UN mission in Central African Republic on 'high alert' as armed group threatens capital

12 October - The United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) has reported that it is on "high alert" as the situation in the war-torn country remains fragile, with armed groups threatening to destabilize its capital city, Bangui.

The Mission’s update was provided by Farhan Haq, Deputy Spokesperson for the Secretary-General at the regular press briefing at UN Headquarters, who said that MINUSCA “remains on high alert to prevent any attempts of armed ex-Séléka moving towards the capital, Bangui.”

On Saturday in the Kemo prefecture, MINUSCA and Sangaris (French-led) forces confirmed the presence of approximately 150 ex-Séléka or Front Popularie pour la Renaissance de Centrafrique (FPRC),” said the Deputy Spokesperson.

“MINUSCA engaged with their leader, Nourredine Adam in Kaga Bandoro and conveyed a strong message that the International Forces would not accept any movement of the armed groups towards Bangui.”

Mr. Haq added that the Mission is “very concerned over what it calls the organized infiltration of several armed groups in Bangui and has condemned all attempts to destabilize Bangui.”
“In accordance with its mandate to protect the civilian population from the threat of physical violence, the Mission, with support from Sangaris, has used force in reaction to attacks from FPRC elements around Sibut,” continued the spokesperson.

He also noted that, “unknown persons targeted MINUSCA on two occasions on Saturday,” although no casualties were recorded.”

“MINUSCA is determined to continue to use all necessary means to protect civilians, strengthen State authority and support the political process,” he said.

The ‘ad hoc Committee on elections’ agreed on a preliminary electoral calendar for CAR, which is scheduled to be presented to the National Transitional Council next week.

MINUSCA, set up in April 2014 to help bring peace after a breakdown of governmental authority and vicious intercommunal fighting between mainly the Muslim Séléka group and the mainly Christian anti-Balaka movement, currently maintains nearly 11,000 uniformed personnel in the country, one of the world’s poorest.

‘Transformative political process’ key to resolving Syrian crisis, says UN envoy

12 October - Only a parallel, all-inclusive transformative political process that is complaint within the framework of the Geneva Communiqué, can lead to a resolution of the ongoing crisis and Syria and tackle terrorism in the region, the United Nations Special Envoy for the country said today.

“Fighting terrorist organizations listed by the Security Council resolutions are a priority, it is also true that winning […] against terrorism can only be achieved through a parallel […] all-inclusive transformative political process within the framework of the Geneva Communiqué. [Trying to resolve the crisis with] only weapons [is] not going to be enough,” said Staffan de Mistura told a press conference in Geneva.

“Let us remember that most of the refugees left Syria well before ISIS [also referred to as Da’esh or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant, ISIL] took over almost one-third of the country. In fact, they left because of the fighting between the Government and what was at that time called the mainstream opposition,” he added.

Mr. de Mistura further said that the recent Russian military intervention in Syria has introduced a “new dynamics” to the situation. He also added that he will be travelling to Moscow tonight to discuss matters further.

He also recalled proposals made by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and himself about introducing working groups and contact groups to resolve the crisis, saying “there is no sustainable military solution in sight, and I believe…this is known by all, including Russians, Americans, the Syrian Government and the regional players.”

Despite the earlier approval of his proposals by the UN Security Council, Mr. de Mistura said that on Sunday, the opposition groups decided for the time being to not be a part of the working group, “mainly due to current Russian military activities and some doubts on the outcome of the working groups.”

“I regret and however respect their decision and hope it can evolve,” said Mr. de Mistura. “Our job is to mediate. Our job is also to look for any opportunity […] to reduce suffering and increase the chances to have some serious discussions around the table,” he further noted.

In the meantime, he suggested that there is an urgent need to avoid the acceleration of militarization of the conflict.

He called for ceasing military activities by both Syrian and Russian authorities in areas surrounding Zabadani, Kefraya and Fua in order to provide humanitarian assistance and to carry out evacuation procedures.
He added that an additional 40,000 displaced Syrians are now moving out of the country in fear of the recent acceleration in military activities, further stressing on scaling back military intervention.

According to the UN, the conflict in Syria has sparked the largest humanitarian crisis since the Second World War, with 7.6 million people displaced and 3.2 million refugees created by the conflict, as well as a further 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance. Well over 200,000 people have died in the conflict, with at least 680,000 injured.

Several rounds of UN-mediated peace talks in Geneva among the parties last year ended without a settlement and the Organization has since been reiterating the need to press ahead with political negotiations to achieve the aims of the Geneva Communiqué.

That document, adopted after the first international meeting on the issue on 30 June 2012, and since endorsed by the UN Security Council, lays out key steps in a process to end the violence. Among others, it calls for the establishment of a transitional governing body, with full executive powers and made up by members of the present Government and the opposition and other groups, as part of agreed principles and guidelines for a Syrian-led political transition.

**Afghanistan: UN urges prompt investigation into murder of mission staff member**

**12 October** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is deeply troubled and saddened over today’s killing in Kandahar of Ms. Toorpaki Ulfat, a staff member of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

In a statement issued by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban urged the local authorities “to undertake a rigorous and prompt investigation into the circumstances and motives behind this killing and ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice.”

The Secretary-General extended his deepest condolences to the family of Ms. Ulfat, “a much valued colleague, staunch human rights defender and friend to many in the United Nations and across Afghanistan.”

Noting Ms. Ulfat’s five dedicated years with UNAMA, UN Special Representative in Afghanistan Nicholas Haysom issued a press statement praising the fallen staff member.

“She was not dimmed by the challenging security environment. She represented the best of what Afghan youth have to offer. Her ideals and enthusiasm were an inspiration to her colleagues and to those she helped,” said the UN envoy.

Initial reports indicated that Ms. Ulfat was killed by gunfire from unknown persons on a motorcycle.

“The motive behind this murder is to be determined, but the Mission will do all it can together with local authorities to bring the perpetrators to justice,” assured Mr. Haysom. “UNAMA is angered by this senseless killing and our thoughts are with the family of Ms. Ulfat.”

UN staff in Afghanistan work under hazardous and trying conditions to support the Afghan people in building a secure and more prosperous future. Violence carried out against its personnel constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law.

The Secretary-General reiterated the Organization’s commitment for continued support.
New UN budget proposal shows commitment to ‘strict financial management,’ says Ban

12 October - Introducing his proposed $5.5 billion budget for the work of the United Nations over the next two years, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said today that it encompasses the Organization’s “vision and commitment to budget discipline and strict financial management.”

“My proposals for the 2016-2017 programme budget are built on our progress,” Mr. Ban told delegates in the UN General Assembly’s Fifth Committee, which focuses on administrative and budgetary issues.

“In formulating the proposal before you, I continued to challenge my senior managers to find new and better ways of delivering mandates more effectively and efficiently. I urged them to rethink our business practices and embrace innovative synergies,” he added.

