Confronting conflicts, disasters, UN launches largest ever humanitarian appeal at $20.1 billion

7 December - Warning that global suffering has reached levels not seen in a generation, the United Nations and its partners today launched their largest ever humanitarian appeal, calling for 20.1 billion life-saving dollars for 2016, even as the 2015 appeal posts the largest funding gap on record – $10.2 billion.

“Conflicts and disasters have driven millions of children, women and men to the edge of survival. They desperately need our help,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Stephen O’Brien said as he launched the Global Humanitarian Overview 2016 in Geneva, calling the outlook for next year grim.

The amount of the appeal, five times that of a decade ago, even tops the revised total appeal for 2015 of $19.9 billion, for which international donors have provided only $9.7 billion, just 49 per cent. The new appeal seeks to deliver life-saving aid to over 87.6 million people across 37 countries, most of which are in conflict.

The “brutal, extended” conflicts in Syria, Iraq, South Sudan and Yemen will remain among the greatest drivers of prolonged humanitarian needs in 2016, fuelling new displacement within countries and across borders, the appeal said.

Worldwide, the number of people forced to flee their homes has already reached 60 million, a level previously unknown in the post-World War II era, half of them children.
“UN agencies and our partners are committed to do everything we can to respond quickly and effectively to the urgent needs of affected people, families, and communities,” said Mr. O’Brien, who heads the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). “They count on us all today for their tomorrow. I urge the international community to respond generously again to our call for funding to allow us to do the job.”

The appeal is the culmination of a global effort in which hundreds of organizations delivering food, shelter, medicine, protection, emergency education and other basic assistance to people in conflict- and disaster-affected regions come together to assess needs, decide response strategies and present their plans to donors.

“Mass movement of people, be it refugees or people fleeing within their own countries, has become the new defining reality of the 21st century,” UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres told the launching ceremony.

“The international humanitarian system is all too often the only safety net that exists for people fleeing wars. It has to be funded on a scale that’s realistic and commensurate with today’s immense challenges. It is clear that with the present level of resources, we are not able to provide even the very minimum in both core protection and life-saving assistance.”

UN World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr. Margaret Chan stressed the disastrous effects conflict and natural disasters are having on global health.

“The number of people now affected by conflicts and other crises is unprecedented, with an unprecedented impact on their health,” she said. “WHO and its partners are committed to ensuring that everyone - especially women and children – get the health care they desperately need. But we urgently require more funding in order to do so.”

In a foreword to the appeal, Mr. O’Brien gave an overview of the conflicts wracking the world from Syria and Yemen to Ukraine and Nigeria.

“The level of violence is unspeakable,” he wrote. “Millions of people are trapped in conflict zones and subjected to flagrant human rights abuses.”

Looking ahead, he said humanitarian needs are expected to increase, especially as the ongoing El Niño weather pattern is already causing severe hardship in East Africa, notably in Ethiopia, where some 10 million people currently need food aid, and in Central America where one of the most severe droughts on record disrupted agricultural production, putting 2.8 million people in need of immediate food assistance, health care and livelihood support.

“We count on your usual generous support for our work to meet these urgent life-saving needs and restore dignity and humanity to millions of people,” he concluded.

The appeal’s Executive Summary stressed that addressing underfunding requires a range of measures, including adjusting the approach to protracted crises and disasters, leveraging diverse funding sources, using the right mix of financial instruments for each situation and investing more in preparedness.

“Faced with ever-growing needs, we rely on the international community, Governments and the public to give their support and resources – financially and in kind – to allow us to continue humanitarian action,” it concluded. “Our shared aims are to end suffering, meet the immediate needs of crisis-affected people, keep them safe from harm and enable them to live in dignity.”
COP21: saving energy ‘triple win,’ Ban says, as $5-billion Africa plan launched at climate summit

7 December - The United Nations and partners launched a $5 billion initiative to expand renewable energy capacity in Africa today as Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon told the UN climate change conference (COP21) in Paris that saving energy is a triple-win in the battle against global warming.

“The production and use of energy is responsible for more than half of the world’s total greenhouse gas emissions. That means energy is also more than half of the solution. We need sustainable energy to reduce global greenhouse emissions and avert the risks of runaway climate change,” he said, stressing that clean energy is equally important for ending extreme poverty.

“Saving energy is a triple-win solution. It can save money, reduce emissions, and provide additional energy capacity,” he added, noting that renewable energy technologies are becoming cheaper and more competitive, with many people accessing energy for the first time thanks to solar panels, wind turbines or small hydro power plant.

“But, to replicate this experience for billions more people, we will need finance,” he declared.

