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Central African Republic: UN agency delivers food aid to thousands displaced by recent violence in capital

14 October - The World Food Programme (WFP) announced today that aid workers have reached more than 30,000 newly displaced people in desperate need of food in the Central African Republic’s capital, Bangui, where the situation remains “tense and volatile” after a new surge in violence.

“It is critical that WFP has the necessary resources to come to the aid of people who are most vulnerable and have been repeatedly affected by a crisis that erupted two years ago,” said Bienvenu Djossa, WFP Country Director in the Central African Republic (CAR).

According to WFP, nearly 900,000 people are still displaced or have taken refuge in neighbouring countries since the start of the conflict in 2013 and the agency and its partners aim to assist 1.2 million people in areas worst-affected by conflict and hunger.

The agency urgently requires $21 million to continue providing vital assistance to families in need through to the end of the year.

“More than 40,000 people have been forced to flee their homes in a matter of days,” according to Mr. Djossa.

“The situation remains tense and volatile, but WFP has been able to reach over the past week those most in need, people who have been cut off from any assistance for days, and living in difficult circumstances in over 20 displacement sites,” Mr. Djossa said.

He went on to say that even before this latest escalation in violence, “about one in four people were in need of urgent food assistance, and were struggling to recover from the widespread disruption the conflict caused to their lives.”
Iraq: UN envoy expresses concern over growing tension and violence in Kurdistan region

14 October - In Erbil today, the United Nations Envoy for Iraq discussed concerns about the recent political tension and violence in the Kurdistan region with political party leaders and the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG).

In his discussions, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Iraq, Ján Kubiš, expressed regrets at the latest developments in the region.

“I appreciate efforts to restore and maintain order and calm,” said Mr. Kubiš in a statement. “Confrontation should give way to bona fide political dialogue and negotiations, guided by principles of democracy and compromise.”

“There is an immediate need for all political parties to act with determination to further de-escalate the political tensions, prevent violence and find solutions to the protracted political impasse on the issue of the presidency and reforms without creating a power vacuum”, he continued.

“Its protraction risks exacerbating an already difficult situation for the population who faces enormous challenges, of such magnitude as the fight against Daesh, the budgetary crisis, economic and asocial hardship of the region’s population that moreover hosts around 1.7 million IDPs [internally displaced persons].”

Mr. Kubiš also noted that “political parties in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq need to prioritize peace, security and stability, for the sake of the people, the region and the country.” He urged “all political leaders to hear the voice of Peshmerga on the frontlines against Daesh, fighting the terrorist enemy to keep the KR-I stable, safe and united in the face of this threat, and to advance economic and social reforms and justice.”

He also condemned the loss of life, injury of protestors and police, and the destruction of offices that have occurred over the weekend.

“The authorities must ensure the right of people to demand peacefully their rights and good governance, while the protesters must respect the law and refrain from violence and provocations,” he said.

Mr. Kubiš also underlined that “accusations and inflammatory statements that have been directed by political parties at one another, also misusing traditional and social media, have contributed to increased tensions and to turning protests violent.”

“At the same time,” he continued, “the work of the media should be protected, and the current crisis should not be used to silence them, to impede the work of the journalists.”
After six years on the rise, Afghan opium crop cultivation declines – UN survey

14 October - Opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan decreased 19 per cent in 2015, compared to the previous year, according to the latest Afghanistan Opium Survey figures released today by the Afghan Ministry of Counter Narcotics and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The findings show that the area under opium poppy cultivation in 2015 is around 183,000 hectares (ha), compared with 224,000 ha in 2014, while the cultivation area has decreased for the first time since 2009.

“I hope the survey will serve to inform policies and efforts to build on these hard-won achievements,” said UNODC’s Executive Director Yury Fedotov in a press release, adding that sustaining progress "depends on the resolve of the Afghan Government, and on the international community, which must devote the needed resources and make a long-term commitment to addressing a threat that imperils all our societies.”

The survey further notes that in 2015, potential opium production in Afghanistan amounts to 3,300 tons, a decrease of 48 per cent from its 2014 level (6,400 tons). The average opium yield meanwhile is at 18.3 kilograms per hectare (p/ha) - 36 per cent less than in 2014 (28.7 kilograms p/ha). Despite these noted decreases, the number of poppy-free provinces fell in 2015, specifically in the Northern region with Balkh losing that status which it had regained in 2014.

