'Gaza is still in crisis' one year after hostilities, UN relief official warns, urging stepped-up recovery efforts

7 July - One year after the escalation of hostilities in Gaza, the United Nations Humanitarian Coordinator for the occupied Palestinian territory, Robert Piper, today expressed concern over the ongoing humanitarian situation and the slow pace of reconstruction there.

“Gaza is still in crisis, with civilians, as always, paying the highest price,” Mr. Piper said following a meeting of humanitarian organizations held in yesterday Gaza city.

The 51-day conflict killed 1,462 civilians, including 551 children, and injured many thousands across Gaza. Six Israeli civilians (including one child) were also victims of the hostilities. It caused close to $1.4 billion in direct and indirect damages and $1.7 billion in economic losses to Gaza, points out a press release from the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) .

Since then, continued Mr. Pipet, humanitarian organizations have supported close to 90,000 families with temporary shelter, food assistance has been provided to over 1.4 million people and some 85,000 children have received psychosocial support. Considerable work has already taken place to remove rubble and unexploded ordnance.

At the Cairo Gaza Reconstruction Conference last October, donors pledged some $3.5 billion in support of recovery efforts. A dedicated mechanism was created by Palestine, Israel and the UN to facilitate the entry of construction material. Within the last month, a new stage of reconstruction has begun, which will allow for the 12,600 totally destroyed homes to be rebuilt and new housing to be built.

Despite all these continuing efforts, he said that today, some 100,000 people remain internally displaced, hosted in temporary accommodation or in make-shift shelters. Close to a 120,000 people are still waiting to be reconnected to the city water supply. Work has yet to begin on a number of key health facilities. The humanitarian appeal for Gaza remains 70 per
cent underfunded, while the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is facing an unprecedented funding crisis in its General Fund.

“Our ability to move from short-term relief to longer-term reconstruction is constrained by a major shortfall in humanitarian funding. Nine months after the Cairo Reconstruction Conference, Gaza's recovery process needs to be accelerated,” warned Mr. Piper.

In order to accelerate the recovery process, the Humanitarian Country Team calls on international donors to ensure that commitments made in Cairo quickly translate into concrete funding on the ground, as only 28 per cent of pledges have been disbursed to date.

In addition, it calls on Israel to review its list of 'dual use' items for which entry into Gaza is restricted, particularly those items required for urgent medical care. Israeli and Palestinian authorities need to cooperate in addressing Gaza's acute water and energy crisis. The team also appeals to the Palestinian government to strengthen the management and oversight of the reconstruction process and to Israel to allow for a significant increase in the movement of people and construction material in and out of Gaza.

According to the World Bank, Gaza currently has the highest unemployment rate in the world, at 43 per cent. Food insecurity affects 73 per cent of the population. An estimated 80 per cent of the population relies on humanitarian aid, mainly food assistance. Electricity is available only eight to 12 hours a day, also affecting water supply which covers a fraction of daily needs. Up to 90 million liters of partially-treated sewage are being discharged into the Mediterranean Sea every day, partially due to electricity and fuel shortages. Finally, maternal mortality rates are estimated to have nearly doubled in the last 12 months.

“Simply restoring households to pre-war levels of vulnerability is not enough,” stated Mr. Piper. “Palestinians in Gaza need to be lifted out of this self-perpetuating cycle of crisis.”

Yemen: amid 'massive' humanitarian crisis, UN reports civilian death toll now exceeds 1,500

7 July - The United Nations human rights office is among several key UN entities voicing deep concern over the worsening human rights and humanitarian situation in Yemen that has more than 1,500 civilians dead, 3,600 injured and 1 million displaced in three months of violence.

Underscoring that civilians continued to bear the brunt of the conflict, Cécile Pouilly, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) updated the press in Geneva that between 17 June and 3 July, at least 92 civilians – including 18 women and 18 children – were killed with another 179 injured – including 43 women and 30 children. Since the conflict began, more than 1 million civilians had been internally displaced or sought refuge in neighbouring countries.

“Since 17 June, coalition forces have continued aerial bombardment and other attacks. Ground clashes, shelling, sniper fire and detonation of improvised explosive devices have also been reported in different governorates in Yemen,” she said.