“Let us build on these bold initiatives. A global energy transformation must reduce heat-trapping emissions. It also needs to ensure that we leave no one behind. Those things can only be achieved if we tackle the issues of energy access, energy efficiency, and renewable energy together as a trinity.”

COP21 held a thematic day on energy today, with the Sustainable Energy for All initiative (SE4All), a multi-stakeholder partnership backed by the UN and World Bank, urging Governments, businesses and financial institutions to act much faster and go much further to meet the ambitious goals of ensuring sustainable energy for all while keeping the global temperature rise within 2 degrees Celsius.

SE4All is acting as a catalyst for a huge global movement for revolutionary change in the world’s energy systems, helping to build working alliances across the public sector, private sector and civil society and foster innovative policies, technologies and financing mechanisms.

Any rise of more than two degrees above pre-industrial levels by 2050 will have an ever more dangerous impact on planet Earth with devastating droughts, floods and storms, and rising seas swallowing up ever more low-lying land.

The Africa Renewable Energy Initiative to expand renewable capacity by 2020 and achieve universal access was just one of several launched today.

The Initiative is led by the African Union’s NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa’s Development) the African Group of Negotiators, the African Development Bank, the UN Environment Program (UNEP), and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA).

At least $5 billion in public and highly concessional finance between 2016 and 2020 from bilateral, multilateral and other sources, including the Green Climate Fund, will be needed to leverage a further $15 billion in other investments, for a total investment of at least $20 billion pre-2020.

Other initiatives launched today included efforts to improve access to electricity and energy efficiency, and promote renewable energy.
Hundreds of Governments, businesses and financial institutions pledged major action on energy efficiency, recognizing it as the basis of the energy transition.

More than 100 banks and a group of investors, managing close to $4 trillion in assets, committed to a major increase in energy efficiency lending in their portfolios. Led by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the UNEP Finance Initiative, this is a major undertaking toward the four-fold increase needed to realize the full energy efficiency potential for climate change.

**Yemen: peace talks to start next week among warring parties, regional actors, says UN envoy**

7 December - After several weeks of intensive consultations with the warring parties in Yemen, as well as with regional and international players, the United Nations Special Envoy for the country today announced that the parties have agreed to open on 15 December in Switzerland, a series of talks aimed at establishing a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.

“We strongly believe that the only way to end the suffering of the Yemeni people and to rebuild confidence, trust, and mutual respect is through peaceful and inclusive dialogue,” the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, told reporters in Geneva.

The Special Envoy said that both the Government of Yemen, the Houthis and other relevant parties have committed to participate in the talks, which he will chair and will also include eight negotiators and four advisors for each delegation. The talks are also set to secure improvements in the humanitarian situation and a return to a peaceful and orderly political transition.

He added that the aim is to develop a plan for the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, including a measure adopted in April 2015 which demanded that all parties, in particular the Houthis, immediately and unconditionally end violence and refrain from further unilateral actions that threatened the political transition.

According to the Special Envoy, implementing the relevant texts will bring the country back to a peaceful and orderly transition based on the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Initiative and the outcomes of the national dialogue.

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed thanked all the participating stakeholders of the discussions for their conciliatory and courageous attitude and their commitment to bring a lasting peace to Yemen, and added that he was “very optimistic” of the parties reaching a permanent ceasefire.

“I call upon the parties to engage in good faith in search of a durable political solution for Yemen which meets the legitimate aspirations of Yemeni people for peace, stability, and prosperity,” he stressed, adding that making peace requires “a lot of courage, personal sacrifice and tenacity.”

Mr. Ould Cheikh Ahmed said that he had been strongly encouraging the parties to work on confidence building measures, including implementing a ceasefire, releasing prisoners, and facilitating the delivery of humanitarian supplies that would constitute positive steps in the efforts to lessen tensions and ease the path to a peaceful settlement to the conflict in Yemen.

“On behalf of the UN Secretary General, Ban Ki-moon, I call on the parties to adhere to a ceasefire effective 15 December in order to create an environment conducive to peace talks, save lives and give hope to the Yemeni people,” the Special Envoy concluded.
Amid ‘relentless’ violence and destruction in Syria, UN deputy relief chief urges greater civilian protection

7 December - Against the backdrop of devastating attacks on health facilities resulting in the deaths of countless health workers along with their patients in Syria, UN Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs Kyung-wha Kang today called for greater protection and assistance for Syrians caught up in the country’s four-year conflict.

“The violence and destruction is relentless, exacting a terrible toll on women and girls, men and boys,” Ms. Kang said following a five-day visit to Jordan and Turkey, where she met with Syrian refugee families. “Parties to the conflict show little regard for the basic norms of warfare,” she added.

