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**Burundi: UN chief urges calm amid country's political crisis**

13 May - Amid reports of political upheaval in Burundi, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called urgently today on all parties in the country to exercise calm and restraint, and reminded the country's leaders of the need to preserve peace and stability.

“We are following from here with great concern developments on the ground in Burundi,” UN Spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters at the start of the regular daily briefing at the world body's New York Headquarters, adding that the Secretary-General urgently calls on all parties to exercise calm and restraint.

“He reminds all Burundian leaders of the need to preserve peace and stability in a country that has suffered so grievously from previous bouts of violence,” said Mr. Dujarric, emphasizing that the UN is evaluating developments amid a “very fluid” situation.

The Spokesperson said that Headquarters is in contact with UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region Said Djinnit who is currently in Dar-ES-Salaam, Tanzania for the Summit of the East African Community.

A Flash Update released today by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that a coup d'état had reportedly taken place in the Burundian capital after President Pierre Nkurunziza left for the Summit, which was intended to try to resolve the crisis, although OCHA’s update added that the situation is “rapidly evolving and confused,” with many reports emerging that are difficult to confirm.

Tensions have been simmering in Burundi for weeks ahead of planned elections. Popular protest erupted after the country's ruling National Council for the Defence of Democracy – Forces for the Defence of Democracy (CNDD-FDD) party nominated on 26 April Mr. Nkurunziza as its presidential candidate for a third term.

The Flash Update said there were no significant new humanitarian developments since yesterday and noted official figures reported yesterday of 20 deaths and 200 wounded. It added that refugee numbers had risen above 70,000.
According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) figures, 25,455 people had crossed into Rwanda as of 11 May, with 8,750 in Democratic Republic of the Congo as of 12 May, and 37,474 as of 13 May in Tanzania, comprising 15,452 new arrivals in Nyarangusu Camp. A further 20,000 were reported to be waiting in Kagunga village, and 2,022 on the way to Nyarangusu Camp. Several hundred people were reported to be in hard-to-reach areas with limited support.

Some people were reported by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to have returned to southern Burundi after initially fleeing to Tanzania, citing worsening humanitarian conditions, particularly around Kagunga village.

**UN welcomes European Union proposals for ‘visionary’ migration reforms**

13 May - The United Nations refugee agency and the world body’s top envoy on international migration have applauded European Union (EU) authorities’ proposals for dealing with refugees and migrants arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean, calling for swift implementation of the reforms “for the urgent purpose of saving lives.”

In a statement issued in New York, Peter Sutherland, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for International Migration and Development welcomed the “visionary reforms” to the region’s asylum system put forward today in the European Commission’s ‘European Agenda on Migration.’

In particular, the proposed relocation and resettlement programs, based on a distribution key, promise to offer safer legal avenues to asylum seekers and to distribute responsibility for providing international protection more equitably across the EU.

“I expect that the resettlement target of 20,000 will increase over time and that the EU will continue to expand safe avenues by providing more humanitarian, labour, and family reunification visas to asylum seekers and migrants,” said Mr. Southerland in the statement.

He went on to comment the EU’s commitment to triple the resources for Operations ‘Triton’ and ‘Poseidon’ in the Mediterranean Sea so that they are at least equal in effect to ‘Mare Nostrum’. However, he said the EU needs to make search-and-rescue the top priority for this effort.

“As the EU pursues its anti-smuggling initiatives, meanwhile, I urge member States not to put any refugees or migrants in the line of fire, and to design any operation in complete conformity with international law,” said the statement.

Mr. Southerland notes that the proposals also begin to give prominence to critical issues related to migration and development, especially the vital need for migrants, refugees, and migration to be included in the post-2015 UN development agenda.

“Only by forging a sustainable, long-term strategy on migration and asylum can the European Union meet its humanitarian, economic, and external relations needs,” it said.

For his part, Volker Türk, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection in the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said the EU proposals represent a “great breakthrough” in terms of managing refugee flows and migration.

“It is now enormously important, and vital for the urgent purpose of saving lives, that these proposals be embraced quickly and fully implemented,” he declared, adding that UNHCR stands ready to provide all further help it can to member States in making those objectives a reality.