Over the past few weeks, OHCHR documented rights violations and abuses and violations of international humanitarian law by all parties to the conflict, including violations of the right to life, abduction, ill-treatment and attacks against humanitarian workers, journalists and media organizations.

“Dozens of civilians have been abducted and subjected to arbitrary detention in Sana’a. We have also received worrying reports that local Popular Resistance committees affiliated with exiled President Abd Rabbo Mansour Hadi have summarily executed at least six people perceived to be loyal to the Houthi-Saleh coalition and committed acts of ill-treatment.”

Additionally, OHCHR has been closely monitoring attacks by the conflict parties against UN offices, citing an airstrike on
28 June that wounded one civilian and partially destroyed the UN Development Programme (UNDP) office in Khormaksar, Aden. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) was struck twice, once by a mortar in Basateen and again by an airstrike in Harad.

The UN rights office is also acutely worried about increasing attacks against places of worship, pointing to the targeting of five Zaydi mosques with car bombs over the past few weeks as an alarming trend to create sectarian divisions.

“Since 17 June, there has been further destruction of civilian infrastructure, with at least 36 buildings, including hospitals, schools, court houses, power generation facilities and communications institutions partially or totally damaged in the governorates of Sana'a, Aden, Taiz, Al-Jawf, Al-Mahwit, and Hajjah,” said Ms. Pouilly said.

Humanitarian access also remains severely constrained by the recent violence. Since the beginning of the conflict, land, air and maritime restrictions have severely reduced imports – with food and other essentials dropping significantly.

“We have also received reports of very serious constraints to humanitarian access in Aden, Al-Dhali, Taiz and Lahj, where Houthi-affiliated Popular Committees and armed forces units loyal to former President Ali Abdalla Saleh have set up checkpoints controlling entry and exit of goods.” noted Ms. Pouilly.

In addition to insecurity on the roads and blocked access to food and clean water, civilians have been imposed with movement restrictions. Yemen's healthcare system continues to deteriorate as medicine shortages, essential medical supplies and fuel have reached critical levels.

“Once again,” Ms. Pouilly stressed, “we urge all sides of the conflict to ensure that international human rights law and international humanitarian law are respected, and to ensure that all feasible measures are taken to protect civilians. International humanitarian law imposes on parties to a conflict the duty to allow and facilitate rapid and unimpeded passage of humanitarian relief for civilians in need.”

In response to a question on attacks against United Nations offices, she called on all parties to respect the inviolability of UN premises, in accordance with applicable international law protecting UN facilities, including the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and associated personnel.

At the same time, Adrian Edwards, spokesperson for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said that on Saturday, 4 July, a rocket blasted a kindergarten in Aden, killing 12 refugees.

“Since the closure of schools across Yemen at the end of May, schools and kindergartens were used to accommodate internally displaced persons. Refugees and internally displaced families were among the most vulnerable, and the UNHCR thus again called on all parties to allow unfettered access for humanitarian aid,” he said.

Mr. Edwards added that there are some 250,000 refugees in Yemen, whereas more than 46,000 persons had fled the country. At the same time, some 35,000 had crossed into Yemen from the Horn of Africa by boat since the beginning of the year.

“Clearly, there is a massive humanitarian crisis…in Yemen,” said Jens Laerke, spokesperson for the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), who said the UN’s $1.6 billion dollar appeal is only partially funded. He explained however that no cash had been taken away from other operations because the Yemen relief appeal is underfunded.
UN health agency recommends taxing tobacco products to curb deadly global epidemic

7 July - Only one in 10 of people now live in countries that levy taxes of more than 75 per cent on a pack of cigarettes despite the fact that raising taxes on tobacco products is one of the most effective – and cost-effective – ways to reduce consumption of products that kill one person every 6 seconds, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said today.

"Too few governments levy appropriate levels of tax on cigarettes and other tobacco products," according to the WHO Report on the global tobacco epidemic 2015 launched today in Manila, Philippines. “They therefore miss out on a proven, low-cost measure to curb demand for tobacco, save lives and generate funds for stronger health services.”

The focus of this year's report, raising tobacco taxes, is one of six so-called “MPOWER” tobacco control strategies that has experienced least progress, according to a WHO the press release on the report.

