women, youth and indigenous peoples are increasing their income and their standard of living by using the cooperative way of working,” and in low income communities, cooperatives of housing, tourism and renewable energy can help to achieve an equitable distribution of economic returns.

The ILO is examining how cooperative arrangements for the provision of care services can improve the well-being of care workers, care beneficiaries and the community at large. “And, as the world of work evolves, the cooperative model can be used to bring technological, social and organizational innovation through pooling of people, knowledge, technology and resources helping to bridge the gaps that perpetuate economic and social inequality,” he said.

**Destruction at Palmyra site 'perverse' attempt to deny Syrian people their heritage, UNESCO chief warns**

3 July - Condemning the destruction of archaeological treasures from the ancient Syrian city of Palmyra as a “perverse…new attempt to break the bonds between people and their history,” the head of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) today called on the international community, including the art market, to join forces and stop the traffic in cultural property.

"The ongoing destruction of Palmyra's cultural artifacts reflects the brutality and ignorance of extremist groups and their disregard of local communities and the Syrian people," decaled UNESCO chief Irina Bokova, strongly condemning this new assault on Palmyra, a World Heritage Site, particularly funerary busts and the renowned Lion statue of Athena from the entrance of the site's museum.

"The destruction of funerary busts of Palmyra in a public square, in front of crowds and children asked to witness the looting of their heritage is especially perverse," she said, explaining that the busts embody the values of human empathy, intelligence and honor the dead. They also represent a wealth of information on costumes, jewelry, traditions and history of the Syrian people.

“Their destruction is a new attempt to break the bonds between people and their history, to deprive them of their cultural roots in order to better enslave them," she declared.

With this in mind, Ms. Bokova reiterated her call to all religious leaders, intellectuals and young people to stand up against the manipulation of religion, to respond to the false arguments of extremists in all media and through the #unite4heritage campaign.

"I commend the courage of the youth from the Arab world who are committed to protecting their heritage as a source of strength, resilience and hope in the future,” she said.

Finally, she called strongly on all UN Member States, the art market and experts to join forces to curb the illicit traffic of cultural property.

“I call on all researchers, artists, filmmakers and photographers to continue to cooperate and join forces with UNESCO to document and share the wealth of the Mesopotamian civilization. Neither bombs nor jackhammers can erase this great culture from the memory of the world,” she declared, adding that nothing can ever stifle human creativity - despite the obstacles and fanaticism, this energy will come back stronger than before, buildings and sites will be rehabilitated, and some
will be rebuilt, and culture will find its place because it embodies the vitality of societies.

“UNESCO will continue to work with the people of Syria to make sure that moment comes as soon as possible,” the Director General concluded.

**AIDS is a 'human rights issue,' Ban declares, launching major new UN report in Barbados**

3 July - Ending the AIDS epidemic – in all places and all communities – is essential to realizing the vision of a life of dignity for all, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared today in Barbados at the Caribbean region launch of a major new United Nations report the calls for scaling up an inclusive, rights-based and stigma-free response to wipe out the deadly disease.

“A quarter of a million people in this region live with HIV. The governments here struggle to finance their responses,” said Mr. Ban at the launch in the region of study released today by the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and renowned medical journal, *The Lancet*.

The UN chief is in Barbados on an official visit in the context of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Summit, which he addressed last night.

The report, *Defeating AIDS – Advancing Global Health* was released in late June, and, among others warns that despite some advances in the battles against the disease, the rate of new HIV infections is not falling fast enough. As a result, the study calls for an urgent need to scale up AIDS efforts, calls on governments to ramp up HIV prevention efforts, and continue expanding access to treatment.

In his remarks today, Mr. Ban stressed that the epidemic is only made worse by punitive laws and stigma. These drive vulnerability to HIV infection – and block access to life-saving treatment.

“Homophobia threatens both human rights and public health. We cannot tolerate discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, nor on the basis of gender identity. We must also defend the human rights of sex workers and of people who inject drugs,” he declared.

The Secretary-General said the report has four main messages. First, the world has the knowledge, tools and know-how to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, and the Commission that compiled the study spells out how to achieve this.

“Second, we need to urgently increase and fully fund our AIDS response. Today the world invests $19 billion annually in addressing AIDS. To reach our targets, we need to almost double this amount,” he said, calling for a rapid scale-up – led by countries, with critical support from global and private partners – over the next five years so the world will be on track to end the epidemic by 2030.

Third, he urged applying lessons learned from the AIDS response to other complex challenges, stressing that young people, women, gay activists and campaigners for equality drive progress and that activism pushes boundaries— to ensure access to affordable medicines, political influence and justice.

“Fourth, we can leave no one behind. AIDS will only end when we protect the human rights of all. This disease thrives on unjust power relations and inequalities. We have to battle all forms of societal ills including stigma, intolerance, discrimination and violence,” underscored Mr. Ban.