Meanwhile, UNODC reports that Hilmand, with some 86,400 ha (47 per cent of the national total), remains the country’s major opium-cultivating province. This is followed by Farah (21,106 ha), Kandahar (21,020 ha), and Badghis (12,391 ha). As noted in the survey, opium cultivation decreased in most of the main opium poppy-growing provinces, notably Nangarhar, Nimroz and Kandahar (which saw declines of 45, 40 and 38 per cent, respectively), but climbed in the provinces of Badghis (by 117 per cent) and Uruzgan (by 22 per cent).

The UN is also highlighting that as in previous years, the available technology used to conduct the crop monitoring and assessment between 2014 and 2015 has again been refined and sharpened, leading to greater accuracy of estimates but which may have an impact on the extent of year-on-year changes.

Regarding the southern region, it reportedly has the country’s largest share of national opium production with 58 per cent recorded, which equals some 1,900 metric tons (MT). UNODC finds Afghanistan’s second most important opium producing region to be the west, responsible for 22 per cent of national production (720 MT), followed by the eastern region with 13 per cent (450 MT). The remaining areas (north-eastern, northern and central regions) together account for less than eight per cent of opium production.

According to the survey, the low production can be attributed to a reduction in area under cultivation, but more importantly to a drop in opium yield per hectare. This yield decreased in all main opium poppy cultivating regions, led by the southern region, with a 45 per cent decrease, followed by the western region (20 per cent) and the eastern region (eight per cent).

In terms of eradication, efforts across the country led by the various provincial governments increased a collective 40 per cent, compared to last year, or from around 2,700 ha to 3,760 ha. During the latest eradication campaign, there were fewer casualties reported than the previous year: in 2015, five lives were lost and 18 persons were injured compared to 2014, when 13 lives were lost and 26 persons injured.
Security Council renews mandate of UN mission in Haiti, maintains recommended troop levels

14 October - The Security Council this morning extended the mandate of the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) for one year, until 15 October 2016, at the UN Secretary General’s recommended force levels of up to 2,370 troops and 2,061 police.

Unanimously adopting a new resolution, the Council affirmed its intention to review by 15 October 2016 the MINUSTAH’s overall capacity to ensure security, stability and security conditions on the ground, in order to consider the possible withdrawal of the Mission and transition to a future UN presence in the country, and it asked the Secretary-General to conduct an assessment mission to Haiti, “preferably by 90 days after the inauguration of the new President, and ideally after the formation of a new Government.”

Welcoming the holding of the first round of legislative elections on 9 August, the Council strongly urged Haiti’s political actors to cooperate and without delaying ensure the holding of free, fair, inclusive, and transparent legislative, partial senatorial, municipal and local elections. It also encouraged the Government to promote increased women’s political participation in Haiti.

Noting that the Haitian National Police’s capacity-building remained a most critical task, the Council requested MINUSTAH to make renewed efforts to mentor and train police and corrections officers. It encouraged the Mission to continue to assist the Government in tackling gang violence, organized crime, illegal arms trafficking, drug trafficking and trafficking of persons, especially children. It further encouraged the Haitian authorities to continue to implement justice reform.

Strongly condemning the grave violations against children affected particularly by criminal gang violence, as well as widespread rape and other sexual abuse of women and girls, the Council called upon the Government, with the support of the Mission and the UN country team, to promote and protect the rights of women and children, as well as to improve response to rape complaints and access to justice for the victims of rape and other sexual crimes.

Through the resolution, the Council expresses its concern about the significant deterioration in the humanitarian situation over the past six months, including increased food insecurity, “while also noting reduced funding has limited the ability of the United Nations system and its partners to provide an adequate response to the multiple challenges.”

The Council further asked MINUSTAH to continue to support the country’s authorities in controlling the flow of small arms, developing a weapons registry, reforming the weapons permit system, and developing and implementing a national community policing doctrine.
Expanded role means UN Support Office in Somalia will require increased investment, Security Council told

The United Nations Support Office for the African Union Mission in Somalia (UNSOA) will need to be “significantly” strengthened, the Under-Secretary-General for Field Support told the UN Security Council today, with its efforts reprioritized around strategic objectives set by the 15 member body and within areas of African Union operations with the Somali National Army.