According to WHO, tobacco-related illness is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced.

“Approximately one person dies from a tobacco-related disease every 6 seconds, equivalent to around 6 million people a year,” it said. “That is forecast to rise to more than 8 million people a year by 2030, unless strong measures are taken to control the epidemic.”

WHO also noted that tobacco taxation could also be a key source of funding for implementing the post-2015 sustainable development goals (SDGs), set to be agreed by UN Member States in September.

“Only one in 10 of the world's people live in the 33 countries that levy taxes of more than 75 per cent of the cigarette retail price, making it the least-implemented 'MPOWER' measure and the one with least improvement since 2007,” according to the report.

The report also noted that more than 80 per cent of countries have no tobacco taxation in place.

“Raising taxes on tobacco products is one of the most effective – and cost-effective – ways to reduce consumption of products that kill, while also generating substantial revenue,” Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General was quoted as saying. “I encourage all governments to look at the evidence, not the industry's arguments, and adopt one of the best win-win policy options available for health.”

Strategies to reduce demand to support the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, such as the 'MPOWER' package established in 2008, have helped save millions of lives in the past decade, according to the UN health agency.

MPOWER stands for: Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies; Protect people from tobacco smoke; Offer help to quit tobacco use; Warn people about the dangers of tobacco; Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; and Raise taxes on tobacco.

Tobacco use is also one of the four main risk factors behind the global epidemic of non-communicable diseases, primarily cancers, cardiovascular and lung diseases, and diabetes. In 2012, these diseases killed 16 million people prematurely before the age of 70 years, with more than 80 per cent occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

According to Dr. Douglas Bettcher, Director of WHO's Department for the Prevention of Non-communicable Diseases: “Evidence from countries such as China and France shows that higher tobacco product prices linked to increased taxes lead to declines in smoking prevalence and tobacco-related harm, such as lung cancer deaths.”
Education 'essential to vision of a life of dignity for all,' says Ban at Norway summit

7 July - The Oslo Summit on Education for Development is a chance to reaffirm the human right to education, an opportunity to mobilize political commitment, and “our moment” to galvanize international support for education, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon declared today in Norway, where he has been attending a number of high-level events over the past two days.

“We are here to secure commitments to deliver on the promises of the sustainable development agenda. Education is essential to its vision of a life of dignity for all,” the Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said, noting that the Summit is being held just six days before the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which will take place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Thanking Norway for its support to his Global Education First Initiative, Mr. Ban particularly welcomed the announcement made today of the establishment of a commission on financing of global education whose five convenors are Norway, Chile, Indonesia, Malawi, as well as the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“The Commission should provide vital insights into the economic case for investment in education – and recommendations on how we can achieve our goals.”

The Secretary-General paid tribute to Indian children's rights advocate Kailash Satyarthi, and Pakistani activist for female education Malala Yousafzai – both Nobel laureates and attendees at the Summit – saying that “the fight for education demands a fight against child labour and child trafficking” and that “there is no more powerful force against violent extremism than a girl with a book.”

He reminded the participants that the first woman ever to address the UN General Assembly was a teacher from Norway named Frieda Dalen, who, during World War II, headed a secret society of teachers against the Nazis.

“When the war ended, Norway sent her to the brand-new United Nations. She pointed out that women suffered and resisted during the war – and the world could not afford to leave them out of building peace. This Norwegian teacher knew what Malala shows today – it takes courage to achieve justice. And we will never achieve justice until women have equal rights.”

Welcoming this Summit's focus on girls, on emergencies, on the quality of education, and on investments, he called for a push for a “bold set” of sustainable development goals to be adopted in New York this September.

“But to turn promises into action, we have to mobilize resources. And we need to increase funding to achieve universal education. And at the same time, we need to improve the coordination of financing.

The UN chief seized that opportunity to share his concerns regarding ongoing crises in the world, such as in Yemen, Syria, Iraq, Sudan, South Sudan, the Central African Republic, Libya, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and beyond, which have left tens of millions of children and youth out of school.

“I will never forget the Japanese students I met after the Fukushima disaster, or the girls in their rebuilt school in Gaza, or others in places where school is an island of peace in a sea of chaos. Children and young people struggling in emergencies are more than victims – they are seeds of future progress. Education is the soil to help them grow into global citizens who can contribute to our common future.”