A record 219,000 people crossed the Mediterranean in 2014 in smugglers’ boats and 3,500 died. Around half of these people were refugees fleeing war and persecution. So far in 2015, some 62,500 people have made the crossing, and at least 1,800...
have died, according to UNHCR.

The European Commission’s proposals announced today “include strengthened measures to save lives at sea, and improved mechanisms for allowing legal entry into the EU for people fleeing war, and providing for a fair redistribution of refugees,” said Mr. Volker.

“They also contain measures to address some of the factors that are driving people into the hands of smugglers, including the desperate conditions many refugees face in countries of first-asylum and transit.”

Record levels of global displacement from wars and conflict in Syria, Iraq, the Horn of Africa and other regions of sub-Saharan Africa, coupled with insecurity in Libya and blocked land routes for mixed migration flows in other regions, have in recent years combined to fuel a sharp increase in refugees seeking to enter Europe by one of the few remaining means possible – travel by sea.

Mr. Turk said that "solidarity among EU member States in the approach is the only way that a problem of this nature can be tackled."

In its press release, the refugee agency spelled out its position on the European Commission’s Migration Agenda on issues ranging from saving lives at sea to responding to high-volumes of arrivals, helping frontline EU Member States, addressing root causes in third countries and border management and a new legal migration policy.

**New UN report shows mixed results for reaching MDG health targets by end of 2015**

13 May - The United Nations health agency today reported that by the end of 2015, the world will have met the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for turning around the epidemics of HIV, malaria and tuberculosis, and boosting access to drinking water, but will likely fall short of reaching other health-related goals in areas such as child and maternal deaths and basic sanitation.

“The MDGs have been good for public health. They have focused political attention and generated badly needed funds for many important public health challenges,” Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) said on the release of this year’s World Health Statistics. While progress has been very encouraging, there are still wide gaps between and within countries, she added.

“Today’s report underscores the need to sustain efforts to ensure the world’s most vulnerable people have access to health services,” Dr. Chan said.

The report’s release comes four months before countries are to decide on new and ambitious global post-MDG targets for the period through 2030, during the annual high-level opening of the UN General Assembly in September.

Summarizing today’s report, which assesses progress towards the health-related goals in each of the 194 countries for which data are available, WHO noted that “results are mixed” for reaching the landmark MDG’s set by governments 15 years ago to guide global efforts to end poverty.

Noting that by the end of the year the world would likely have met targets on turning back pandemics and maternal and child deaths, and increasing access to basic sanitation, the report shows that “progress in child survival worldwide is one of the greatest success stories of international development.”

“Since 1990, child deaths have almost halved – falling from an estimated 90 deaths per 1000 live births to 46 deaths per 1000 live births in 2013,” according to the report.

“Despite great advances, this is not enough to reach the goal of reducing the death rate by two-thirds,” it said. “Less than
one third of all countries have achieved or are on track to meet this target by the end of this year.”

The top killers of children aged less than 5 years are: preterm birth complications, pneumonia, birth asphyxia and diarrohea.

The report also reveals that the number of women who die due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth has almost halved between 1990 and 2013, but “the rate of decrease won’t be enough to achieve the targeted reduction of 75 per cent by the end of this year.”

“In the WHO African Region, one in four women who wants to prevent or delay childbearing does not have access to contraceptives, and only one in two women gives birth with the support of a skilled birth attendant,” it said. ”Less than two-thirds (64 per cent) of women worldwide receive the recommended minimum of four antenatal care visits during pregnancy.”

On a positive note, according to the report, the world has begun to reverse the spread of HIV, with new infections reported in 2013 of 2.1 million people, down from 3.4 million in 2001.

“At current trends, the world will exceed the target of placing 15 million people in low- and middle-income countries on antiretroviral therapy (ARTs) in 2015,” it said.

While the global target for increasing access to safe drinking water was met in 2010, the report noted that “the world is unlikely to meet the MDG target on access to basic sanitation.”

“Around 1 billion people have no access to basic sanitation and are forced to defecate in open spaces such as fields and near water sources,” it said. “Lack of sanitation facilities puts these people at high risk of diarrhoeal diseases (including cholera), trachoma and hepatitis.”