More than four million Syrians have fled across borders in search of safety, while over 6.5 million others who are internally displaced have had to struggle to survive under extremely dire conditions.

Ms. Kang expressed concern over the fate of refugees stranded at the border between Jordan and Syria, but conveyed the hope that a swift solution can be found as winter approaches, through the close collaboration forged between the Jordanian Government and the United Nations.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), she also visited the town of Bab al Salama to see first-hand cross-border relief operations. While there, she head reports on the recent spike in airstrikes and ground fighting near the northern border, which has impacted communities across northern Syria, forcing them to flee, many for the third or fourth time.

Airstrikes are taking place where civilian infrastructure has already been severely damaged. In particular, health facilities have been routinely hit by aerial bombing, OCHA stated.

“There have been repeated devastating attacks on health facilities, and countless health workers have been killed or injured along with their patients. Alleviating human suffering – the core of humanity – is at stake,” said Ms. Kang.

“The recent Vienna talks and the follow-up represent an opportunity for a new chapter in Syria. I urge all parties to the conflict to stop the war and secure peace for families who yearn to return home and rebuild their live,” she stressed.

She expressed appreciation for the generosity and hospitality of the Turkish and Jordanian authorities and their people, who refer to Syrian refugees as their brothers and sisters, while urging them to keep the borders open for families fleeing the conflict.
Desperate farm families in eastern Ukraine forced into ‘difficult choices’ to survive – UN agency

7 December - The absence of financial, physical, social and human resources has left some 700,000 farm households extremely vulnerable in conflict-torn eastern Ukraine, the results of a United Nations Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) household survey revealed today, and also warned of food insecurity among those families due to “skyrocketing” commodity prices.

Painting “a bleak picture” for small-scale farming families in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions, the FAO survey noted that to cope with the dire circumstances, people are skipping meals, migrating to find work, borrowing to pay for necessities, selling household goods and vehicles, killing their livestock for lack of feed, and even planting less for lack of seed and fertilizer.

“Family farms in the conflict area have shown resilience in the face of very difficult conditions, but this cannot last,” said Farrukh Toirov, FAO emergency response coordinator in Ukraine, stressing that while “difficult choices” may make sense in the short term, “it means we can expect to see consequences.”

The FAO household survey also warned of “skyrocketing” prices for animal feed and agricultural inputs such as seed, fertilizer and tools, among others.

“We believe there is a significant and urgent need to support the subsistence production needs of the affected populations and stabilize their agricultural activities,” said Vladimir Rakhmanin, FAO Assistant Director-General and Regional Representative for Europe and Central Asia.

FAO has carried out the timely distribution of potato seed, animal feed, and live broiler-layer chickens to needy farm households in eastern Ukraine. Meanwhile, the agency is boosting operations to reach more families and enabling them to continue production.

Immediate-term solutions to tackle food insecurity such as providing agricultural inputs and animal feed to ensure crop and livestock production are recommended in the report.

The majority of survey respondents produce crops for their own consumption. While there is a growing trend of migration, the capacity to self-sufficiency is declining for those remain on the land, according to the survey.

“People should not become dependent on food hand-outs in a land that can produce most of the population's food needs,” said Mr. Rakhmanin.

In late February 2014, the situation in Ukraine transcended what was initially seen as an internal Ukrainian political crisis into violent clashes in parts of the country, later reaching full-scale conflict in the east. Nevertheless, despite a September 2014 ceasefire agreed in Minsk, the situation has since deteriorated, with serious consequences for the country’s unity, territorial integrity and stability.
On world Civil Aviation Day, UN agency calls for safer skies, more efficient procedures

7 December - With global air transport doubling in flight and passenger volumes every 15 years, the United Nations aviation agency today called for enhanced safety and efficiency to rule the world's skies.

“The air transport sector today stands on the cusp of a very important era in the history of international civil aviation,” UN International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council President Olumuyiwa Benard Aliu and ICAO Secretary General Fang Liu said in a joint statement on annual International Civil Aviation Day.

“The commitments and actions on behalf of world States and organizations toward modernized and expanded civil aviation infrastructure and capacities have never been more important.

“Under its 'No Country Left Behind' programme, ICAO is working with great determination today to raise global awareness on the fundamental importance of the effective implementation of ICAO Standards and Policies, which together support the enhanced safety, efficiency, security, economic development and environmental protection of the international aviation system.

“This is the most important and urgently required first step which must be undertaken if a State or Region hopes to improve its ability to access and realize the significant socio-economic benefits which derive from the availability of safe and reliable air services.”

The Montreal-based agency works with 191 Member States and industry groups to reach consensus on international standards, practices and policies for a safe, efficient, secure, economically sustainable and environmentally responsible civil aviation sector, ensuring that ICAO Member States' local civil aviation operations and regulations conform to global norms.