The UN chief explained that he had presented a budget outline level of $5.74 billion dollars to the General Assembly, which then invited him to prepare the proposed budget on the basis of a preliminary estimate of $5.56 billion.

“I am now proposing a budget level of $5.57 billion, before recosting,” he announced. “This is 1.6 per cent – or $90.8 million – below the appropriation for the current biennium, and is $10.2 million – or 0.2 per cent – above the budget outline figure set by the General Assembly.”

Mr. Ban explained that the increase of 0.2 per cent over the budget outline figure is mainly due to adjustments in light of recent General Assembly decisions on a new administrative online platform, called Umoja, which is currently been rolled out.

He also indicated that the proposal reflects a net decrease of 56 posts [job positions] compared to the current budget, primarily related to the “freezing of posts.”

The Secretary-General further underlined that with UN Member States adopting the Addis Ababa Action Agenda last July and the landmark 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September, in addition to commitments made to achieve a universal climate agreement in Paris in December, some costs haven’t been taken into account.

“My budget proposals do not yet reflect any possible financial implications required for the Organization to support Member States in achieving these goals,” Mr. Ban explained. “We are working towards the most appropriate implementation framework for the UN system and the Secretariat. As we assess financial implications arising from this framework, I will present any cost estimates to the Assembly.”

He recalled that with the end of his 10 year tenure as Secretary-General, half the executions for the budget period will have to be carried by his successor.

“I have felt a sense of responsibility to make sure that my successor, whoever it may be, will be able to carry out his or her duties smoothly and with sufficient resources,” he said. “That is my commitment, and that spirit is reflected in this programme budget.”

In conclusion, he called for collaboration to ensure that the United Nations “makes the best possible use of our resources in the service of humanity.”
UN Daily News

12 October - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today condemned the suicide attacks in Kangaleri, Cameroon, on 11 October, suspected to be carried out by Boko Haram elements.

“The Secretary-General extends his condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Cameroon. There is no justification for such indiscriminate violence and killings,” said a statement issued today by his spokesperson in New York.

“The Secretary-General reaffirms his solidarity with the people of Cameroon,” the statement further added.

Since July 2015, the Northern State of Cameroon has witnessed 15 separate suicide attacks, causing the death of scores of civilians.

Mr. Ban reiterated the support of the United Nations to the Cameroonian Government and the Lake Chad Basin countries in their fight against terrorism, grounded on international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.

Top UN refugee official thanks Greece and frontline islands for improved response to continued arrivals

12 October - During a two-day mission to Greece – the main European Union entry point for nearly 450,000 refugees and migrants so far this year – the United Nations’ most senior refugee official said he had witnessed the improved humanitarian response mounted by Greek local authorities and civil society while lamenting the continued lack of a large-scale and effective European response.

“It is amazing that on a small island, you are managing, whereas in a big Europe, with half a billion people, they are finding it so difficult,” the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, António Guterres, told Lesbos Mayor Spyros Galinos and other Greek officials.

“We are always saying this crisis is manageable at the European level, but to be manageable, it needs to be much better managed.”

The chief of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was assessing conditions on the Greek island of Lesbos, the main landing spot for tens of thousands of people taking smuggler boats from the nearby Turkish coast. He said European governments had yet to match the “gigantic effort” that the island and its people had made in trying to cope with the huge influx.

Indeed, without a Europe-wide approach and an effective strategy in dealing with the influx, Mr. Guterres warned, criminal networks would continue to thrive. “When States are not able to organize the orderly movement of refugees, smugglers take charge, exploiting people further and adding to their suffering,” he stated.

Describing his island as “frontline,” Mayor Galinos said the main issue “is not the numbers, but the lack of a European policy to respond.” Nevertheless, he said, Greeks would continue to do whatever they could to address the crisis and combat smugglers, “who not only exploit the people, but who put their lives at continuous risk.”

“Above all, we are all human beings,” the Mayor added. “We must all recognize the position of these people because we might all find ourselves in this situation one day.”
UNHCR has deployed an emergency team to Greece and now has some 120 staff in the country to support the Government in its effort to address the continuing crisis. The island of Lesbos, which according to the last census in 2011, had a population of 85,000 people, but is probably now several thousand higher, has received over 220,000 people in nine months.

UNHCR figures put the number of arrivals in September alone at 160,000, while the Greek coast guard records show 110,000 people.

According to the agency, the majority of the refugees and migrants arriving on Lesbos are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. The rest, about five per cent, are migrants and refugees from 21 countries as varied as India, Bangladesh, Togo, Niger, Columbia, Haiti and the Dominican Republic.

The Greek Coast Guard on Lesbos reportedly receives between five to 10 distress calls a day, and then sets out to rescue people in overcrowded boats.

Meanwhile, Deputy Harbour Master, Antonio Sofiadellis, a leader in the Greek Coast Guard effort that has saved between 240-400 refugee and migrant lives every day, said that more people are being packed onto the flimsy boats these days – around 60 when 50 used to be the limit.

“The engines are very cheap and the smugglers don't care that they don't know how to operate the boats,” Mr. Sofiadellis explained. “This is something no country in Europe has faced. If we weren't there to rescue them, half or more than half would drown. The boats capsize, some fold, when the floor breaks.”

Mr. Guterres also visited the north of Lesbos, where most refugee boats land. The beaches were strewn with hundreds of bright orange life jackets and deflated rubber boats, soaked shoes and pieces of clothing. Some 1,050 people had arrived overnight and volunteers helped them to an assembly point nearby, where they found food and a warm place to sleep in a large UNHCR shelter.

Some Syrian refugees he met told him they had fled directly from Aleppo, Damascus or Homs. Other Syrians said they could no longer make ends meet in neighbouring countries amid cuts in humanitarian aid and restrictions on work. Most people said they felt now was their chance to find safety in European countries where refugees were welcome.

**Peace endures when women can participate meaningfully in peace talks, says new UN report**

12 October - A new report on women, peace and security, launched today to coincide with the 15th anniversary of the landmark United Nations Security Council resolution on the issue, highlights the important gains to be made by the greater empowerment of women in peacebuilding efforts.

UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy, the lead author of the global study, introduced it at a press conference at UN Headquarters.

“Since 2000, when resolution 1325 was adopted, the UN has recognized that women’s leadership and equality are key to international peace and security,” said Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.

“This is now an accepted global norm,” she added, while noting that it had been “reiterated as many times as it has been ignored in practice.”

Introducing the new study, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka said that it represented the most up-to-date and comprehensive compilation of all the evidence that “women’s empowerment contributes to the success of peace talks,” as well accelerates economic recovery after conflict and counters violent extremism.
She also noted that, in recent years, the positive impact of women’s participation had been seen in Colombia and the Philippines, but that “these cases are still outliers rather than the norm.”