WHO also drew attention to the following 10 facts from the report:

1. Life expectancy at birth has increased six years for both men and women since 1990.
2. Two-thirds of deaths worldwide are due to non-communicable diseases.
3. In some countries, more than one-third of births are delivered by caesarean section.
4. In low- and middle-income countries, only two-thirds of pregnant women with HIV receive antiretrovirals to prevent transmission to their baby.
5. Over one-third of adult men smoke tobacco.
7. 15 per cent of women worldwide are obese.
8. The median age of people living in low-income countries is 20 years, while it is 40 years in high-income countries.
9. One quarter of men have raised blood pressure.
10. In some countries, less than five per cent of total government expenditure is on health.
Yemen: UN welcomes ceasefire as ‘lifesaving’ humanitarian relief begins to arrive

13 May - The top United Nations humanitarian official has welcomed the commencement of a ceasefire in Yemen aimed at allowing the delivery of “lifesaving” relief and aid to the country's civilian populations.

“I call on all parties to the conflict to respect this vital pause in hostilities,” Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator (OCHA) Valerie Amos said in a statement issued late yesterday evening. “This pause will provide a respite for civilians and allow the delivery of food, medical supplies and other essential items to people who have been trapped in conflict zones.”

Ms. Amos also extended her thanks to the Member States involved in supporting the UN’s efforts and enabling humanitarian agencies and partners on the ground to provide the humanitarian relief.

Since the Yemen conflict erupted in mid-March 2015, over 1,400 people have been killed and close to 6,000 people injured, roughly half of whom have been civilians. Civilians across the border in Saudi Arabia's frontier towns have been caught up in the fighting as well.

Meanwhile, Yemen was already in a precarious state prior to the explosion of violence with the current fighting only fuelling concerns in the humanitarian community that the country would grow increasingly food insecure.

In 2014, a World Food Programme (WFP) food security survey found that 10.6 million people – 41 percent of the population – were food insecure with more than five million people severely food insecure – in need of food assistance. The current conflict will exacerbate the precarious food security situation because the country imports more than 90 percent of its food needs.

“Given the role of the United Nations in coordinating emergency relief activities in an impartial and neutral way, I request that humanitarian assistance to Yemen be routed through existing UN and international humanitarian organization channels,” Ms. Amos added. “It is essential that humanitarian assistance is not politicized.”

The Under-Secretary-General's statement comes as Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the UN Special Envoy for Yemen, arrived in the capital, Sana'a, where he hopes to meet the various Yemeni parties, in particular Houthi representatives, and the hope is that the pause can serve as a basis for a more permanent cessation of hostilities.

At the same time, the UN Security Council also reaffirmed its “strong commitment to the unity, sovereignty, independence, and territorial integrity of Yemen, and its commitment to stand by the people of Yemen” in a statement released yesterday evening.

The 15-member Council called on all sides in the country to comply with international humanitarian law and welcomed any efforts aimed at supporting a political transition.

To that point, the UN body called on the Secretary-General to convene a conference of all Yemeni stakeholders with the intention of brokering “a consensus-based political solution” and called on all Yemeni parties to attend these talks.
Nepal’s emergency preparedness saved lives in earthquake aftermath – UN health agency

13 May - The emergency preparedness efforts implemented by the Government of Nepal over the past 15 years have ensured that key elements of the health sector remained ready and able to function during the recent earthquake that devastated large swathes of the mountainous country, the United Nations World Health Organization (WHO) said today.

According to WHO, the practice of hospital retrofitting – a process which involves everything from repairing cracks in walls to installing seismic belts and roof bracing – has been a core part of Nepal’s preparedness plans and helped keep the largest hospitals in the capital city of Kathmandu working throughout the 7.8 magnitude earthquake which struck on 25 April and the 7.3 earthquake which rattled the country on just yesterday.

“Retrofitting meant that when the earthquakes struck, hospitals did not collapse,” Dr. Roderico Ofrin, WHO’s Health Response Leader, confirmed in a press release, adding that it was “clear that the investment in time and resources paid off.”

“These hospitals that are standing and were retrofitted went through a process of prioritization,” Dr. Ofrin continued. “Emergency rooms, maternity wards, and operating theatres were some of the first areas where retrofitting was applied.”