In the margins of the Oslo Summit, the Secretary-General met today with Gordon Brown, the UN Special Envoy for Global Education, who will lead the Commission on Financing Global Education. Both men noted the potential role that philanthropists could play in that regard.
They also discussed the huge challenges faced by the humanitarian system and underlined the importance of ensuring the education of children living in emergencies.

Mr. Ban also met with Julia Gillard, Chair of Board of Directors of the Global Partnership for Education (GPE). They agreed on the “critical” need for consistent and streamlined resources for education, to address the educational gap of a growing number of refugees and displaced populations throughout the world.

**Development financing conference to agree 'concrete' action on social protection, aid delivery – UN official**

7 July - The senior United Nations official who will act as head of the upcoming Third International Conference of Financing for Development, to be held in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, announced today that among the meeting's “concrete deliverables” would be a commitment to establish a new technology bank for the least developed countries by 2017.

“The Third International Conference on Financing for Development next week will be the first of three major global events taking place this year, followed by the September summit in New York for the adoption of a new set of sustainable development goals (SDGs) and a conference in Paris in December to reach a universal climate change agreement,” said Wu Hongbo, who is the UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

“These…events will shape international cooperation for years to come,” Mr. Wu told reporters at UN Headquarters in New York, and the conference, which will run from 13 to 16 July, will set a framework for financing sustainable development over the next 15 years.

Noting that the Addis Ababa conference will be held at the “highest political level,” he said about 30 Heads of State and Government, and Deputy Prime Ministers will be attending, together with more than 110 Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs and Development Cooperation.

In addition, he said, approximately 1,000 representatives from civil society and the business sector are expected to be in Addis for the conference.

Mr. Wu said the outcome of the conference will be a comprehensive package in support of the SDGs to be adopted in September.

“The framework will be ambitious and universally inclusive,” he said. “No one should be left behind.”

While UN Member States are still completing negotiations on the outcome document, it will address all three dimensions of sustainable development, cover all sources of development finance – public, private, domestic, international – and strengthen policy environments at national and international levels, he said.

“Taxation and aid feature prominently in the draft outcome document,” according to Mr. Wu, who will be the Secretary-General of the Addis Ababa conference. “In addition, all States see the importance of technology, innovation and capacity building.”

“In terms of concrete deliverables,” he said, the draft 'action agenda' thus far calls for a new social compact between governments and their people to deliver social protection and essential public services for all, including health, education, energy, water and sanitation.

“It also includes a package of proposals for least developed countries, including deliver increased aid, steps to amplify foreign direct investments, and a commitment to establish a new technology bank for the LDCs [least developed countries] by 2017,” he said, adding that the draft outcome includes the establishment of a Technology Facilitation Mechanism to help facilitate development, transfer and dissemination of relevant technologies for the SDGs.
Mr. Wu also told reporters of the importance of coming up with a “useful” basket of policy recommendations for governments from which to choose and for which to be able to mobilize financing.

And the agreement to be adopted in Addis Ababa needs a strong accountability and follow-up mechanism, he added.

**After Ebola outbreak missteps, WHO must re-establish itself as 'guardian of global public health' – review panel**

7 July - The United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) has welcomed the report issued today by a panel of experts tasked to look into the agency’s response to the unprecedented 2014 Ebola outbreak, which said that WHO needs to re-establish its pre-eminence as the guardian of global public health and that this will require it to make significant changes throughout, with strong political and financial support from Member States.

“The Panel firmly believes that this is a defining moment not only for WHO and the global health emergency response but also for the governance of the entire global health system,” said the Report of the Ebola Interim Assessment Panel released today. “The challenges raised in this report are critical to the delivery of the proposed Sustainable Development Goals, especially Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all age.”

At WHO Executive Board's special session on Ebola in January 2015, Member States adopted a resolution calling for an assessment by a panel of independent experts on all aspects of WHO's response in the Ebola outbreak, which affected more than 27,500 people, including over 11,000 deaths, mostly in West Africa. In response to the resolution, WHO Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan established a panel to undertake this work.

