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'No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis,’ Ban declares on anniversary of atomic bombing

6 August - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today renewed his resolve to advance the goal of achieving a world “free of the nuclear shadow,” in a message to mark the 70th anniversary of the atomic bombing of the Japanese city of Hiroshima.

“Seven decades after their first use in conflict, this sombre occasion commemorates the tens of thousands who died that day. It honours the survivors who have suffered severe adversity in the aftermath. The United Nations stands with them, resolved to realize their vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world,” said Mr. Ban.

“Your commemoration should reverberate from this city across the world, reminding all people of the need for urgent action to eliminate nuclear weapons once and for all,” he added in the message to the Peace Memorial Ceremony, delivered by Acting High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Kim Won-soo.

More than 200,000 people died of nuclear radiation, shock waves from the blasts and thermal radiation resulting from bombing of Hiroshima on 6 August 1945 and of Nagasaki three days later. Additionally, over 400,000 more people have died – and are continuing to die – since the end of the Second World War from the impacts of the two bombs.

Mr. Ban recalled his visit to Hiroshima five years ago, saying he will always carry the memories of meeting the survivors, witnessing the destruction and seeing the lingering effects.

“The courage of those who lived through this catastrophic, man-made tragedy was deeply inspiring. The hibakusha are more than survivors – they are unparalleled champions of peace. From their searing experiences, they have forged a message of hope that someday the world will be free of these indiscriminate and destabilizing weapons,” he stated.

“I pay tribute to the bravery of the hibakusha and renew my resolve to advance our common cause of achieving a safer and more peaceful world, free of the nuclear shadow.”
Noting that this year also marks the 70th anniversary of the UN, the Secretary-General recalled that the first resolution adopted by the General Assembly reflected the world's concern about the use of atomic weapons.

“As you keep the memory of the bombing alive, so, too, must the international community persist until we have ensured that nuclear weapons are eliminated,” he stated.

“I echo your rallying cry: No more Hiroshimas. No more Nagasakis.”

**World food prices hit lowest level in almost six years, UN agency reports**

*6 August* - Prices for global agricultural products in July hit their lowest level since September 2009, as sharp drops in the prices of dairy products and vegetable oils more than offset some increases for those of sugar and cereals, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) confirmed today.

According to the UN agency's monthly Food Price Index, meat prices remained stable. An increase in international prices of bovine meat offset a decline for pig meat and ovine meat, while prices for poultry remained stable.

The trade-weighted index tracks prices on international markets of five major food commodity groups: cereals, meat, dairy products, vegetable oils and sugar.

In July, says FAO, the dairy price index dropped 7.2 percent from the previous month, mainly due to lower import demand from China, the Middle East and North Africa amid abundant EU milk production which has resulted in good availability of dairy products for export.

As for the July vegetable oil price index, it was some 5.5 percent below its June level, reaching its lowest value since July 2009.

The recent slide was primarily caused by a fall in international palm oil prices due to increased production in Southeast Asia combined with slower exports especially from Malaysia. Another reason is a further weakening of soy oil prices on ample supplies for export in South America and a favourable outlook for global supply in 2015/16.

The cereal price index rose by 2.0 percent from June, but was still 10.1 percent below July last year's level. For the second consecutive month, higher wheat and maize prices, in part due to unfavourable weather in North America and Europe, kept the cereal index rising, but rice prices continued to fall.

The sugar price index rose by 2.5 percent from June 2015, largely due to less than ideal harvesting conditions in the main producing region of Brazil.
UN agency prioritizes most needy Syrian refugees in Iraq for food assistance

6 August - In an effort to meet the food needs of the most vulnerable Syrian refugees living in Iraq, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has announced that it will focus its resources this month on those living in the country’s Kurdistan region.

“Our assessments have shown that while some families have the resources to meet their food needs, many Syrian families in the Kurdistan region still need continued assistance,” explained Matteo Perrone, WFP Emergency Coordinator for the Syrian refugees operation in Iraq.