In the 15 years since the adoption of resolution 1325, she said, “progress remains far too slow,” with only 2 per cent of aid to peace and security interventions in fragile States targeting gender inequality, while just three per cent of military peacekeepers are women. In conflict-affected settings, violence against women and girls is higher, as is child marriage, while girls’ school enrolment and access to property falls.

She also commended the scope of the study, which, she said had incorporated submissions from civil society, member states, regional and international organizations, as well as country visits undertaken by the author.

Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka also referred to the UN Security Council meeting tomorrow on women, peace and security to mark the 15th anniversary of the resolution, noting this as an opportunity for the “positive stepping up of women’s empowerment and gender equality.”

In her concluding remarks, she said that evidence shows that when women are at the peace tables, their participation brings a higher rate of peace agreement, adding that “squandering the potential dividends has never been more costly.”

Ms. Coomaraswamy, the lead author of the report, underscored the importance of its independence, for which she thanked the Secretary-General, noting that there are areas not completely in line with the United Nations position on some of the issues contained within it.

She cited the report’s focus on prevention, the nature of early warning systems, armed and unarmed presences, and the need for dialogue.

“Levels of military spending are high and the cycle of escalation must stop,” she noted, adding that force should only be used as a last resort; when dialogue is impossible.

She also said that the study proves “beyond any doubt” that women’s “participation in peace processes sustains [those] processes for a much longer time” than efforts that exclude them.

Ms. Coomaraswamy also stressed the importance of looking at peacekeeping at the local level, because “not one size fits all.”

“You have to understand what the society needs and the peacebuilding program should be mapped for that particular area,” she said.

She also noted that the report contained detailed recommendations for the Security Council, which will be debated tomorrow. One such recommendation was the need for an expert level group that would help the Council deal with issues through a “gender lens,” as well as a proposed change to funding, with some earmarking for projects affecting women. It also calls for an Assistant-Secretary-General at UN Women to work in the area of women, peace, and security.
Kicking off ‘Africa Week’ at UN, Ban lauds steps taken for continent’s long-term development agenda

12 October - Africa Week 2015 kicked off at Headquarters today with Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commending African Member States of the United Nations for taking an “important step” this year toward the establishment of a Continental Free Trade Area envisioned in the African Union’s Agenda 2063.

“The year 2015 is indeed a critical time for global action,” the UN chief told the High-level Event on the Role of African Regional and Sub-regional Organizations in Achieving Regional Integration.

“The United Nations system is committed to supporting the 10-Year Implementation Plan of the Agenda 2063, including the efforts of the Regional Economic Communities as they strive to further integration,” Mr. Ban said.

In his remarks to start off Africa Week 2015 at UN Headquarters, Mr. Ban also said “operationalizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – and Agenda 2063 of the African Union – will be a key to our success in ensuring a life of dignity for all.” This event is the first in a series of high-level discussions and events this week held on the margins of the 193-member General Assembly’s annual consideration of the landmark New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), and other vital issues concerning for the continent.

“You can also count on my Special Adviser on African issues, Mr. Maged Abdelaziz, for his continuing commitment working together with all Member States and myself also,” he added.

The UN chief also outlined ways in which he has been addressing peace and security challenges in Africa.

“I have recently convened, in close cooperation with the African Union and key sub-regional organizations, High-level Meetings on the situations in the Central African Republic, Congo, Libya, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan,” he said. “Let us also continue to work together to resolve the pressing refugee and migration crisis.”

In his remarks, the President of the General Assembly said the events of 2015 offer an “unprecedented opportunity” for Africa to reduce poverty, foster sustainable and inclusive economic growth, and to integrate into the global economy.

“These initiatives should not, however, be simply about trade liberalization between African countries,” Mogens Lykketoft cautioned. “Rather they should constitute an important pillar of the continent’s strategy for structural economic transformation. They should focus on harmonizing policies, enhancing infrastructure development and promoting public-private partnerships.”

Mr. Lykketoft said he encourages African leaders to sustain the political will and commitment needed for truly beneficial regional integration, adding that the UN must also assist the African Union and its Regional Economic Communities as they work to put in place policies that support regional integration.

He announced that he will hold a high level thematic debate next April to highlight early successes and to advance a coherent response to the agendas and agreements to which countries have committed. <p

The main objective of Africa Week 2015 is to garner necessary support from Member States, civil society, the private sector and academia for Africa’s new agenda.

The Week also aims to identify the kind of support the United Nations could further extend to African regional and sub-regional organizations in the implementation of Agenda 2063, in ways that ensure synergy with the 2030 Agenda for
UN agency calls for robust political action to halt escalating violence in West Bank

12 October - Deeply alarmed by the escalating violence and widespread loss of civilian life in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem and in Israel, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) today called for strong and immediate political action and accountability to stem the ongoing violence and prevent its further escalation.

“We condemn killings and injuries of Palestine refugees such as the tragic case on 5 October, of Abd El Rahman, a 13-year-old ninth grade student at an UNRWA school who was shot dead by Israeli Forces in Bethlehem’s Aida refugee camp,” said the agency in a press statement.

The initial UNRWA investigation indicates that the child was with a group of friends next to the UNRWA office after the school day was over and was not posing any threat.

According to UNRWA, a total of 11 Palestinians have been killed and at least 186 have been injured in Gaza. Nine people, including three children were reportedly killed during demonstrations in Gaza and a pregnant woman and a child were killed when a house collapsed in a nearby area due to the impact of an Israeli strike.

The UN agency also recorded 45 incursions by Israeli forces in refugee camps resulting in several refugees being shot dead, including one child.

UNRWA’s preliminary figures indicate that 180 people have been injured in West Bank refugee camps, including 20 children, and about 50 were injured due to live-fire.

“UNRWA reiterates the call of the United Nations Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon], on all sides to respect and protect the rights of children, in particular their inherent right to life. We call for maximum restraint to ensure the protection of civilians, in accordance with international law,” said the statement.

Earlier, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, UN High Commissioner of Human Rights had also voiced extreme concerns over escalating concerns and warned that further bloodshed will offer no solution in the long run.

Further, the UN agency reported that the high number of casualties resulting from live ammunition by Israeli forces raises serious concerns about violations of international law enforcement standards.

UNRWA stressed that the root causes of the conflict, including the Israeli occupation, need to be addressed. It reported of a “pervasive sense of hopelessness and despair” that is spreading across the occupied Palestinian territory due to “the denial of rights and dignity.”

“While in Gaza the latest demonstrations are evidence of a generation that has lost hope in the future; not least because of the lack of economic prospects – youth unemployment is one of the highest in the world – but also because of the lack of reconstruction more than a year after the conflict.

“An entire generation of Palestinians is at risk. All political actors must act decisively to restore their hope in a dignified, secure and stable future,” the statement concluded.
Member States pledge $100 million to UN agency supporting Palestine refugees

12 October - Twenty-two Member States of the United Nations are planning to pledge $100 million dollars to support next year’s budget of the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) which provides educational, health, relief and social services for some five million such refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza.