WHO has also been critical in assisting Nepal’s Ministry of Health and Population during their implementation of emergency preparedness efforts. In 2009, for instance, it focused global attention on the need for safe facilities in emergencies through its World Health Day campaign which underscored the need for building strong health systems able to provide medical care in times of disaster and emergency. The UN agency has continued to promote this aim with direct technical and material support.

However, retrofitting alone is not sufficient for an adequate healthcare response in times of disaster, the WHO has warned. Capacity building and staff training is equally important.

Dr. Pradeep Vaidya, coordinator for the WHO-supported Hospital Preparedness for Emergency Programme, has noted that the response to the earthquake by Nepal’s health care providers was resilient because of pre-planning and training initiatives.

“The most helpful part during the earthquake response was the hospital emergency preparedness plan,” Dr. Vaidya explained. “People knew what to do, where to meet and how things will flow when the earthquake happened. The roster management system worked well.”

In Nepal, the WHO has been placing particular attention on training in triage management, putting into practice its guidelines and strategies in mass casualty systems.

Due to the training, the agency said, emergency responders could quickly prioritize the injuries and save lives when large numbers of patients began to arrive in the hospitals following the recent earthquakes.
Rebel group responsible for ‘grave violations’ in DR Congo massacres, says UN report

13 May - A United Nations human rights report released today says that a Uganda-based rebel group has committed grave violations of international humanitarian law in crisis-riven north-eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

The report says that the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF) committed the violations, which were systematic and extremely brutal, and which may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity, over a three-month period at the end of 2014 in Beni territory, North Kivu province.

“In light of the magnitude and the persistence of the attacks by ADF combatants, I call upon the Congolese authorities to take, as soon as possible, all the necessary measures to put an end to the massacres of civilians,” said the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in the DRC, Martin Kobler.

In total, ADF combatants attacked 35 villages, killing at least 237 civilians, including 65 women and 35 children, between 1 October and 31 December 2014, with a further 47 civilians wounded, 20 abducted and two sexually abused.

The attackers used machetes, hammers and knives, among other weapons, to wound or execute civilians. Some had their throats slit, were shot at while trying to flee or were burned alive in their homes. Several cases of looting and destruction of property were also documented.

The report details the results of in-depth investigations conducted by the UN Joint Human Rights Office in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (UNJHRO) and features more than 180 testimonies from victims, witnesses and others. It concludes that the total number of victims could be much higher as human rights officers encountered many difficulties in conducting their investigations and could not access some areas for security reasons.

Also documented in the report are violations of international humanitarian and human rights law committed in the same period by members of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in operations against the ADF.

Investigations by the Congolese authorities into massacres in Beni led to the arrests of at least 300 people, including around 33 FARDC members. Two FARDC officers and four ADF leaders were convicted by Congolese military justice authorities in November 2014 for the killing of the FARDC General Mamadou Ndala and for participation in an insurrectional movement.

“I welcome these initial steps towards justice, but urge the authorities to redouble their efforts to hold to account all those implicated in the series of truly horrendous crimes that ravaged the Beni area last year,” said UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein.
Senior UN official tells Forest Forum how it can contribute to sustainable development

13 May - A new international agreement on forests should aim at advancing implementation of sustainable forest management and bring about a reversal of deforestation, the President of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) said this morning.

Addressing the High-Level Segment of the 11th Session of the UN Forum on Forests, ECOSOC President, Martin Sajdik, said the international arrangement on forests (IAF) should also harness its full potential to mobilize further political support and resources required to fulfil its objectives, and should mainstream forests and sustainable forest management into sustainable development at the global, regional, national and local levels.

“I am pleased to see that the Forum considers as a high priority the integration of its future arrangement in the broader development agenda beyond 2015, and is undertaking adaptations to the new agenda through its deliberations on the international arrangement on forests (IAF) beyond 2015,” said Mr. Sajdik.

A strengthened and effective IAF beyond 2015 would enable the UN Forum on Forests to provide further contributions to the Council’s efforts to support the achievement of sustainable development, he said, adding that a strong Ministerial Declaration from the current Forum would “send a signal” on the importance of further elevating the profile of forests and serve as a concrete input to the post-2015 development agenda.