“Our effort is to focus on meeting the food needs of the most vulnerable refugees,” he added in a news release.

This month, WFP will channel all available resources to over 48,000 refugees who still require support to meet their food needs. The monthly voucher value will be reduced to $10 per person per month for over 47,000 moderately vulnerable refugees, while nearly 1,000 refugees considered the most vulnerable will continue to receive $19 per person per month to meet their food needs.

Some 50,000 previously assisted Syrian refugees will no longer receive food assistance from WFP. These people have been advised of the decision by SMS messages and other means.

The decisions being taken on the prioritization of food assistance are based on comprehensive interagency food security and vulnerability assessment, to measure the general food security status of refugees living in camps and their ability to cope, WFP said.

Factors taken into account include access to livelihood opportunities, food consumption, household expenditure, coping strategies and other socio-economic considerations.

The assessment found that food insecurity was not a major problem faced by refugees in camps, due to the fact that Iraq is the only country in the region where refugees can hold work permits, allowing them to earn money to meet their families’ food needs. The assessments found that 85 per cent of Syrian refugees in Iraq have an external source of income.

Efforts will be made to make sure nobody falls through the cracks, stressed the agency. “Through our regular post-distribution monitoring, WFP will keep a close eye on the food security situation for all refugees to ensure that families affected by these cuts are not impacted negatively,” Mr. Perrone stated.

WFP’s food voucher programme for Syrian refugees in neighbouring countries is the largest in the world, and is funded entirely by voluntary contributions. Nearly 1.6 million Syrian refugees, spread across five countries in the region, are assisted through WFP food vouchers every month.

Last month, WFP avoided suspension of that programme thanks to a $65 million from the United States.
Almost 400 people rescued in the Mediterranean after fishing boat sinks – UN agency

6 August - Almost 400 people have been rescued so far from a vessel which sank off the coast of Libya while attempting to cross the Mediterranean Sea with an estimated 600 refugees and migrants on board, the United Nations refugee agency reported today.

The bodies of a further 25 people had been recovered, but dozens more were still missing and feared dead after the flimsy, overcrowded fishing vessel sank minutes after it left shore, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

“Another terrible tragedy happened on the Mediterranean 15 miles off the coast of Libya, so obviously the boat was just setting off. Refugees and migrants do not deserve to die seeking a better life,” UNHCR spokesperson Melissa Fleming stated.

Before this tragedy, which took place on 5 August, some 2,100 people had died so far this year trying to cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe.

Survivors described how the boat was packed and that people panicked when they saw a rescue boat approaching, rushing to one side and tipping the vessel over, Ms. Fleming said.

“These are boats which should only have 40-50 people on board and not 600. People were stuffed into the haul, shoulder to shoulder, feet to feet in every possible nook and cranny.”

According to people on the rescue boat, there were bodies, life jackets and debris in the water. Rescuers did what they could to save panicked and frightened people.

“No one should have to die reaching safety in Europe,” said Ms. Fleming. “The vast majority of people arriving to Europe across the Mediterranean – and there have been 200,000 this year – are people that are fleeing war and conflict and persecution.”

She blamed “ruthless and money-hungry” smugglers for packing such large numbers of people on unsuitable vessels, calling for greater funding to help address the crisis and stem the flow of “desperate” people.

“Unfortunately, we have a system where refugees in neighbouring countries they first fled to are not being assisted to the level we would like to see them assisted. This drives them to say, ‘I can't make it here and we are going to go to Europe,’” she explained.
Libya: new round of UN-facilitated political dialogue set to begin next week

6 August - With a new round of the United Nations-facilitated political dialogue set to begin next week, the top UN envoy for Libya, Bernardino León, has urged the parties to redouble their efforts to find a peaceful resolution to the conflict in the country.