Donors made their pledges last week during a meeting of the Ad Hoc Committee for voluntary contributions, created by the UN General Assembly as the main forum to announce support for the 65-year-old agency.

"Against the backdrop of unrest in the Middle East, the devastation caused by the Syria conflict, the recent clashes in Jerusalem and the West Bank, the slow pace of the Gaza reconstruction, and the waves of refugees leaving the region to find shelter in Europe, it is time to change the paradigm: UNRWA and the rest of the UN needs be strengthened and not weakened," said Mogens Lykketoft, President of the UN General Assembly, in his opening statement.

Pledges were committed by Sweden, Italy, Luxembourg, Turkey, Argentina, the Czech Republic, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland, the United Arab Emirates, and the Republic of Korea. Several more countries indicated their contributions would be forthcoming or are pending approval by the respective national parliaments.

According to UNRWA, $100 million dollars would cover a part of the basic needs of the Agency to ensure the uninterrupted delivery of essential services. Provided these pledges and other expected contributions materialise, and thanks to strict internal control measures, UNRWA expects to face a deficit of $81 million dollars, lower than previous years.

"UNRWA is emerging from a financial crisis that was unprecedented in its severity and the pain it caused our beneficiaries," said the Agency’s Deputy Commissioner-General, Sandra Mitchell, in her statement. Ms. Mitchell commended the tremendous effort and support from partners, including donors and host governments, thanks to which sufficient funds to address the $101 million funding shortfall had been secured. In July, UNRWA warned that the funding crisis may force it to delay schools opening and limit essential services such as primary health care.

"Without education and its sense of dignity and hope for a better life, people would have nothing else to turn to, and many undertook the perilous journey to Europe and elsewhere," she stressed.

In addition, she outlined the increasingly grave operational context in which UNRWA works and which makes the need for its services all the greater.

"The civil war in Syria persisted with relentless barbarity; in Gaza, the blockade continued to affect every aspect of the population’s lives and restricted UNRWA’s work; in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, escalating violence and the denial of rights and dignity under an increasingly restrictive and destructive occupation regime remained a powerful driver behind the need for UNRWA services," she stated.

"And in Lebanon, in addition to the established community highly reliant on UNRWA, some 45,000 Palestine refugees from Syria were in desperate need of its assistance which continued to decline in the face of financial scarcity."

Furthermore, Ms. Mitchell underlined the vital role played by hosts of Palestine refugees, a point which UNRWA notes was reiterated by a significant number of UN Member States present at the meeting.
Concluding her remarks, Ms. Mitchell underlined that until a just and lasting solution is found to the plight of Palestine refugees, donors have to remain committed to ensuring that UNRWA can deliver vital services to Palestinians.

UN urgently appeals for $86 million to tackle food insecurity in Zimbabwe

12 October - The United Nations in Zimbabwe has appealed to humanitarian and development partners for $86 million that is critically needed to fill a shortfall to support 1.5 million people affected by food insecurity in the country.

“The food security response plan, developed through a consultative process, requests $132 million, with $46 million so far pledged leaving a shortfall of $86 million to support 1.5 million people affected by food insecurity in 52 districts,” said Bishow Parajuli, UN Resident Coordinator in Zimbabwe, in a statement during a high level consultative meeting this past Friday of senior government representatives, UN agencies and development partners in the capital, Harare.

The request followed a recent call by Vice President Emerson Mnangagwa, chairman of the Cabinet Committee on Food and Nutrition Security, to partners for support.

Expressing gratitude to the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Department for International Development (DFID) in the United Kingdom for their joint $43 million pledge, the Resident Coordinator called on other humanitarian and development partners to “join hands in responding to the funding gap.”

The response plan, which covers various sectors, has a gap of $41 million in food assistance; $32 million in agriculture and livelihoods; $5 million in nutrition; $5 million in protection and social safety nets; and $3 million in water, sanitation and hygiene to assist the most vulnerable populations in the country.

Supported by the Government, UN, non-governmental organizations and donors, the 2015 Zimbabwe Vulnerability Assessment Committee reported that food insecurity was the result of agricultural production loss – due mainly to prolonged dry spells in the southern and south-eastern parts and poor rainfall distribution patterns both in space and time across the country.

With logistical support from the World Food Programme (WFP), the Zimbabwe Government has urgently provided 30,000 MT of cereals.

“While addressing the urgent lifesaving needs of the affected communities, the assistance needs to be delivered in a way that strengthens resilience of the affected communities to adapt to recurrent erratic rain patterns and natural disasters,” said Retired Colonel Christian Katsande, Deputy Chief Secretary to the President and Cabinet, citing the limited alternative opportunities of the affected communities.

On behalf of the European Union (EU) Ambassador to Zimbabwe, Paula Vazquez Horyaans recognized that vast areas of Zimbabwe affected by structural food insecurity were aggravated by the effects of climate change and El Niño. She confirmed that the implementation of an EU-supported national resilience framework would help create a resilient nation – one capable of protecting development gains against shocks and stresses and supporting inclusive economic growth – and stressed the importance of a coordinated approach to emergency responses for strengthened medium- and long-term resilience coping mechanisms.

Reiterating the dire food security situation and looming El Nino effect on the next season, the UN Resident Coordinator called for concerted and pro-active action to address immediate needs and invest in national resilience-building efforts.

The UN agencies participating in the response to the food insecurity are the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF), WFP and World Health Organization (WHO).
Gender parity in education achieved in less than half the world’s countries – UNESCO

12 October - A new gender report compiled by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), shows that fewer than half the countries have achieved the goal of ensuring gender parity in both primary and secondary education before 2005.

The new report Gender and Education for All (EFA) 2000-2015, compiled by UNESCO’s Global Monitoring Report (GMR) and UN Girl’s Education Initiative also revealed that no country in sub-Saharan Africa has been able to meet the gender equality goal.

“Educating a girl educates a nation. It unleashes a ripple effect that changes the world unmistakably for the better,” said Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, in a news release on the report, which was released in time for the International Day of the Girl Child, which is marked 11 October every year.

She noted that the international community has recently agreed a new ambitious agenda to achieve a sustainable future. “Success in this endeavour is simply not possible without educated, empowered girls, young women and mothers,” she said.

According to the report, girls continue to face challenges in accessing primary school. Almost 15 million girls will never set foot in a classroom compared to over a third of boys who are out of school.

The report shows that although the divide in gender inequalities in secondary education is reducing, the gap still remains wide. The Arab States and sub-Saharan African regions record the highest numbers in gender disparity. In the Central African Republic and Chad in 2012, half as many girls as boys were in secondary school.

The report also indicated that boys were more likely to drop out of secondary education than girls. Since 2000, it has been recorded that only 95 boys for every 100 girls complete upper secondary level.