Continuing, he said that ending the epidemic would demand the achievement of gender equality. “We need to protect sexual and reproductive rights. And we need to give adolescents life-skills, including education about their sexuality.”

“AIDS is about more than human health – it is fundamentally an issue of human rights,” the UN chief said.
Children bearing brunt of ongoing political instability and violence in Burundi, UN warns

3 July - Children, some as young as four years old, are bearing the brunt of the prolonged instability and election-related violence in Burundi, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned today, confirming reports of an additional three deaths of children over the last five days.

Speaking to reporters in Geneva, UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Boulierac said one of the children died because of a grenade explosion in the Muyinga province, becoming the first child victim of the violence outside of the capital city of Bujumbura.

In total, since the beginning of the confrontations in April, eight children have been killed in the violence, he continued, noting also that a child of only four years old had been killed by a stray bullet to the stomach, becoming the youngest victim of the election-related violence so far.

UNICEF has also confirmed that a second grenade attack took place on a school ground on 29 June before the proceeding of the voting in the Bururi province. There were no victims, but the children fled from the school and upon return reportedly found military in the school.

“Preventing children from experiencing and witnessing violence was everyone's responsibility,” said Mr. Boulierac, stressing that UNICEF called all levels of Burundian society, including the authorities, security forces and families, as well as the Government of Burundi, to use all influence to protect children and to ensure they were not exposed to violence, arbitrary arrest or unlawful detention.

He said that most schools in Bujumbura are still closed, but schools inside the country are still open. Movement across borders had accelerated as people sought refuge in neighbouring countries, with thousands of women and children crossing in the three days preceding the 29 June elections.

“Burundi is one of the poorest countries in the world, with one of the highest child malnutrition rates and figures on the top of the Global Hunger index. Prolonged insecurity that provokes repetitive displacement of people is likely to have a massive impact on an already vulnerable population, Mr. Boulierac concluded.

According to the UN refugee agency, civil unrest erupted on 26 April in Bujumbura after the ruling CNDD-FDD party elected President Pierre Nkurunziza on 25 April as its candidate for then-scheduled 26 June presidential election. 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.
Urging end to violence, UN Middle East envoy warns of rise in security-related incidents in West Bank

3 July - Increasingly concerned by the continued deadly incidents in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, against Israelis and Palestinians, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov today called for an immediate end to the violence.

“I condemn today's fatal shooting by Israel Defense Forces of a 17-year-old Palestinian during an alleged stone-throwing incident,” said Mr. Mladenov in a press statement issued by his Office, in which his underscored that all sides must exercise restraint, maintain calm and promptly bring the perpetrators of the violence to justice.

“These tragic incidents, once again, highlight the need for a return to a political process with the goal of establishing two states living side-by-side in peace and security,” he declared and added that the incidents are also taking place at time when the Middle East faces a “vicious tide of terror and extremism.”

Ebola: as virus resurfaces in Liberia, UNICEF teams and supplies arrive in affected areas

3 July - In a speedy response to Liberia's first confirmed cases of Ebola in more than three months, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has begun distributing emergency supplies in the affected communities including tents for isolating those under quarantine, hygiene kits and chlorine and buckets for handwashing stations.

In Margibi County, where the body of a child tested positive for the virus on 29 June, UNICEF social mobilization teams are already on the ground conducting door-to-door awareness campaigns on Ebola prevention, to minimize the risk of further infections and to protect and assist those affected.

“There was always a risk that Ebola would return to Liberia. Now we have to put everything we have into getting back to zero cases,” Sheldon Yett, UNICEF's Representative in Liberia said in a press release. “The speed of the response to these cases shows that no one has let their guard down.”

Liberia, among the West African countries most affected by last year's unprecedented outbreak – along with Guinea and Sierra Leone – was declared free of Ebola transmission in early May.

In the coming days, the school that the victim attended will be decontaminated, new hygiene stations will be put in place, and soap and chlorine distributed. Handwashing stations provided by UNICEF were positioned at the entrance of all schools in Liberia when they re-opened after a six-month closure in February.

UNICEF has worked with local authorities to keep them in place following the declaration on May 9 that the country was free from Ebola transmission.

UNICEF is also working with the government to ensure measures such as the taking of students' temperatures when they arrive are in place.

“Liberia would not have been declared Ebola free in May without the knowledge and initiative of communities,” said Mr. Yett, adding that those communities are again at the forefront of reinvigorated efforts to ensure that there are no new cases of the disease there.

In neighboring Guinea and Sierra Leone, new infections continue to be reported, though in much lower numbers than at the peak of the outbreak. In the week ending June 28, 12 new cases of Ebola were recorded in Guinea and eight in Sierra Leone,
according to UNICEF.