Laying out a series of proposals, Atul Khare said such changes meant redefining the Support Office’s clients as the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the UN Assistance Mission in Somalia (UNSOM) and the Somalia National Army. Medical support infrastructure would be extended on a limited basis to provide medical evacuation assistance to the Somali National Police in areas where AMISOM operated. While the Secretariat would do its part, critical support would need to come from the Council, the General Assembly, Member States and the African Union.

A three-month strategic review of the Support Office, from July to September, had found that its resources had not kept pace with the “dramatic expansion of its tasks,” which now included support to both high-intensity military operations, as well as highly mobile political engagement in Somalia and beyond. The clients had grown from one to five, and the number of personnel it supported from 8,000 to 33,000 – all in an area that had expanded from 100 square kilometres to more than 400,000.

“UNSOA is working in a significantly non-permissive environment with the backdrop of the scourge of Al Shabaab, and a continuing humanitarian crisis,” he explained, recalling that fatalities in AMISOM last year exceeded the combined fatalities from malicious acts in all UN peacekeeping operations combined. In the last 18 months, UN personnel and facilities had been attacked an average of once every 10 weeks.

The logistical enabling environment is also weak, Mr. Khare continued, affected by insecurity in the major supply routes, where three quarters of all improvised explosive device attacks against AMISOM occur. While proud of what UNSOA has achieved with its comparatively small and restricted resource base, he said that has come at the expense of effective service delivery in critical areas of maintenance services, field defence supplies, tentage, mobility and construction.

As such, future efforts would also be refocused on “surge support”, he said, to address critical gaps, strengthening human rights due diligence policy and sexual exploitation and abuse compliance, coordination and joint decision-making frameworks, and environmental stewardship.

The Council would need to strengthen the Support Office’s accountability framework, he said, through a single, clear mandate focused on the delivery of support to – but operationally separate from – its clients. That would require a stronger reporting relationship with the Council; a leadership function headed by an Assistant Secretary-General and a new name.

Clear roles for the delivery of logistical support had been agreed with the African Union Mission. Encouraged by the Union’s efforts to generate the enabling units authorized as part of AMISOM, he said that, in parallel, UNSOA would support the establishment of those units in all sectors of the Union’s operations to support the opening of the main supply routes.

He hoped to present proposals to the General Assembly for strengthening the Support Office, he said, which would likely represent a $60 million annual increase and a one-time cost of $13 million in investment.

He would send Assistant Secretary-General for Field Support Anthony Nathan Banbury to Somalia from 18 to 20 October to
follow up on the Council’s guidance. During Mr. Banbury’s visit, on 19 October, he would also address the Support Office staff.

**New UN trade report spotlights links between maritime transport and sustainability**


The Review is the main United Nations publication on seaborne trade, the world’s fleet, freight costs, port traffic, maritime connectivity and the relevant legal and regulatory framework. It is of particular relevance to developing countries, whose trade volume is estimated to be 90 per cent seaborne.

According to the Review, due to the slow recovery of world economy led by uneven growth in developed economies and a slowdown in developing countries and economies in transition has led to the sluggish pace of growth rate in the shipping industry.

At the beginning of the year, the fleet totalled 89,464 vessels, with overall 1.75 billion in deadweight tonnage. However, the newer tonnage cannot be compensated for the natural aging of the fleet, as there is less delivery of newbuilding and reduction in scrapping activity.

The report also revealed that developing countries, especially in Africa and Oceania, pay 40 to 70 per cent more on average for the international transport of their imports than developed countries.

This is mainly due to regional trade imbalances, pending port and trade facilitation reforms, as well as lower trade volumes and shipping connectivity.

Further, the report also states that the developing economies' share of world container port throughput increased marginally to approximately 71.9 per cent. This continues the trend of a gradual rise in developing countries' share of world container throughput.

The report also announced that the Polar Code, adopted by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) will come into effect on 1 January 2017. According to the Code, mandatory provisions must be established to ensure ship safety and prevent environmental pollution in both Arctic and Antarctic waters.

The report further stated that several regulatory measures were adopted at IMO, including strengthening legal framework relating to ship-source pollution and reduction of greenhouse gases (GHG) from international shipping.

Lastly, guidelines for the development of the Inventory of Hazardous Materials required under the 2010 International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea were also adopted.
UN agency and French Government urge inclusion of food security in global climate change debate

14 October - Targeted policies and investments in food security and agriculture should be at the centre of debates on climate change, according to a top UN official and the French Minister for Agriculture, speaking at the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) in Rome this week.

Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) José Graziano da Silva and French Minister for Agriculture, Stéphane Le Foll, warned that failure to do so would unravel recent progress made in combating world hunger.

Mr. da Silva and Mr. Le Foll made their appeals at a CFS side event. The CFS is an intergovernmental body that serves as a forum for the review of food security and nutrition policies.

Both Mr. Da Silva and Mr. Le Foll urged countries to reach an agreement on how to combat climate change ahead of the upcoming UN conference in Paris, known informally as COP 21, where global leaders and international organizations will meet to reach consensus on a historic climate change accord.

The FAO Director-General hailed the international community’s recent adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the eradication of hunger and extreme poverty. He emphasized that, in order to achieve these goals, agriculture and food systems that are more productive and adapted to climate change are needed.

“We can end extreme poverty and hunger by 2030,” said Mr. Da Silva. “We know what works and we have the tools for it, but we know climate change threatens to derail our efforts. It is already impacting on food security and making hunger eradication even more difficult.”

“We believe that agriculture in the broad sense – including forestry, fisheries and aquaculture – can and must play a central role in addressing climate change, particularly in adapting its impacts, such as water scarcity, soil salinity or increasing pests and diseases of plants and animals,” he added.

Mr. Le Foll cautioned that everyone on the planet would bear the consequences “if the world’s leaders cannot find agreement on tangible and concrete objectives” to curb global warming.

Noting that agriculture is often viewed as a problem due to its role in greenhouse-gas emissions, Mr. Le Foll called for the need to make progress with techniques that “allow us to be more economical and consume less energy.”

Mr. da Silva said that the world’s poorest and most vulnerable are the hardest hit by the droughts and floods caused by global warming. He also noted the additional challenges faced by family farmers, fishermen and community foresters, who were both highly dependent on the world’s natural resources and also the first to suffer due to climate-related shocks: “they are the least responsible for climate change and cannot be expected to bear the costs of adaption to climate change,” he said.

He called for policies and investments to adapt agriculture to climate change, including reducing deforestation and overfishing, improving soil fertility and achieving lower emissions.

The Director-General also said that FAO was ready to assist countries through agroecology, climate smart agriculture, Integrated Coastal Management, Sustainable Land Management and Forest Landscape Restoration.
UN-backed telecom summit shines spotlight on young innovators

14 October - The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) today hosted at its 2015 telecom summit in Budapest the winners of the Young Innovators Competition, who benefited from expert mentorship to help accelerate their innovations globally through a series of workshops, pitching sessions and collaborations.

“These talented young people have made great use of ICTs [information and communications technologies] to meet a wide range of development goals, and their innovations have the potential to impact lives for the better,” said ITU Secretary General Houlin Zhao.

“Start-ups such as these have a key role to play within our ICT ecosystem and I am very pleased that ITU Telecom World 2015 is providing them the global platform to showcase their innovations,” he added.

The programme took place at the ITU Telecom World 2015 event, which has been under way in Budapest since 12 October and which wraps up tomorrow.

The Young Innovators Competition onsite programme provides opportunities for participants to connect, share experiences and learn from other representatives across the industry, including with other small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and start-ups present at the event, from developed and developing countries alike.

“The Young Innovators are an inspiring group. Every time I speak with them, it’s a window onto a generation of young people willing, ready and able to answer the challenges of the future using innovative technologies. They are absolutely a group of young people to watch, they’re going to change the world, and they know it,” said Tayo Akinyemi, CEO at AfriLabs Foundation, and Young Innovators Competition Mentor.

The winners of the competition showcased their entries in the InnovationSpace shared and also took part in the Acceleration Platform.

Moving forward, new challenges have been set in motion for the next Young Innovators Programme where young social entrepreneurs with big ideas on how to apply technology to help improve the lives of refugees and people displaced by situations such as war, oppression, and natural disaster are being sought.

In Turkey, UN deputy chief says response to migration and refugee movement ‘being tested as never before’

14 October - The world’s ability to respond to migration and refugee movement is “being tested as never before,” the United Nations deputy chief today said speaking at the Global Forum on Migration and Development taking place in Istanbul, Turkey, while recalling some key principles underscored by the UN to address this global challenge.