Additionally, the report states that gender disparity gaps in youth literacy are gradually narrowing. However, less than seven out of every 10 young women in sub-Saharan Africa are expected to be literate by 2015. The report also revealed that two thirds of adults who lack basic literacy skills are women. This astounding lack of progress in literacy has remained unchanged since 2000.

The report also added that gender based violence in schools is a factor in holding back education attainment. Also, child marriage is another terrible manifestation of gender discrimination which acts as a persistent barrier to girls’ education. As per the report, almost one in five women who got married in 2012, were aged 15 to 19.

“Lacking any other way of measuring gender equality, we have focused on getting equal numbers of boys and girls in school. But we will never achieve this unless we tackle the roots of imbalance: social barriers and entrenched discriminatory social norms,” said Aaron Benavot, Director of the Education for All Global Monitoring Report.

“Unless we begin to understand equality as a much broader concept, girls and young women will never be able to reap the full benefits of education,” she added.

The report also produced an online interactive tool which shows that in sub-Saharan Africa, the poorest girls are almost nine times more likely to set foot in a classroom than the richest boys. In Arab States, one fifth of the poorest girls have never been to school, compared to one tenth of the poorest boys. However, in Latin America and the Caribbean, 55 per cent of boys as compared to 62 per cent of girls in rural areas complete lower secondary education.

However, the report, notes that even though the goal of gender parity has not been met by all, the progress achieved so far is
one of the biggest education success stories. Since 2000, number of countries that have achieved the goal of gender equality in both primary and secondary education has risen from 36 to 62. The report also states that although 62 million girls are denied basic right to education, the number of out-of-school girls has declined by 52 million in the last 15 years.

Acknowledging the progress made, the report recommends that in order to achieve gender parity education must be ‘really free.’ It further urges that policies be designed to address issues faced by boys and girls in accessing and completing education. They also recommend providing secondary education options should be provided for out-of-school adolescents.

The report also urged to integrate gender issues into all aspects of policy and planning in order to achieve gender equality. For this, a mix of legislative change, advocacy and community mobilization must be initiated. The report also calls for the governments, international organizations and education providers to work together to tackle school-related gender based violence. Further, governments should recruit, train and support teachers effectively to address gender inequality.

**Top UN forum on food security focuses on eradicating hunger by 2030**

**12 October** - Marking the first international gathering on food security and nutrition since world leaders approved the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) commenced today, focusing on ending hunger by 2030.

Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) José Graziano da Silva told the assembled delegates that last month's approval of the 2030 Agenda "brings new momentum to our efforts."

"Now the world has a set date to end hunger, to achieve food security and to end malnutrition in all its forms," said Mr. da Silva. "I do not doubt that we can become the Zero Hunger generation."

The CFS is an intergovernmental body that serves as a forum for the review and follow up of food security and nutrition policies. It also gives the opportunity for participants from civil society and the private sector to have a voice in policy decisions.

"CFS is different. So let's go out there and make this difference," said Chairperson for the CFS Gerda Verburg. "We are running one single race, all together, to goal Zero Hunger."

The four-day meeting will include remarks by International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) President Kanayo F. Nwanze and World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Director Ertharin Cousin, as well as discussions on nutrition policies and initiatives that focus on youth engagement in the global pledge to eradicate hunger.

Former president of Ireland Mary Robinson will give the keynote speech during a session on strengthening global linkages and dialogue between the CFS and other food security and nutrition organizations.

CFS will also discuss water and food security and nutrition based on the report on the subject by the High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition.

Discussions are also expected to approve the Framework for Action for Food Security and Nutrition in Protracted Crises, a voluntary agreement which seeks to ensure that humanitarian and development efforts are integrated in the increasing number of areas undergoing protracted crises, with a special focus on the nutritional needs of infants and the most vulnerable people.

Mr. da Silva congratulated CFS delegates for what he called a "major achievement in policy convergence" on a complex subject, noting that FAO is already putting the Framework's principles into practice.
UN chief condemns suicide attacks in Chad

11 October - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has denounced the five simultaneous suicide attacks in Baga Sola sous-prefecture in Chad today, which left scores of civilians dead or injured.

In a statement released by his spokesperson, Mr. Ban said that he “deplores that three of the suicide bombers were reportedly young girls.”

The Secretary-General also commended Chad “for its role in the fight against Boko Haram, as well as the countries of the Lake Chad Basin for their collective efforts to address this scourge,” adding that he encouraged “the holding of the postponed Summit of Heads of State of Central and West Africa, as soon as possible, as a further way to tackle the threat of terrorism in the region, and its root causes, in a holistic manner and in full respect of international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law.”

Mr. Ban also extended his condolences to the families of the victims and to the Government and people of Chad.

In Bolivia, Ban urges action on climate change, says caring for planet is 'moral issue'

11 October - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, speaking in Bolivia at the Peoples World Conference on Climate Change and the Defence of Life, said that the subject of the conference was both “important and timely.”

“Climate change and the defence of life on Earth are at the top of the international agenda this year,” said Mr. Ban, noting the recent adoption by world leaders of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the upcoming climate change conference in Paris.

The 2030 Agenda, he continued, should leave no one behind, especially women, adding that Sunday was Women's Day in Bolivia, the birthday of the country's best-known poet, Adela Zamudio.

“She rose above society's constraints to become a leader for women's emancipation,” said Mr. Ban. “I urge all women -- and men – to be inspired by her example. We cannot achieve equitable sustainable development if we do not involve and respect half the world's population.”

Mr. Ban noted that Bolivia was one of “the few countries in the world with as many women as men in its Parliament” and that guaranteeing women's participation in all levels of decision-making “is crucial not just for gender equality, but for inclusive democracy and sustainable development.”

The Secretary-General then turned his remarks to Bolivia's advocacy for the rights of indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples globally, he said, “are among the world's most vulnerable and marginalized people.”

“Yet their history, traditions, languages and knowledge are part of the very bedrock of human heritage,” he continued. “There is much to be learnt from indigenous peoples as we seek to find solutions to the challenges of combating climate change and managing Mother Earth's resources in a sustainable way.”

Mr. Ban added that, in many nations, “the poverty gap between indigenous and non-indigenous groups is increasing,” and that was unacceptable. “As we implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, we must do so in culturally appropriate ways that meet the needs of indigenous peoples and their conceptions of well-being.”
He then commended the Government of Bolivia and President Evo Morales for introducing International Mother Earth Day to the United Nations General Assembly in 2009.

Bolivia, he said, had also inspired the discussions on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with the principle of “vivir bien.”

The Secretary-General noted that, in his recent speech to the UN General Assembly, President Morales had explained the concept as “living in solidarity with people and in harmony with Mother Earth,” a reminder “that well-being is not only about material advantages, but social and spiritual well-being” and that “well-being cannot be achieved without respecting and protecting our planet.”

Mr. Ban said that those sentiments “were also recently and powerfully echoed by His Holiness Pope Francis” when he came to speak with world leaders on the day they adopted the 2030 Agenda.