This in turn permits more than 100,000 daily flights in civil aviation's global network to operate safely and reliably in every region of the world.

The ICAO Council has selected a new theme for International Civil Aviation Day for the years 2015-2018 inclusive: Working Together to Ensure No Country is Left Behind.

COP21: 'We have the unique opportunity to define our own destiny,’ Ban tells UN climate summit

7 December - Calling climate change a defining issue of our time, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today told top government officials that the opportunity exists “to define our own destiny” at the UN climate change conference (COP21) in Paris.

“In rising to the climate challenge, we can set the world on a sustainable footing for generations to come, and lay the foundation for prosperity and security for all,” he said at a High-Level ministerial segment one week into COP21, which kicked off at the Paris-Le Bourget site last Monday in the north-east of the French capital.

Today, the second week of negotiations begins, with the aim of reaching a new universal climate agreement to limit global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius.

“A week ago, 150 world leaders stood here and pledged their full support for a robust global climate agreement that is equal to the test we face,” Mr. Ban recalled. “Never before have so many Heads of State and Government gathered in one place at
one time with one common purpose.”

The UN chief underlined that leaders have assured him they will work to remove any roadblocks.

“They have called for strong ambition and re-affirmed their support for curbing greenhouse gas emissions and strengthening resilience to changes to come,” he stressed, calling on leaders to translate “this historic call for action into a durable, dynamic, credible and fair climate agreement.”

Noting that outside the negotiating halls there is a “rising global tide for a strong, universal agreement,” he voiced what the people of the world expect from those working towards its achievement.

“First, we need an agreement that will limit temperature rise to less than 2 degrees Celsius. For many, including low-lying and least developed countries, even a 1.5 degree rise will have grave consequences,” he insisted.

“Second, the private sector needs a clear signal that the low-emissions transformation of the global economy is inevitable, beneficial and already under way. Third, developed countries must agree to lead, and developing countries need to assume increasing responsibility in line with their capabilities. Fourth, the agreement must ensure sufficient, balanced adaptation and mitigation support for developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable.”

Finally, he said the agreement must provide a single framework for measuring, monitoring and reporting progress in a transparent manner.

“The decisions you make here will reverberate down through the ages,” he declared.

The Secretary-General also recounted a conversation he had with a young Norwegian explorer yesterday, named Erika. While visiting the Tara research vessel currently banked on the Seine, she told him: “We are the future. Your decisions today will be our future.”

Meanwhile, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate (UNFCCC), Christiana Figueres, also spoke of the groundswell of climate action being highlighted in a plethora of activities during the first week of COP21 under the Lima to Paris Action Agenda.

“Commitments have given way to real action on the part of investors, corporations, provincial and city governments, and from civil society as a whole,” she said.

Sharing his remarks at the High-Level ministerial segment, Mogens Lykketoft, President of the UN General Assembly, said that whilst the year 2015 was all about reaching agreements, the year 2016 would be about their swift implementation. He announced he will be organizing an event in New York in April to help realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) unanimously agreed this year by all UN Member States.

However, Mr. Lykketoft cautioned that a robust universal climate agreement in Paris is an essential foundation for the world to avoid crossing the threshold of a maximum two degrees Celsius global average temperature rise.

“Without your leadership, no amount of collaborative initiatives will suffice,” he warned.

Speaking at a press conference later in the day, Mr. Ban said that “from Lagos to Los Angeles, from Berlin to Beijing, people are asking for clean air and a peaceful, prosperous future for their children and succeeding generations, and also for a healthy planet.”

“We are on the verge of one of the most important peace agreements of our times – making peace with our planet,” he told reporters.
Libya: UN envoy urges endorsement of political agreement as way forward for ‘peace in unity’

7 December - The top United Nations official in Libya has emphasized that the political agreement reached after wide consultations among Libyan parties and facilitated by the UN for more than a year, is the basis to end the North African country’s conflict.

“The country needs peace in unity, it is divided now,” Special Representative of the Secretary-General and head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Martin Kobler told Aljazeera International on 6 December.

The Agreement is supported by the majorities of both House of Representatives and the General National Congress.

According to UNMSIL, Mr. Kobler urged even those who still opposed the Agreement to support it as an opening to unite the country, fight the scourge of terrorism and address the deteriorating economic situation in Libya.

“It is now time for a rapid endorsement of the Libyan Political Agreement. The train has left the station,” said the UN envoy.

An upcoming global conference in Rome aimed to unify Libya will be co-chaired by Italy, the United States and the UN and server as an opportunity to demonstrate the determination of the international community on the way forward on the basis of the Political Agreement.