Mr. Sajdik said the Forum had been successful in integrating the multiple benefits of forests and their contributions to sustainable development into the broader development agenda, including the sustainable development goals (SDGs) which were currently under consideration as part of the post-2015 development agenda.

This was one of several ways in which the Forum had promoted management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests in the past 15 years and become an “indispensable” member of the ECOSOC system.

“One of the most significant contributions made by the Forum is the agreement on the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests, also known as the Forest Instrument,” he said. “The impact of the work of the Forum has been visible in other forest-related intergovernmental bodies and processes, as well as sustainable development processes.”

The Council President stressed how well-placed the Forum is to define the role of forests in sustainable development, and to contribute to the work of the ECOSOC High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) going forward.

“You are approaching the decision on the IAF beyond 2015, and are about to shape the framework for the next fifteen years,” he said. “I look forward to a constructive and energetic policy dialogue on the integration of forests in the post-2015 development agenda, and renewed commitments to the implementation of the IAF beyond 2015.”
UN voices alarm over ‘pushbacks’ of boats carrying migrants in Southeast Asia

13 May - The United Nations refugee agency has said it is “extremely alarmed” at reports suggesting that Indonesian and Malaysian authorities have pushed back boats carrying numerous migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh.

According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Indonesian navy stated that it had escorted a boat out to sea on Monday in a move which may signify a change in the Government’s overall policy. Similarly, Malaysia’s Maritime Enforcement Agency yesterday announced that it would prohibit foreign ships from docking unless they are unseaworthy and sinking.

“The first priority is to save lives. Instead of competing to avoid responsibility, it is key for States to share the responsibility to disembark these people immediately,” said Volker Türk, UNHCR’s Assistant High Commissioner for Protection, in a press release.

“Sea crossings are a symptom of desperation as people are left with no other choice but to risk their lives,” Mr. Türk continued, as he reiterated the UNHCR’s global call for legal alternatives to access protection and safety.

“Nobody should have to put their lives into the hands of ruthless smugglers.”

The UNHCR press release comes just one week after the agency published its Irregular Maritime Movements in South-East Asia report documenting an alarming rise in the number of Rohingya and Bangladeshis being smuggled across the Bay of Bengal and towards Thailand’s border with Malaysia in the three-month period spanning January to March 2015. Estimates now place the number of those crossing one of the world’s most dangerous sea routes at 25,000.

In addition, the UN refugee agency said it believed that several thousand people remain stranded on smugglers’ boats in the Andaman Sea and Straits of Malacca, likely abandoned by their crews amid government crackdowns against traffickers.

Based on survivor accounts, UNHCR estimates that 300 people died at sea in the first quarter of 2015 as a result of starvation, dehydration or abuse by boat crews. One survivor, the agency’s report says, compared his 62-day experience at sea to being in a graveyard and said he lost hope of reaching shore alive.

UNHCR added that it was urging governments throughout South-east Asia to facilitate disembarkation and keep their borders and ports open in an effort to prevent a humanitarian crisis at sea.

The growing problem of irregular migration must be approached as a regional question with “real human consequences” and highlights the “urgent need for regional cooperation to address the challenge of irregular maritime movements,” the agency concluded.
Arms Trade Treaty vital to halting flow of ‘portable, casual instruments of death’, Security Council told

13 May - The widespread availability of small arms and light weapons, and their ammunition, is the common factor in over 250 conflicts witnessed across the globe in the last decade, the United Nations Secretary-General told the Security Council today, pointing to 50,000 deaths along with displacement levels unseen since the Second World War as direct consequences of such violence.

“The recent entry into force of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) laid the foundations for a global framework of arms transfer controls, including for small arms and light weapons and ammunition,” said Ban Ki-moon. “A universal ATT, adequately implemented, is critical to removing the tools for armed conflict.”

The Treaty, he said, could stem the misuse and illicit circulation of the thousands of weapons that are often part of the roots of conflict and thereby advance international peace and security, reduce human suffering, and promote co-operation, transparency and responsible action by States.