“His recent Encyclical highlights the direct link between caring for the environment and caring for the world's poor and vulnerable,” said Mr. Ban. “Caring for Mother Earth is a moral issue. We must change how we use Mother Earth's resources, and live in a manner that is sustainable.”

This was especially true for the challenge of climate change, he said, noting that governments will be meeting in Paris in December to finalize an agreement on the issue.

“It must be ambitious,” he said, adding that “Climate change is upon us. Here in Cochabamba you know this well. Your mountain Tunari used to be capped with snow all year round. Nowadays, it has snow only a few weeks a year.”

The effects of climate change are apparent globally, Mr. Ban noted.

“Droughts. Fires. Floods. Landslides. Glaciers melting. Oceans turning to acid. Mother Earth is giving us a warning. We must listen. And we must act.”

The climate change conference in Paris, he said, “must be a turning point in our collective effort to protect Mother Earth.”

He said that an agreement was needed that was durable and flexible, and must “send a clear signal that the transformation of the global economy in a low-carbon direction is inevitable, beneficial, and already under way.”

Developed countries, Mr. Ban continued, must provide a politically credible pathway for meeting their pledge of $100 billion dollars a year by 2020.

Noting that “a transformative deal in Paris” was in sight, Mr. Ban closed his remarks by asking world leaders to take a pledge to “not steal from our planet” but to “manage its resources wisely.”
On International Day, UN focuses on adolescent girls as part of 'relentless' drive towards equality for all by 2030

11 October - The newly adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) offer an opportunity for a global commitment to breaking intergenerational transmission of poverty, violence, exclusion and discrimination – and realizing our vision of a life of dignity for all, United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon declared, marking the International Day of the Girl Child.

“Our task now is to get to work on meeting the SDG targets and making good on our promises to give girls all the opportunities they deserve as they mature to adulthood by 2030,” said Mr. Ban in his message on the Day, referring to the newly-adopted 2030 Agenda and its landmark 17 Global Goals.

That means enabling them to avoid child marriage and unwanted pregnancy, protect against HIV transmission, stay safe from female genital mutilation, and acquire the education and skills they need to realize their potential.

“It also requires ensuring their sexual health and reproductive rights. Girls everywhere should be able to lead lives free from fear and violence. If we achieve this progress for girls, we will see advances across society,” continued the UN chief.

The Secretary-general recalled that just after the adoption last month of the Global Goals for, world leaders heard a ringing call from Nobel Peace Laureate Malala Yousafzai, who was flanked in the General Assembly Hall by young people from around the world. ‘Promise us that you will keep your commitments and invest in our future,’ she urged.

“Three years ago, on the International Day of the Girl Child, I condemned the attack against Malala and called for more opportunities for girls everywhere. Today, I applaud her courage and that of her peers, who only want the chance to contribute to our world,” said the Secretary-General.

“In her remarks UN Women Executive Director Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka said the cadre of 15-year-old girls living today were born at the advent of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) into a world of hope. Not all of those hopes were fulfilled. Many have already dropped out of school to look after family members or take informal work to help support the family.

“More than 250 million of our 15-year-olds are already married, too many are facing the likelihood of HIV infection, especially given the high unmet needs for family planning… and every 10 minutes somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies by violent means,” she said, adding that: “These, and the generations that follow them, are the young women for whom we are working so hard.”
In Peru, UN chief meets with World Bank, highlighting its 'major role' in sustainable development

10 October - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the important role of the World Bank today in the implementation of the adopted 2030 Agenda, noting that it could “step up capacity building and the mobilization of resources for sustainable development by drawing on its rich technical expertise.”

Mr. Ban is currently in Lima, Peru to participate in the 2015 Annual Meetings of the Boards of Governors of the World Bank Group and International Monetary Fund.

In his remarks at the Development Committee meeting of the World Bank Group, he noted the importance of the 2030 Agenda, emphasizing that it addressed the “structural factors that have hindered poverty eradication, inclusive growth and sustainable development.”

He also highlighted the importance of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Agenda's Means of Implementation mechanisms, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development and the upcoming climate change conference in Paris.

The World Bank, said the Secretary-General, “has an important role in economic empowerment, sustainable agriculture and infrastructure, the fight against hunger, combating climate change, building resilience, and promoting effective governance and the rule of law.”

“I count on the World Bank to encourage other multilateral and regional financial institutions and development banks to incorporate the SDGs into their programmes and work,” he added.

The Secretary-General also noted that all the SDGs must be pursued together and that, more than ever, “the World Bank, the United Nations and the world’s international and regional institutions must work hand in hand.”

“At the global level, we have put in place inter-agency teams around several important issues, notably the follow-up to Addis,” he continued, highlighting that it was “essential that the World Bank Group participates in the mechanisms for follow-up and review of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.”

He also encouraged the World Bank to join him at the inaugural Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Forum on Financing for Development, and added that 2016 will see the first full session of the UN High-Level Political Forum on sustainable development, a forum where national, regional and thematic reviews of the 2030 Agenda will join together, and that the World Bank will engage in supporting the Forum's work.

Mr. Ban also met with Mr. Jim Yong Kim, President of the World Bank Group. The two leaders exchanged views on a wide range of issues including small states, gender equality and water and sanitation, and agreed to work closely on the SDGs.

The Secretary-General also attended an international stakeholders' roundtable meeting for the Middle East and North Africa region and a Development Committee Ministerial event on “investing in evidence.”
On eve of Guinea elections, UN officials deplore recent violence and urge peaceful process

10 October - As Guinea gets ready to hold its presidential elections tomorrow, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon issued a statement deploiring the recent violence in the country, and called on all national stakeholders to “uphold their commitments and ensure that the elections are conducted in a peaceful and transparent manner that reflects the will of the people of Guinea.”

“The success of the elections is the responsibility of all concerned,” said the Secretary-General in a statement issued by his Spokesperson. “In this regard, the Secretary-General calls on all political leaders and their supporters to address outstanding areas of disagreement through dialogue and resolve disputes that may arise from the electoral process through legal means.”

The Secretary-General reiterated “the commitment of the United Nations to support the electoral process and support the country’s efforts to strengthen its democratic institutions.”

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein also expressed his concern.

“I have received worrying reports of violent unrest and looting in Conakry, Guinea” he said in a statement yesterday. “These new incidents come after a series of violent clashes between supporters of Guinea's ruling party and members of the opposition last week in the southwestern city of N'Zerekore, which left more than 45 people injured.”

“I condemn all acts of violence and destruction of property, and call for calm, ahead of the first round of the Presidential elections, which is expected to take place on October 11,” he continued. “I urge all political leaders to use their influence to calm their supporters and to bring an end to the current unrest.”

UN officials condemn terrorist bombings in Turkey

10 October - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has denounced today's terrorist bombings in Ankara, Turkey.