WHO welcomed the report and outlined its initial efforts towards implementation of recommendations that examined: the International Health Regulations; WHO's health emergency response capacity; and WHO's role and cooperation with the wider health and humanitarian systems.

On the first category they looked into, the experts concluded that “the Ebola crisis not only exposed organizational failings in the functioning of WHO, but it also demonstrated shortcomings in the International Health Regulations (2005).”

“If the world is to successfully manage the health threats, especially infectious diseases that can affect us all, then the Regulations need to be strengthened,” the panel said. “Had the recommendations for revision made in 2011 by the Review Committee in relation to Pandemic (H1N1) 2009 been implemented, the global community would have been in a far better position to face the Ebola crisis.”

“The world simply cannot afford another period of inaction until the next health crisis,” it said.

On WHO's emergency response capacity, “having reviewed all the options, the Panel has concluded that WHO should be the lead health emergency response agency,” but “his requires that a number of organizational and financial issues be addressed urgently,” the report said.

Currently, less than 25% of WHO's Programme budget comes from assessed contributions (and the remainder from voluntary funds) and “there are no core funds for emergency response,” it said.

“At the 2016 Executive Board and World Health Assembly meetings, Member States should reconsider moving from the policy of zero nominal growth to increase assessed contributions by 5 per cent,” the panel recommended.

And “in order to ensure delivery of effective preparedness and response capacity, Member States and partners should contribute immediately to the contingency fund in support of outbreak response, with a target capitalization of $100 million fully funded by voluntary contributions,” it said.
On WHO's role and cooperation with the wider health and humanitarian systems, the panel concluded that during the Ebola crisis, the engagement of the wider humanitarian system came very late in the response.

“The Panel was surprised that many donors, governments, the United Nations and international non-governmental organizations understood only either the health emergency or the humanitarian system,” it said.

The experts noted that it was clear that by September 2014 it was essential that highly visible action be taken to generate political and financial support from the global community, but “while the UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response (UNMEER) catalysed this high-level political and financial support, it was less successful in coordinating the effort in affected countries.”

The panel concluded that the UN “Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and other United Nations agencies should have been engaged more strongly and earlier in the crisis.”

It also recommended that the Secretary-General should consider – when a crisis escalates to a point where it poses a high-level global health threat requiring greater political and financial engagement – the appointment of a Special Representative or a Special Envoy with a political/strategic role to provide greater political and financial engagement, but “would not recommend the establishment of a full United Nations mission.”

In a statement issued in response to the Panel's conclusions, WHO said that next month, Dr. Chan will convene a Review Committee of the International Health Regulations, where Member States can discuss the recommendations of the panel, including the idea of establishing an intermediate level of alert to sound an alarm earlier than a full Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

As for WHO's health emergency response capacity, the agency said that it is already moving forward on some of the panel's recommendations including the development of the global health emergency workforce and the contingency fund to ensure the necessary resources are available to mount an initial response.

Going forward, WHO says the current Ebola outbreak is still ongoing and improved methods of working are incorporated into the response as they are developed. “But it will take many more months of continued hard work to end the outbreak and to prevent it from spreading to other countries.”

South Sudan: UN Mission deprecates killing of civilian in Organization compound

7 July - The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) has condemned “in the strongest terms” the fatal shooting of an internally displaced person (IDP) at one of its 'protection-of-civilians' sites – the second attack of its kind to strike the African nation and the Organization in less than a week.

According to a press release issued by the Mission earlier today, UN personnel serving at the Organization's compound in Bentiu responded to a gunshot on the evening of 5 July only to find the body of a male IDP fatally wounded in the back.

UNMISS explained that according to eyewitness accounts two armed men in military uniforms were seen inside the 'protection-of-civilians' site and fled into the surrounding bush following the attack.

“Any attack on a protection-of-civilians site constitutes a direct assault against the United Nations and may constitute a war crime,” the Mission declared in its condemnation of the attack.

“This is not the first time that an UNMISS protection-of-civilians site has come under attack by armed elements in South Sudan, and such indefensible actions will compromise the Mission's ability to implement its mandate if they continue to go unpunished.”
The killing, in fact, follows the shooting death of one internally displaced person (IDP) and the injuring of six others at another UN compound in Malakal early last week.