“I encourage all Member States to accede to the Treaty and to faithfully implement it,” he said, noting that States Parties were required to ensure that their arms exports would not be used to violate arms embargoes, fuel conflict, facilitate terrorism or engage in serious violation of international human rights or humanitarian law.

He underlined his concerns about poor weapons management by States lacking thorough planning and consistent attention to safe storage, handling, transportation and disposal of their arsenals and described how diversion of weaponry, including from government stockpiles, served to fuel conflict, allowing rebels, gangs, criminal organizations, pirates, terrorist groups and insurgents to bolster their firepower.

In his report on the subject, two key elements vital to tackling the worldwide challenge were given particular prominence.

“First, we need to ensure that the use of weapons and ammunition by national security forces conforms with commitments under global treaties and instruments,” Mr. Ban said. “Second, we need further measures to combat the proliferation of illicit weapons.”

States had to enforce arms embargoes and strengthen UN missions tasked with policing small arms, he said, encouraging greater efforts to accelerate exchange of information on arms trafficking and calling for “far more attention” on the issue of ammunition.

“Monitoring ammunition flows can help identify sources, trafficking patterns and diversion points,” said Mr. Ban. “It can remove source material for improvised explosive devices and stem the re-supply of ammunition into crime and conflict areas. Cutting ammunition flows has an immediate impact on the intensity of armed activity. In situations where there is high risk to civilian populations, this should be a priority.”

Also briefing the Security Council today was the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al-Hussein. He said that many people are willing to indulge in “the commerce of death,” adding that those responsible for facilitating and abetting serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law are rarely held accountable in any way.

He said the bloodshed and devastation caused by these weapons never fails to elicit unanimous declarations of dismay. But when the international community is called upon to control more effectively the production and trade of small arms and light weaponry, States push for loose definitions, as well as numerous exclusions and loopholes, and enforcement remains weak.
“The reason is clear: the trade in small arms is a multi-billion-dollar business,” he said, underscoring however that the human and economic cost of armed violence also runs into the hundreds of billions of dollars. “These are the weapons of the easy kill: the most portable, most easily accessible, most casual instruments of death.”

“We must place the protection of human life and human rights at the centre of this discussion,” he said. “The ATT’s recent entry into force is a real source of hope, if more Member States ratify it, agree to implement it genuinely, particularly articles 6 and 7, providing for the human rights safeguards that are the treaty’s heart.”

He called on the Security Council to continue to build on resolution 2117 and to continue its strong support for the ATT, mandating UN operations to build ATT implementation capacity into regional and national assistance, hand in hand with capacity-building for human rights and rule of law institutions.

He also echoed a call made by his predecessor as High Commissioner, Navi Pillay, who told the Security Council in August 2014 that where there exist concerns about human rights in States buying large quantities of small arms, a condition of sale should be acceptance of small human rights monitoring teams.

“I too believe this form of innovative thinking deserves further elaboration and urge the States Parties to explore it, along with the distinguished members of the Security Council,” Mr. Zeid said.

**UN chief condemns ‘despicable’ terrorist act in Pakistan on Shia Muslim community**

**13 May** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has condemned in the “strongest possible terms” today’s terrorist attack in Pakistan which left dozens dead and many others injured, a United Nations spokesperson has confirmed.

The attack targeted a passenger bus in the Pakistani city of Karachi and reportedly killed at least 45 members of the Ismaili Shia Muslim community while injuring several others.

“Pakistan, as a responsible member of the international community, must uphold its obligations and commitments towards protecting its citizens, including all minorities,” the UN spokesperson declared in a statement which highlighted the Secretary-General’s appeal for the Government of Pakistan to “take all necessary measures” to bring to justice the perpetrators of the “despicable act.”

The statement also took note of the worrisome number of attacks against Shia and Christian minorities residing in Pakistan in recent times and urged the country’s authorities to take “swift measures aimed at effective protection of religious minorities in the country.”

“Creating a climate of tolerance, understanding and respect will greatly contribute to achieving this objective,” it added.

In addition, the spokesperson said Mr. Ban extended his “heartfelt condolences” to the families of the victims, the Government and the people of Pakistan and wished a “speedy recovery” to those injured in the attack.