“The Secretary-General condemns today's terrorist bombings in Ankara, Turkey. The attack during a peaceful gathering has reportedly claimed the lives of dozens or people and injured more than 126 others,” said a statement issued by his Spokesperson.

“The Secretary-General expects the perpetrators of these terrorist acts to be swiftly brought to justice,” the statement continued. “He sends his heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, as well as to the people and the Government of Turkey, and wishes those injured a speedy recovery.”

President of the UN General Assembly Mogens Lykketoft joined the Secretary-General in condemning the bombings.

“As a representative of all the member states of the United Nations, the President of the UN General Assembly expresses solidarity with the Turkish Government and the Turkish people and reaffirms the UN's undeterred resolve in the fight against the shared threat of terrorism,” said Mr. Kykketoft in a statement.

“The President sends his deepest condolences to the loved ones of all those who have been murdered and he wishes the injured a swift recovery,” he continued. “This brutal attack is a cowardly and senseless act and will not stop the people and nations striving to build a more peaceful, harmonious and sustainable world.”
On World Day against Death Penalty, UN says practice deters neither drug crimes nor abuse

10 October - The death penalty does not deter drug crimes, nor does it protect people from drug abuse, said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, reiterating the world body's ongoing call to abolish the practice altogether, while emphasizing that if used, that it be applied only to the crime of intentional killing.

“Curbing drug crimes is far more a matter of reforming justice systems and investing in prevention through the public health system, including access to treatment,” declared Mr. Ban in his message for the World Day Against the Death Penalty, marked each year on 10 October.

He notes that seven decades ago, only 14 countries had abolished the death penalty. Today, 82 per cent have either introduced moratoria by law or in practice, or have abolished the death penalty. This year's observance of the World Day against the Death Penalty draws attention to this progress and focuses on the death penalty and drug crimes.

“International law limits the application of the death penalty to the 'most serious crimes.' This means that it should only – if at all – be applied to the crime of intentional killing,” said the Secretary-General.

Indeed, he said, UN human rights bodies have repeatedly stressed that the use of the death penalty for drug-related crimes does not meet this threshold. The International Narcotics Control Board and other drug control bodies have encouraged States that impose the death penalty to abolish it for drug crimes, added the UN chief.

“I urge all States and individuals to join the United Nations as we continue to advocate for an end to the imposition of the death penalty,” he concluded.

Meanwhile, UN human rights experts have noted that around 1,000 executions for drug crimes take place worldwide every year.

Against that background, two UN Special Rapporteurs have underscored that “the imposition of death sentences and executions for drug offences significantly increases the number of persons around the world caught in a system of punishment that is incompatible with fundamental tenets of human rights.”

According to the experts, more than 30 States have legal provisions providing the death penalty for drug-related crimes and in some of them, such cases make up a significant proportion of the total number of executions carried out.

In his comments, Cristof Heyns, Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions said that in many States where the death penalty is used for drug-related offences, there is not a system of fair trial.

“The World Day [...] provides an opportunity to reflect on another year in which the number of States that have completely moved away from capital punishment has increased,” Mr. Heyns said. “However, it also prompts scrutiny of the extent to which a small minority of States violate international law by imposing the death penalty for drug offences.”

The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights prohibits the imposition of the death penalty for any but the 'most serious' crimes. Drug offences, according to the Covenant, cannot meet this threshold, comparing to the crimes involving international killing, which is the 'most serious.'

“Certain States that persistently and openly flout this international standard are also acting contrary to an emerging
customary norm that the imposition and enforcement of the death penalty, in breach of those standards, is a violation per se of the prohibition of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment,” said Juan E. Méndez, Special Rapporteur on torture.

Concerned that some global efforts to combat drug crime would inadvertently be contributing to unlawful executions, Mr. Heyns urged abolitionist States to ensure that they are not complicit in the use of the death penalty in other States under any circumstances.

Meanwhile, he stressed to international agencies and States providing bilateral technical assistance to combat drug crime that, they “must ensure that the programmes to which they contribute do not ultimately result in violations of the right to life.”

“We are looking forward to the time when it will no longer be necessary to have a special day on the death penalty; a time when all states have left this form of punishment behind them,” the Special Rapporteurs reaffirmed in their statement.

Everyone is entitled to a life of dignity, Ban says on World Mental Health Day

10 October - Everyone has the right to respect and dignity, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has declared in his message on World Mental Health Day, highlighting that people who have mental health and psychosocial disabilities deserve to live with the dignity that is integral to a healthy and fulfilling life.

“Everyone is entitled to their hopes and dreams – to work, enjoy family and friends, go about their life without stigma and discrimination, and participate in decisions that affect them,” said Mr. Ban in his remarks on the Day, commemorated each year on 10 October and this year focused on the theme 'Dignity in mental health.'

The World Day “is an opportunity to raise awareness of the challenges faced by people with mental and psychosocial disabilities, and of efforts needed to ensure that they can lead fulfilling and satisfying lives,” said the Secretary-General.

There are still many people around the world living with mental and psychosocial disabilities, many exposed to continuous discrimination, stigmatization, abuse and neglect from society, noted the UN chief.

“A lack of qualified health professionals, use of coercion in treatment and imprisonment in isolated mental and social health facilities further hinders their basic human rights and their prospects of recovery” he added.

Calling for increasing people's awareness of the challenges faced by people with mental disabilities, Mr. Ban urged governments around the world to ensure they are able to go about their life without stigma and discrimination, and participate in decisions that affect them. “Services need to promote this and communities need to support this,” he said.

The first target in the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda stresses the need to ensure all humans can fulfil their potential in dignity and equality and in a healthy environment. Providing help to the people with mental disabilities will advance the process to meet the newly-adopted target.

“Together, we can help make sure that people with mental health and psychosocial disabilities can live with the dignity that is integral to a healthy and fulfilling life,” concluded the Secretary-General.
Somalia: UN boosts El Niño preparedness and relief, urges more funding

12 October - Efforts have been ramped up recently to mitigate the impact of floods and droughts in Somalia driven by the El Niño phenomenon between now and December, which may worsen the food security and humanitarian situations, the United Nations has said, while stressing the urgent need for more financial support to continue its relief work in the country.

“Humanitarian partners have developed contingency plans and are scaling up preparedness activities,” said Peter de Clercq, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Somalia, adding that these operations include “pre-positioning aid supplies and boats in areas most likely to be affected by flooding.”

El Niño could cause devastating effects in Somalia, such as heavy rains and flooding along Juba and Shabelle rivers, flash floods in central Somalia and Puntland, and worsening droughts in parts of Somaliland, which will put over 600,000 people at risk, according to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

These impacts, however, might be severe for the vulnerable communities already facing dire humanitarian situations in Somalia. Over 3 million people need humanitarian assistance, 1.1 million of whom are internally displaced.