Libya has been plagued by factional fighting since the 2011 revolution, with the situation continuing to deteriorate in recent months amid significant political fragmentation and violence.

Following broad consultations facilitated by the Secretary-General’s former Special Representative for Libya, Bernardino León, it was announced in mid-October that a national unity government could be proposed. The names of candidates for the government's top council were put forward but the deal stalled when some parties failed to sign off.

Latin America faces huge task to reverse discrimination against Afro-descendants – UN rights chief

7 December - The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, saying he was struck by the “enormity of the task” over the next decade to reverse five centuries of discrimination against the 150 million people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean, has urged the region to draw on “the untapped potential in hitherto invisible communities.”

The top UN human rights official made those remarks in a speech to the first Meeting of Latin America and the Caribbean on the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024) held in Brasilia, Brazil, last week and which bought together States, regional organizations, national human rights institutions, equality bodies and civil society, particularly those of people of African descent, as well as UN bodies from the region.

“I am struck by the enormity of the task before us,” Mr. Zeid said.
“Ten years to reverse five centuries of structural discrimination? Racial discrimination that has deep roots grown in colonialism and slavery and nourished daily with fear, poverty and violence, roots that aggressively infiltrate every aspect of life – from access to food and education to physical integrity, to participation in decisions that fundamentally affect one’s life,” he said.

“A decade is such a short time,” he noted.

Mr. Zeid called on States to honour their commitments and obligations under international human rights law and use all the tools at their disposal to make concrete progress in advancing the rights of Afro-descendants. The tools include international human rights treaties, the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action (DDPA) on eradicating racism and xenophobia, as well as the framework provided by the UN General Assembly for the International Decade. The themes for the Decade are: Recognition, Justice and Development.

“Today, there are more than 150 million people of African descent in Latin America and the Caribbean – about 30 per cent of the population. Yet Afro-descendants throughout much of the region are almost invisible in the halls of power – economic, academic, professional or political, at local or national levels. High rates of inequality persist,” he said.

At the end of the meeting on Friday, the delegates adopted a declaration which recalls the UN General Assembly’s Programme of Activities of the International Decade and reaffirms their commitment to the full implementation of the Durban Declaration at national, regional and global levels.

States also pledged to adopt affirmative action policies to alleviate and remedy inequalities in the enjoyment of human rights in access to education and employment, in line with the particularities of each country.

“Let us seize this chance to tap the untapped potential in hitherto invisible communities. Let us pledge to use these 10 years to turn a corner,” the High Commissioner said.

**UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador Katy Perry calls for action on climate change in a special weather report**

7 December - In an exclusive recording launched today as world leaders gather in Paris, France, for the high-level segment of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21), UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Goodwill Ambassador and global pop star Katy Perry read a unique weather report to draw attention to the devastating effects of the phenomenon on the world’s children.

“Droughts, floods, heatwaves and other severe weather conditions are putting children at an increased risk of disease and malnutrition, as well as destroying their families’ homes and livelihoods. The worst part about this is that some of the youngest and most vulnerable citizens of our world are bearing the most unfair burden of climate change,” said Ms. Perry in a news release issued by UNICEF.

In her weather report, Ms. Perry highlighted the extreme weather patterns that are emerging across the world and forcing millions of children and families to flee their homes.

According to a major report launched by UNICEF in November, over half a billion children live in areas with extremely high flood occurrence and 160 million live in high drought severity areas.

The report also revealed that of the 530 million children in flood-prone zones, some 300 million are in countries where more than half the population lives in poverty, surviving on less than $3.10 a day; and of those living in high drought severity areas, 50 million are in countries where more than half the population lives in poverty.

UNICEF stressed that climate change means more droughts, floods, heatwaves and other severe weather conditions, which can cause death and devastation, and can also contribute to the increased spread of major killers of children, such as
malnutrition, malaria and diarrhoea.

Further, the climatic activities can create a vicious circle. For example, a child deprived of adequate water and sanitation before a crisis will be more affected by a flood, drought, or severe storm, less likely to recover quickly, and at even greater risk when faced with a subsequent crisis.

In the exclusive weather report, Ms. Perry called on viewers to share their story on how they are helping reduce climate change as part of the #FightUNfair campaign.

“Let’s encourage our world leaders to take this issue seriously. [...] Together we can help change the forecast for millions of children,” said Ms. Perry, who was appointed as UNICEF Goodwill Ambassador in 2013 with a special focus on engaging young people to improve the lives of the world’s most vulnerable children and adolescents.