The talks, which have been underway in Skhirat, Morocco, are set to resume on 10 August. During the previous session, a number of Libyan leaders had initialled a political agreement that would allow the country to complete the transition that started in 2011.

Underscoring the significant progress achieved to date within the framework of the dialogue process, Mr. León is urging the parties “to redouble their efforts and continue working together towards narrowing existing differences and forging a common platform that can form the basis for a peaceful resolution of the political and military conflict in Libya,” said a news release issued by the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL).

Mr. León, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of UNSMIL, acknowledged that while some of the parties continue to have reservations about what has been achieved to date, it is important for all parties to continue working on jointly addressing and resolving these concerns within the framework of the dialogue process.

He also stressed that any final political settlement will also include guarantees designed to reassure the different parties regarding any outstanding concerns they might continue to have.

The ongoing fighting in Libya has provoked a growing displacement crisis within the country with the number of people displaced almost doubling from an estimated 230,000 last September to more than 434,000, according to the UN’s refugee agency.

Amid rising tensions and instability, UN chief reiterates concerns to Burundian President

6 August - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has urged Burundian President Pierre Nkurunziza to resume the political dialogue that was suspended last month, and reiterated his strong condemnation of the recent killing of General Adolphe Nshimirimana and the attempted assassination of human rights defender Pierre Claver Mbonimpa.

During their phone conversation yesterday, Mr. Ban expressed his “deep concern” over the impact of these events on security in Burundi, UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

“The Secretary-General urged the President of Burundi to resume the political dialogue, which has been suspended since July 19th. He encouraged the Burundian authorities to work closely with the Ugandan-led facilitation on behalf of the East African Community.”

The Secretary-General offered the UN’s full support to help find a peaceful solution to the grave problems facing the country, the spokesperson added.

Also yesterday, the Burundi Configuration of the UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) strongly condemned the assassination of General Nshimirimana, and the attack against Mr. Mbonimpa, while voicing concern about the deterioration of the security environment.
“The PBC Burundi Configuration calls on all Burundians to exercise restraint in order to prevent a further escalation of violence” and “to establish the necessary conditions for rebuilding trust and fostering national unity,” said the statement.

The group also called on the Government and political actors in Burundi to urgently resume dialogue.

**Growing insecurity leads to more displacements in Lake Chad region, warns UN official**

**6 August** - The United Nations today reported further population displacement in the Lake Chad region owing to fear of attacks by Boko Haram and appeals by the Government of Chad for civilians to leave areas where ongoing military operations are being undertaken against the group.

“For a few weeks now, more than 40,000 people have been fleeing their villages for fear of attacks, without any belongings,” said the UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Chad, Thomas Gurtner.

“The Lake Chad islands still face sporadic attacks and the Government is considering relocating some additional 20,000 people to the mainland, therefore increasing vulnerability among displaced population and host communities,” he added.

On 3 August, an estimated 10,000 people fled to the locality of Koulkimé, some 20 kilometres from the town of Baga Sola, in the Lake Chad basin, bringing the total of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the region to around 40,000, according to the latest update by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Overall, some 79,000 civilians have been forced to flee their homes since the beginning of the year, including refugees, returnees and IDPs.

The UN system is working with partners to implement immediate life-saving assistance to this new displaced population, as the area is prone to cholera outbreaks, Mr. Gurtner said.

The volatile security situation and the rainy season are limiting physical access, slowing humanitarian assessments and response. Despite these challenges, three spontaneous IDP sites near Baga Sola have been provided with basic supplies, food and wash kits.

According to OCHA, the humanitarian community is concerned with the growing trend of forced displacement of civilians in the region.

“As elsewhere in the Lake Chad Basin, which straddles four countries, and where people have been affected by violence, the humanitarian community calls on authorities to ensure that any measures taken to counter terrorism comply with the Member States obligations under international law, particularly international human rights law, international refugee law, and international humanitarian law,” it stated.