“Since communities in the flood-prone areas will be the first to respond, partners are working with local authorities and community leadership to strengthen local response capacity, reinforce river embankments and raise awareness, including through distribution of climate monitoring information,” said Mr. de Clercq.

“An initial $30 million is required to strengthen preparedness and kick start immediate response in 2015,” said a news release issued by OCHA Somalia office, while citing some received donations for the contingency plan as aid agencies continue to monitor the situation.

Previous El Niño events have caused massive flooding in Somalia. Some 900,000 people were affected in 1997-98 and over 440,000 people were affected in 2006-7. The effects this year could extend several months into 2016.

‘Horrific’ terrorist attacks in Chad and Cameroon condemned by UN Security Council

12 October - The members of the UN Security Council have strongly condemned the “horrific” terrorist attacks attributed to Boko Haram, perpetrated on Saturday and Sunday in the towns of Baga Sola, Chad, and Kangaleri, Cameroon, which resulted in a large number of deaths and casualties.

In a press statement, the 15-member Council expressed its deep condolences and sympathy to the families and friends of those killed and injured by these “heinous acts,” as well as to the people and the governments of Chad and Cameroon.

The Council members also reaffirmed that terrorism in all its forms and manifestations constitutes one of the most serious threats to international peace and security, and that any acts of terrorism are criminal and unjustifiable regardless of their motivation, wherever and whenever, and by whomsoever committed.
In addition, the Council underlined the need to bring perpetrators, organizers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice and urged all States, in accordance with their obligations under international law and relevant Security Council resolutions, to cooperate actively with the Chad and Cameroon authorities in this regard.

Furthermore, the Council reminded States that they must ensure that measures taken to combat terrorism comply with all their obligations under international law, in particular international human rights, refugee and humanitarian law.

**As Guinea awaits election results, Ban urges all political leaders to maintain peaceful atmosphere**

**12 October** - After weekend polls in Guinea, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today encouraged all political leaders and national stakeholders to maintain the peaceful atmosphere that prevailed on election day and to refrain from any statements that may lead to violence or unrest.

“The Secretary-General welcomes the peaceful conduct of the first round of the presidential election in Guinea on 11 October,” said a statement issued by Mr. Ban’s spokesperson in New York.

Urging calm while stakeholders await the final results, the UN chief in his statement also reiterated his call on “national stakeholders to resolve any disputes that might arise peacefully, through established legal procedures.”

**Ban calls for urgent and collective action to reform UN peace operations**

**12 October** - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon today urged immediate action to strengthen the Organization’s peace operations, telling the 193-member UN General Assembly that is essential to act now and “not wait, as in the past, for crisis or tragedy to propel reform.”

“UN peace operations are a global instrument. Making them fit for purpose is a collective responsibility. I hope that today will mark the start of early and concerted action to strengthen a set of vital tools at a time when they are most in need,” said Mr. Ban.

A year ago, the Secretary-General had appointed a panel to assess UN operations and suggests ways to meet the challenges that are faced by both peacekeeping and special political missions. President Ramos-Horta of Timor-Leste led the panel along with Under Secretary-General Ameerah Haq, who held the position of Vice-Chair.

Mr. Ban cited his implementation report which conveyed support and endorsements for the Panel’s recommendations. He also added that his report called on the Assembly and the Security Council to consider a number of key recommendations that were directed at Member States.

“It deliberately leaves some of the structural proposals to my successor, but I wholeheartedly support the need for these changes to be given serious consideration,” said Mr. Ban. “I fully endorse the Panel’s call for a focus on politics, people and partnership,” he added.

The UN chief also underscored that the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals last month certifies that there can be no peace without development or no development without peace and neither without respect for human rights.

He also highlighted that UN peace operations are political tools which aim to pursue and sustain negotiated political settlements. Peace operations, he said, must be used responsibly and cannot be substituted for a clear political strategy. Nor
should they be used to give the appearance of action, or given mandates without the means.

“UN peace operations must be judged by their impact on people. They must make every effort to protect civilians and defend the rights of people in conflict. And they must never abuse that trust,” Mr. Ban further noted.

He also remarked that the world today is ‘living in a global turmoil’ where escalating large-scale conflicts and rising violent extremism have displaced over 60 million people, the most since the Second World War.

To address these challenges, Mr. Ban called to strengthen global partnerships to help UN tackle the ‘growing complexity of conflict.’

Mr. Ban also noted that in his implementation report, he set out an Agenda for Action that translates these priorities into concrete steps over the next 18 months. He stressed the need to bring prevention and mediation to the centre of international peace and security, stating that “early action saves money.”

The UN chief also recommended reforming UN peace operations, especially in its planning and conduct. He calls for more agility and discharging quicker actions to limit the spread of violence and seize opportunities to resolve conflict. For this, he underscored the need for more uniformed and civilian UN personnel who can be deployed quickly and effectively and who will always uphold the highest standards of conduct.

Mr. Ban reiterated the need for stronger partnerships within peace operations and its multiple actors such as UN bodies, troop and police contributors, regional organizations, host countries and others. He added that while UN peace operations are an important tool, ‘they are not the only international tool.’

“In our partnerships with regional organizations, we will aim to prioritize standing arrangements for early consultation and rapid response, including bridging arrangements. The African Union is bearing an increasingly heavy burden, along with several of the continent’s sub-regional organizations,” Mr. Ban said.

“There is far more we can do to sustain peace and help post-conflict societies avoid a relapse in to violent conflict. And despite important gains in advancing the women, peace and security agenda, we have still not done enough to involve women in peace processes and other decision-making processes,” he added.

Lastly, Mr. Ban reiterated the need for coordinated efforts from global leaders and to ‘let our actions speak louder than our words.’

**African Union-UN mission in Darfur welcomes rebel group order to ban recruitment of child soldiers**

12 October - The African Union-United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) today welcomed as a “significant step” an order by the rebel Justice and Equality Movement known as JEM that prohibits the recruitment and use of children in its ranks.

“This is a significant step towards phasing out this negative phenomenon in the Darfur conflict. UNAMID shall continue to engage all parties to the conflict for an end to all forms of violations against children,” said the Mission’s Acting Joint Special Representative Abiodun Bashua.

The recruitment and use of children is considered a serious crime under international law and the Sudan Child Act of 2010.

In a so-called ‘Commanding Order’ issued on 30 September, the JEM leadership instructs all the armed movement’s members to adhere to the international norms and standards governing the protection of children and observe all the provisions of UN Security Council resolutions on children in armed conflict, according to the press release issued in El Fasher, Darfur.
The JEM leadership also called upon its field commanders to extensively disseminate the order, which followed a meeting that brought together the JEM with two other rebel groups – the Sudan Liberation Movement /Abdul Wahid and Sudan Liberation Movement /Minni Minawi – with the UN Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict Leila Zerrougui in Austria on 27 and 28 May 2015.

As an outcome, these Darfuri armed movements issued a Joint Statement in which they committed to continue to take all necessary steps to protect children.