UN agency deploys artificial fish habitats along Somali coast to boost sustainable fishing

7 December - The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), working with the European Union has completed the deployment of 25 Fish-Aggregating Devices (FADs) – or ‘fish magnets’ – along Somalia’s 3,300 km coastline, aiming to boost the nation’s small-scale artisanal fisheries and tackle food insecurity and malnutrition to some extents by sustainable usage of the devices.

In a statement issued today, FAO explained that the devices consist of a floating buoy and so-called ‘habitat mat’ a few metres across. “Plant life quickly grows under the mat, attracting large numbers of fish – in essence creating new high - density fishing grounds where none existed before,’’ the statement said.

These ‘fish magnets’ will attract many different fish species, including tuna, that normally small – scale fishers cannot easily catch, making fishing more safe and efficient, while also encouraging fishers to switch their fishing efforts away from habitats such as coral reefs and sea grasses that are vulnerable to overfishing.

“The FADs initiative is at the heart of the work by FAO and our partners to boost coastal livelihoods, strengthen resilience, and tackle the underlying causes of piracy – illegal fishing, degradation of local fisheries, high levels of youth unemployment, and food insecurity,” said FAO representative in Somalia, Richard Trenchard.

The effort has been funded by the governments of Japan and Switzerland, while the European Union Naval Forces (EUNAVFOR) – which has a regional role in combatting piracy and monitoring fisheries – has provided critical protection and logistical support for the vessel that deployed the FADs.

According to FAO, the European Union Head of Delegation and Ambassador to Somalia, Michele Cervone d’Urso, commended the programme as a crucial addition to efforts aimed at creating employment in Somalia’s piracy-affected areas.

“This is an integrated approach to creating long-term, sustainable employment opportunities to youth and women as alternatives to piracy and migration, by developing the value chains of the fishery and livestock sector within the coastal communities of Puntland, Galmudug and Banadir where traditionally communities have combined seasonal fishing and pastoral activities,” said Mr. d’Urso.

FAO has worked with 20 communities as well as federal and regional ministries in Somalia to identify the deployment locations and ensure that the FADs would be accepted and well used.

“Just over one million people in Somalia currently face severe food insecurity, while an estimated 307,800 children under the age of five are acutely malnourished,” FAO noted, pointing to sustainable fisheries as a key element of tackling food insecurity in the country.
In addition, Mr. Trenchard explained that the devices should help kick-start further longer-term development support to these communities, most importantly, investment to strengthen market linkages.

“As well as expanding the FADs programme to other areas,” he said, “we will be working with the ministries and the fishing communities to attract further investment for ice machines, cold storage and processing facilities, improved landing sites and, of course, better roads to bring fresh fish to markets as quickly as possible.”

Related FAO activities in Somalia include boat building, fish preservation training, distribution of solar fridges, construction of jetties and the registration of fishers, much of which has been supported by generous funding from Norway and the United Kingdom. Additionally, with European Union funding.

FAO plans to launch a broader programme to stimulate further growth across the fisheries sector and further reduce the chances of piracy re-emerging in the future.

While FADs can have negative environmental impacts when used unwisely, FAO has been at the forefront of developing guidelines for their sustainable use, building on lessons learned elsewhere.

In Somalia, the FAO devices have been deployed in carefully targeted deep-water locations and are anchored to the seabed.

Further, FAO has been actively engaging with women, youth and fishers, as well as relevant authorities to develop local management best practices and agreed rules that will reduce the chance of local conflict and ensure sustainable use of each FAD. These rules are enshrined in local agreements, signed by village elders, co-op leaders as well as government ministries.

**Paying tribute to victims of Paris attacks, UN chief says ‘today, I too am Parisian’**

6 December - On the margins of the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) today, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon paid tribute to the one hundred and thirty victims of the attacks which shook Paris almost one month ago.

Alongside the mayor of the city, Anne Hidalgo, Mr. Ban placed a bouquet of flowers in front of the Bataclan concert hall, and bowed his head. Tens of bystanders applauded the gesture, chanting “merci merci, Monsieur Ban Ki-moon.”

Next, the UN chief visited “La Bonne Bière,” one of the targeted restaurants where five people lost their lives.

“Today, I too am Parisian,” said the Secretary-General sitting inside the café, with Mayor Hidalgo and other top UN officials. “I am very moved. To the families and loved ones of the five people who were killed here, and to all the victims of the barbaric attacks on 13 November, I present my sincere condolences.”

Drinking a coffee, he said Paris is a symbol of culture and of the “art of living,” and noted that the reopening of the café ten days ago is also symbol of resistance to terror.

“In this regard, the Government of France's decision to maintain the UN climate change conference shows its determination to uphold the values of the United Nations: liberty, peace, equality and justice,” he said.