In that specific incident, however, three members of forces belonging to either the Sudan People's Liberation Army In Opposition or the allied militia led by General Johnson Olony were identified as having opened fire on IDPs at the recently inaugurated 'protection-of-civilians' site.

The 5 July shooting is just the latest outburst of violence to afflict South Sudan as the country's 18-month conflict continues to smoulder amid brutal violence against civilians and deepening suffering across the country.

Some 120,000 South Sudanese are sheltered in UN compounds while United Nations estimates suggest that the number of people in need for 2015 will include an anticipated 1.95 million IDPs and a projected 293,000 refugees.

Meanwhile, the country is also being threatened by a cholera outbreak amid mounting reports of contagion throughout the capital, Juba, and the nearby city of Bor.

“It's a race against time to prevent the spread of cholera up the river Nile, especially during rainy season,” Jonathan Veitch, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Representative in South Sudan confirmed in a press release. “Our priority right now is reaching the most vulnerable children who urgently need clean water and vaccinations.”

UNICEF has reported more than 700 cholera cases in Juba and Bor so far and 32 deaths – one in five of which are children under the age of five.

In South Sudan's Central Equatoria state, where the epicentre of the outbreak is located, students and teachers in schools near cholera hotspots have invited UNICEF to make school visits to raise awareness of the main risk factors. According to the UN agency, some 1,340 students and 30 teachers have already benefited from life-saving information, with a goal of reaching 150 schools.

In addition, UNICEF is also working to strengthen health facilities, distribute soap to communities, conduct vaccination campaigns in crowded 'protection-of-civilians' sites and raise awareness in vulnerable communities about prevention and early detection by training volunteers, teachers and religious leaders.

“Cholera is a deadly disease that inordinately affects young children,” continued Mr. Veitch. “One of the most powerful ways we can respond to this outbreak is by equipping school-children with the information and tools they need to protect themselves and their families.”

UN rights chief concerned by 'broad scope' of China's new security law

7 July - The top United Nations human rights official today expressed deep concern about the human rights implications regarding the scope of a new law on national security adopted by China on 1 July.

“This law raises many concerns due to its extraordinarily broad scope coupled with the vagueness of its terminology and definitions,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein in a press statement.

“As a result, it leaves the door wide open to further restrictions of the rights and freedoms of Chinese citizens, and to even tighter control of civil society by the Chinese authorities than there is already.”

The new legislation covers a large spectrum of issues and defines the meaning of national security extremely broadly, stressed UNHCR: it is described as the condition in which the country's government, sovereignty, unification, territorial integrity, well-being of its people, sustainable development of its economy and society and other major interests are
“relatively safe and not subject to internal and external threats.”

“The law should clearly and narrowly define what constitutes a threat to national security, and identify proper mechanisms to address such threats in a proportionate manner,” Mr. Zeid said, adding that, by doing so, individuals will be enabled to foresee the consequences of their conduct, as well as to safeguard against arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement by authorities.

For instance, articles in the law envisage the mobilisation of citizens to guard against and report on security threats to the authorities, but the type of conduct that is considered to be a danger to national security is not defined, conferring broad discretion and leaving potential for abuse.

The law also states that individuals and organizations must not act to endanger national security neither provide any kind of support or assistance to individuals or organizations endangering national security, without specifying the precise scope of any of these terms.

Welcoming the fact that the new security law makes specific references to the Constitution, to the rule of law and to the respect and protection of human rights, Mr. Zeid said he is concerned about the lack of independent oversight.

“States have an obligation to protect persons under their jurisdiction – but they also have an obligation to guarantee respect for their human rights. Restrictions on the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly need to serve a legitimate aim [and] be necessary and proportionate, and there should be independent oversight of the Executive,” the High Commissioner said.

Mr. Zeid also noted that China's National People's Congress will in the near future also consider laws on the regulation of foreign NGOs operating in China and on counter-terrorism.

“I regret that more and more Governments around the world are using national security measures to restrict the rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly, and also as a tool to target human rights defenders and silence critics,” he said. “Security and human rights do not contradict each other. On the contrary they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. Respect for human rights and public participation are key to ensuring rule of law and national security.”