“We are all familiar with the scale of our challenge—around 240 million international migrants and more than 60 million refugees and forcibly displaced persons,” Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson told representatives of governments, academia, civil society and other groups attending the three-day Forum.

“This challenge is not only a crisis of numbers. It is a crisis of solidarity. It is a crisis that requires mobilization of political will but also viable and forward-looking solutions,” he continued.

Mr. Eliasson said it is fitting that the annual event be organized in Istanbul this year as Turkey has been at the heart of the refugee crisis in the region, as have Lebanon, Jordan, Egypt and Iraq, “paying a high price for the horrific war in Syria
which must come to an end.”

“Tackling the root causes of forced or involuntary migration is a key element of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – goal number 10,” the UN deputy chief noted, referring to the new agreement that was adopted in September by all UN Member States to wipe out poverty, fight inequality and tackle climate change over the next 15 years.

“By improving conditions for a life of dignity, by reducing inequalities, and by promoting peaceful societies, we can make crossing international borders a matter of informed choice, not desperate necessity,” he added.

Mr. Eliasson also recalled that on the margins of the UN General Assembly’s annual debate in New York two weeks ago, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon convened a high-level meeting on migration and refugee movements.

“Saving lives must be our first priority,” he insisted. “Despite additional search and rescue efforts, we continue to witness people in great numbers dying while seeking to cross borders.”

Seven other key principles he listed included creating a stronger focus on refugee protection, ensuring non-discrimination, increasing preparedness, and sharing responsibilities among nations.

“The Global Forum has successfully built networks and cooperation among the key actors,” he stated. “The Forum and its Member States can now take action to facilitate mobility, reduce migration costs and ensure fair access to benefits.”

He added that the Forum should work closely with the UN System, in particular the Global Migration Group (GMG), which he said can help integrate migration into national development plans and provide technical assistance to develop migration-related indicators.

In closing, the Deputy Secretary-General said that for many years, governments have worked to establish clear rules for cross-border trade, finance and services – yet the cross-border movement of human beings remains insufficiently regulated and managed.

“By working together in a cooperative, innovative and constructive way, we can leave behind us the many tragedies we see unfold around the world,” Mr. Eliasson concluded. “By this we can help build a life of opportunity and dignity for all.”

**Morocco’s agriculture-focused ‘Green Plan’ must benefit all, says UN rights expert**

14 October - The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Hilal Elver, has commended Morocco’s achievements in reducing extreme poverty and eliminating hunger through crucial economic and social reforms, while also urging the authorities to reach all regions, paying particular attention to those living in remote areas and vulnerable groups.

“Morocco has a number of well-intended and comprehensive programmes, including the National Initiative for Human Development, which has the potential to ensure food and nutrition security for everyone, and while much progress has been made disparities in implementation across regions and gaps in necessary infrastructure have hindered its full dissemination,” Ms. Elver said press release wrapping up her eight-day mission to the country.

She also stressed that Morocco’s ‘Green Plan,’ which was developed to boost the agriculture sector, should be implemented equally across all regions through effective consultation with local populations and improved coordination services.

“Infrastructure should also be improved in remote areas to ensure easy access to markets, and to attract investment to rural areas, while projects that target women and young farmers should be encouraged further,” she added.
The Special Rapporteur noted that desertification and increasing potential for drought caused by climate change will have a considerable impact on agriculture over the coming years.

As such, she recommended complying with the adaptation policies outlined in the Green Plan and undertaking measures to ensure that large scale farming and intensive agriculture do not drain resources such as fresh water and lead to land degradation.

“The dual pillars of the Plan (modernity and solidarity) should be developed in a balanced manner so as to ensure full support for small holder farmers,” added Ms. Elver.

The Special Rapporteur also urged the authorities to include agroecology in future projects in order to protect biodiversity, environmental resources, maintaining social equality, and climate friendly agriculture.

Ms. Elver noted that Morocco has been benefitting from several important reforms, particularly the adoption of a new Constitution in 2011.

“The development of a national framework law on the right to food would complement the reforms and ensure food and nutrition security while ratification of the Optional Protocol on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights should be considered a priority,” added the expert.

During her mission, Ms. Elver met with representatives of relevant Government departments, international organizations, development agencies, academia and civil society groups.

She also visited a number of projects in Midelt, Agadir and Dhakla, in Western Sahara.

Independent experts or special rapporteurs are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.