Earlier today Mr. Ban continued his work related to the UN climate change conference (COP21), meeting with African environmental ministers. He reiterated his belief that “Africa has an enormous stake in the conference's success.”

“Your personal engagement and ownership are essential to securing the ambitious agreement that Africa's people and the entire world need,” he told them. “Already, your leadership has helped make 2015 a year of opportunity.”
Meanwhile, this morning on the banks of the Seine, Mr. Ban visited the Tara, a scientific exploration research vessel which travels the world sampling water and collecting plankton, one of the planet's major oxygen producers.

“For 10 years, Tara has sailed the oceans, monitoring the marine the changes in the ocean, particularly degradation of marine environment. They have been measuring and providing data to our scientific community to that we can better address climate change,” Mr. Ban told reporters.

On the Tara, the UN chief also spoke with a dozen children, who have family members working on the vessel.

“It is important that we must preserve our oceans healthy so that we can have a healthy and prosperous planet. Our planet is 70 per cent oceans. It is the basis of our life,” Mr. Ban stressed.

The Tara has been in Paris since November at the invitation of Mayor Hidalgo to raise awareness about COP21, and will remain on the Parisian banks through 18 December.

As the second and last week of the United Nations conference begins tomorrow, the UN chief also highlighted today that he is “optimistic and confident” that the world will have a universal and ambitious agreement, while urging Member States to look beyond their national boundaries.

**Afghanistan: UN mission condemns alleged shelling by national army which killed 9 civilians**

6 December - The United Nations mission in Afghanistan today condemned the recent killings of nine civilians when an explosive ordinance was fired into the village of Shahi Khil in Wardak on 4 December, allegedly by Afghan forces.

Initial reports indicate that the casualties, including four boys, killed from the impact of the shelling were fired by the Afghan National Army, according to a statement from the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), adding that the shelling injured three other persons near a mosque in the village.

The UN mission expressed its sincere condolences to the families of the victims and a speedy recovery to the injured.

According to the statement, Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani assigned a delegation to investigate the attack prompting UNAMA to urge the Government to ensure an independent, impartial and transparent investigation and that those responsible be held accountable, and to provide appropriate compensation and support to victims and their families.

“UNAMA reiterates its call for all parties to the conflict, including pro-Government forces, to cease firing explosive weapons into civilian-populated areas and urges the Government to prioritize the development and approval of a national policy on civilian casualty mitigation backed by an action plan with concrete objectives to prevent civilian casualties in the conduct of hostilities,” the statement concluded.
Chad: Ban condemns triple suicide attacks, urges region to address scourge of Boko Haram

6 December - Following the triple suicide attacks carried out on the island of Koulfoua on the Chadian side of Lake Chad yesterday, which left more than 30 dead and many more injured, the United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon condemned the brutal attacks stating that these “despicable acts demonstrate yet again the brutality of Boko Haram.”

In a statement issued by Mr. Ban's spokesperson, the UN chief reiterated his call for the countries affected by Boko Haram to address the root causes of this scourge in a holistic and integrated manner.

Mr. Ban extended his condolences to the families of the deceased and wished a speedy recovery to the injured.

“The Secretary-General reaffirms his solidarity with the people of Chad and reiterates the United Nations' support for the Government in its fight against terrorism, which must be conducted in full respect of international human rights, humanitarian and refugee law,” the statement concluded.

COP21: UN chief says ‘today is about action by all sectors of society’

5 December - As the United Nations climate change conference (COP21) marked 'Action Day' with dozens of events happening throughout its sprawling venue in the north-east of Paris, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said the purpose of the occasion was to highlight solutions the world “so urgently” needs.

“All, as never before, the stars are aligned in favour of strong, concerted action on climate change,” Mr. Ban told non-state actors and top governments officials, including French President François Hollande, in his remarks wrapping up the day.

“The pace of climate action is quickening. Governments, cities, the private sector, investors, and the public at large increasingly understand the grave risks posed by climate change,” he added, noting “tangible benefits” to be gained by early action, including economic growth, new markets, job creation, cleaner air and improved health.

Climate negotiators have been in Paris since the opening of the conference last Monday, seeking to adopt a new, universal climate change agreement, expected to set the international policy framework needed to scale up climate action by all sectors of society.

Earlier today, the Secretary-General had a busy schedule meeting with a delegation of United States' Senators on the state of the discussions so far at the conference, as well as French and international parliamentarians at the country's National Assembly, to whom he highlighted the key role they play in supporting an effective national and global response to climate change.

Prior to this, Mr. Ban attended an event focused on the Arctic, where he has been several times during his almost ten-year tenure as leader of the world body.

“[The Secretary-General] has been using his Office to remind the world that our planet is changing at an unprecedented
rate” Bob Orr, a UN Special Advisor on climate change, told the UN News Centre in an interview.

“He has been to every part of the globe that shows how quickly things are changing. At the Arctic event today, the head of the Norwegian Polar Institution noted that this past month of November, the average temperature in the Arctic was six to eight degrees centigrade above what it has traditionally been. This shows a level of change which is staggering and scary,” Mr. Orr warned.

Paying a visit to COP21 today on “Action Day” was American actor Leonardo DiCaprio, who became a UN Messenger of Peace with a special focus on climate change one year ago. The Secretary-General and Mr. DiCaprio met this afternoon and discussed the importance of acting now to protect future generations.

“Nature does not negotiate with human beings,” the UN chief told Mr. DiCaprio. “As human beings who have caused the climate change phenomenon, we just have to adapt to the Nature—we do not have any negotiating power with [it].”

In response, Mr. DiCaprio crossed his fingers and held them up. “We're all like this about Paris,” he said.

Finally, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the organizer of the conference – said “Action Day” announced the submission of a new draft agreement that will feed negotiations continuing next week.

“One more step in writing of history,” said a message tweeted by Christiana Figueres.

Power of volunteerism can help build more sustainable world, says Ban on International Day

5 December - To celebrate the power of the volunteerism, United Nations Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon is marking the International Volunteer Day by emphasizing that volunteering fosters creativity, “draws strength from our passions and connects us to those who need us most.”

“Volunteerism is a global phenomenon that transcends boundaries, religions and cultural divides,” said Mr. Ban in his message on the Day, adding that volunteers embody the fundamental values of commitment, inclusiveness, civic engagement and a sense of solidarity.

The Secretary-General recalled the volunteering spirit during the Ebola crisis in West Africa, saying: “community volunteers, international volunteers and United Nations Volunteers were crucial to the response.”

“A similar spirit of volunteerism and solidarity has been on display in addressing the current refugee crisis and this year's devastating earthquake in Nepal,” added the UN chief.

The Day has been observed on 5 December every year since 1986. This year, the newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer another opportunity for individuals to show solidarity through volunteerism.

As such, Mr. Ban called the world to contribute through volunteerism towards realizing the 2030 Agenda's vision of ending poverty.

He went on to highly commend volunteers' contributions, saying: “I thank the more than 6,300 United Nations Volunteers (UNV) and 11,000 United Nations Online Volunteers who help millions of people to make sustainable change and peace happen. I also commend and salute the one billion community volunteers worldwide.”

“As we mark International Volunteer Day,” the Secretary-General concluded, “let us strive to make the most of the power of
volunteerism to build a more sustainable world and a life of dignity for all.”

**COP21: Ban announces ‘Climate Action 2016’ partnership to maintain momentum after UN climate conference**

5 December - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon announced today at the UN climate change conference (COP21) that a broad group of organizations will partner in 2016 to maintain momentum for multi-stakeholder climate implementation.

“I am heartened by the significant and growing coalitions that are emerging to tackle the challenges of climate change and realize new opportunities,” Mr. Ban underlined at the global event taking place in Paris, on a day dubbed “Action Day.”

“I am pleased to be joined by so many key partners to scale climate action efforts and make them sustainable,” he added.

The Secretary-General, joined by groups such as the World Bank, the Global Environment Facility and the Compact of Mayors, and individuals including Michael Bloomberg – the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Cities and Climate Change – will co-sponsor a “Climate Action 2016” summit of leaders from government, business, cities and localities, civil society and academia next 5 and 6 May in Washington, D.C.

According to a press release issued by the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) – the organizer of the conference – this high-level gathering will complement ongoing implementation efforts and catalyze actionable, concrete deliverables in specific high-value areas, including: cities; land use; resilience; energy; transport; tools for decision makers; and finance.

"[The summit will] show that the things that were talked here in Paris are actually happening on the ground,” Bob Orr, a Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on climate change, told the UN News Centre in an interview.

“The number and the depth of the coalitions that are organized to deliver action on climate whether through forestry, through industry, through cities, all the different channels need to move forward as far and as fast as they can," he added. “So the Secretary-General is not only ensuring we have this robust universal agreement, but that we have the coalition in the field to deliver the goods.”

Mr. Orr noted that the meeting is taking place in the United States' capital as all the partners joining the Secretary-General at the 2016 summit agreed that Washington, D.C. is the “best stop” as it is home to a number of important international institutions and financing vehicles.

Meanwhile, the world's attention is turned towards the Paris-Le Bourget site north-east of the French capital, where government representatives have been meeting since Monday to reach a new universal climate agreement to limit global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius.