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Opening 70th UN General Assembly, President underscores urgent need for action

15 September - A major priority for the 70th session of the United Nations General Assembly is to ensure that all actors move swiftly to deliver on the promises being made for sustainable development, the President of the 193-member body said today.

“In less than 10 days’ time, our leaders will gather in this hall to adopt the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development,” Mogens Lykketoft said as he opened the session.

The Agenda, which will be adopted during a special summit at UN Headquarters, consists of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets that aim to be a charter for people and the planet in the twenty-first century. They will stimulate action over the next 15 years in areas of critical importance towards building a more equitable and sustainable world for all.

“The summit, of course, marks only the beginning,” Mr. Lykketoft continued. “There is an urgent need for action right across the three pillars of the UN and ample opportunities to do so during this session. […] An ambitious and universal climate agreement is an absolute must and the first real test of the world community’s ability to deliver the necessary policy tools for sustainable development.”

Indeed, not long after the summit and the annual General Debate, leaders will come together in Paris for the UN climate change conference – or COP21.
At the same time, Mr. Lykketoft warned there will be no sustainable development without peace and security and respect for human rights.

“The UN and its Member States have a strong obligation to work together to end the catastrophic wars and conflicts – not least in and around Syria. And we will have to act here and now to address the huge and explosive refugee crises resulting from ongoing conflicts – and to protect the human rights of all refugees.”

In addition to several high-level meetings and thematic debates he will hold over the course of his one-year tenure, the new President said he plans to continue efforts to revitalize the General Assembly’s work and to reform the Security Council.

“I will conduct all activities in as transparent, inclusive and open a manner as possible,” Mr. Lykketoft assured. “Where it is relevant I will also engage with and involve civil society representatives and others, such that a multi-stakeholder approach becomes a hallmark of my presidency.”

Also addressing the meeting, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recalled that this new session of the General Assembly marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Organization.

“The Charter’s principles have stood the test of time, and the United Nations can look back on a record of achievement,” he stated. “At the same time, we know that suffering remains widespread across the world. My thoughts today are especially with the people of Syria – those inside the country facing terrible violence, and those who have fled, desperately seeking a safe haven and a better life.”

Mr. Ban called on the 70th General Assembly session to be one of compassion, prevention and, above all, action.

**Latest provocations could ignite fresh Israeli-Palestinian violence, warns UN envoy**

**15 September** - The United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process told the Security Council today that he is gravely concerned over the violence and continuing clashes in and around the holy sites of the Old City of Jerusalem, and urged all leaders to ensure that visitors and worshippers demonstrate restraint and respect for the sanctity of the area.

Clashes of varying intensity have been ongoing for three days now, and follow sweeping restrictions on entry into the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound which Israel applied beginning on 26 August. Since then, the Government has decreed an entry ban to the compound and the Temple Mount area to members of Muslim and Jewish groups considered to be extremist.

“As the Middle East faces a vicious tide of terror and extremism, such serious provocations have the potential to ignite violence well beyond the walls of the Old City of Jerusalem,” Nickolay Mladenov told the Council, speaking via video conference from Jerusalem.

“I urge all political, community and religious leaders to ensure that visitors and worshippers demonstrate restraint and respect for the sanctity of the area,” he continued, stressing that all sides have a responsibility to refrain from provocative actions and rhetoric.

“Against this backdrop, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has left an indelible scar on the people and landscape of this region,” the envoy underlined. “Frustration, fear and violence have continued to spiral, undermining belief in finding a way out of the impasse.”

He informed the 15-member body that over the last three months, the Middle East Quartet [comprising the European Union, Russia, the United States and the UN] has actively consulted with Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the League of Arab States, the Gulf Cooperation Council, and key international partners on how to preserve the two-State solution and establish conditions for the parties to return to meaningful negotiations.
“All of our discussions have highlighted the region’s determination to play a constructive role in resolving the conflict,” Mr. Mladenov noted. “But the message from all could not be more clear: patience is running out.”

“A comprehensive approach must be advanced, consisting of bold, concrete actions on the ground, in the region and internationally. It will necessitate significant policy shifts by Israel as well as an unflinching commitment on the Palestinian side to achieving genuine national unity,” he added.

However, despite efforts by Israel in recent months to ease some restrictions in the West Bank and Gaza, Mr. Mladenov described the situation on the ground as “precarious.”

This past month, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank continued, injuring one Palestinian and four Israelis. The UN reported that 115 Palestinians were injured by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) while six members of the Israeli security forces were injured by Palestinians. In the West Bank, Israeli security forces arrested 282 Palestinians.

“He also deeply troubling is the continuing Israeli policy of settlement construction and demolishing of Palestinian-owned structures in Area C of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem,” Mr. Mladenov continued. “I call upon Israel to freeze demolitions, to reverse ‘relocation’ plans and – critically – to expedite approval of outstanding planning submissions and enable community-led planning processes.”

He recalled that since his last briefing, some 50 Palestinian structures have been demolished.

“I am alarmed that the calendar month of August saw the highest number of demolitions since June 2010, with 142 Palestinian-owned structures demolished and over 200 Palestinians displaced.”

Meanwhile, in Gaza, power outages have reportedly been averaging 12 to 16 hours per day, and 40,000 public sector employees have not received full salaries for one year.

On a more positive note, Mr. Mladenov said the reconstruction of Gaza following last year’s conflict in the enclave is picking up speed, with some 94,000 homeowners having procured construction material to repair their homes.

The envoy said the UN will continue to support the efforts of the legitimate Palestinian institutions and to reach out to all factions in order to ensure that the humanitarian, social and economic challenges of Gaza are addressed.

**UN agency urges Europe to develop coherent response to refugee crisis**

15 September - While welcoming the steps taken by European leaders at their meeting in Brussels to tackle the current refugee crisis, the United Nations refugee agency today said a robust and coherent response is still urgently needed.

Yesterday’s meeting of the European Council of Ministers saw the formal adoption of an earlier relocation proposal involving 40,000 people.

“This is a single welcome step towards addressing the current refugee situation in Europe, but it is clear that much more is still needed,” Melissa Fleming, spokesperson for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), told a press conference in Geneva.

“UNHCR is deeply disappointed that although a majority of member States were in agreement with a wider relocation proposal involving 120,000 people, a final consensus on this could not be reached,” she added. “Decisive agreement is needed without further delay to address the needs, as is bold action based on solidarity from all member States.”

Speaking at a press conference in Brussels, High Commissioner António Guterres warned that the EU must move quickly to
help solve the crisis.

“This is a moment of truth for the EU,” he said. “Either it acts, or it will become irrelevant in international affairs.”

Mr. Guterres pointed out that the massive influx of Syrian refugees is the result of a loss of hope, as well as severe cuts in life-saving assistance in the neighbouring countries’ refugee camps due to of lack of funding. For example, the UN World Food Programme (WFP) has been forced to cut down on food assistance by 40 per cent.

“In an ideal world, there would be a common European asylum policy and refugees could move freely within the EU. But that is not the case,” he stated, calling for legal alternatives to reach safety so that people will not have to resort to smugglers and undertake dangerous, irregular journeys.

While welcoming a proposed relocation scheme for 160,000 refugees from Greece, Italy and Hungary, Mr. Guterres emphasized that estimates have indicated an even higher number that will require assistance.

“A plan B is necessary,” he said. “We can’t wait until October for another meeting of the European Council who then reverts back to the European Parliament, then back to the European Council … the Union has 500 million people – it’s a manageable situation, and it needs to be managed.”

**UN officials condemn ‘virtual silence’ about escalating violence in Yemen**

15 September - Two senior United Nations officials today condemned “the virtual silence” about the increasing impact on civilians of the escalating conflict in Yemen, and urged leaders from all sides to refrain from manipulating religious identities for political purposes.

“Unless there is a serious commitment of the parties to find a political solution to the conflict that will end the violence and ensure humanitarian access to all populations, without discrimination, the situation is likely to degenerate further,” warned Adama Dieng, the Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, and Jennifer Welsh, the Special Adviser on the Responsibility to Protect.

The joint statement by the two officials comes a day after UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein told the UN Human Rights Council that his office has found that over 2,000 civilians have been killed and more than 4,000 wounded in Yemen.

He added that credible allegations of human rights violations by all parties to the conflict should be thoroughly examined by an independent and comprehensive body.

The Special Advisers “expressed alarm about allegations of serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law throughout the country, committed by both sides of the conflict.”

They “expressed concern at the ever increasing impact on civilians of the ongoing conflict in Yemen, and the virtual silence of the international community about the threat to populations.”

The statement added that “recent developments are likely to lead to escalation of the violence in central Yemen, particularly if Sana’a becomes the scene of confrontations between the Saudi-led military coalition and the Houthi forces, and civilians will bear the brunt of this violence.”

The officials also denounced the use of sectarian language by the Yemeni branch of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula to justify violations of international law and to fuel divide.

They urged leaders from all sides to refrain from manipulating religious identities for political purposes.
While reminding national authorities of their primary responsibility to protect the Yemeni population, the officials also recalled that the international community has a responsibility to protect populations from genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, and “must intensify its efforts to fulfil this collective responsibility in Yemen.”

Meanwhile, UN humanitarian officials reported that damage to civilian infrastructure such as hospitals, mosques and schools continues unabated in Yemen, while the depletion of medical stocks and the lack of fuel to run hospital generators further exacerbate the humanitarian crisis.

Yemen relies on imports for up to 70 per cent of its fuel requirements and 100 per cent of its needs for medicine.

**Syria: UN chief names panel to probe accountability for chemical weapons use**


**15 September** - Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has appointed Virginia Gamba of Argentina to head the independent three-member panel that will lead the Joint Investigative Mechanism (JIM) tasked with identifying those responsible for the use of chemical weapons in Syria.

The Mechanism is a joint venture between the United Nations and the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). It will be tasked with identifying “individuals, entities, groups, or governments involved in the use of chemicals as weapons, including chlorine or any other toxic chemical,” in Syria, as mandated by Security Council resolution 2235.

Ms. Gamba, who brings with her more than 30 years of experience and leadership on disarmament, is currently serving as Deputy to the UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. She has provided key support to two earlier missions related to chemical weapons in Syria led by Åke Sellström and Sigrid Kaag.

Mr. Ban also intends to appoint Adrian Neritani of Albania and Eberhard Schanze of Germany to the panel. Mr. Neritani will be responsible for the political component, while Mr. Schanze will be responsible for the investigative component.

The appointments will be made following the usual consultations and in coordination with the Director-General of the OPCW, as was the case with Ms. Gamba’s appointment.

UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters that the Secretary-General reiterates his call for all parties in Syria to cooperate fully with the Joint Investigative Mechanism.

“He counts on the continued engagement and support of the members of the Security Council as well as the entire UN membership to ensure the effective implementation of this resolution.”
Afghan refugee teacher Aqeela Asifi, who has dedicated her life to bringing education to refugee girls in Pakistan, has been named as the winner of the United Nations annual Nansen Award.

The 49-year-old is being recognised for her “brave and tireless” dedication to education for Afghan refugee girls in the Kot Chandana refugee village in Mianwali, Pakistan – while herself overcoming the struggles of life in exile, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The agency added that despite minimal resources and significant cultural challenges, Ms. Asifi has guided a thousand refugee girls through their primary education.

“Access to quality and safe education helps children grow into adults who go on to secure jobs, start businesses and help build their communities – and it makes them less vulnerable to exploitation and abuse,” High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres said in a news release.

“Investing in refugee education will allow children to play a part in breaking the cycle of instability and conflict. People like Aqeela Asifi understand that today’s refugee children will determine the future of their countries, and the future of our world.”

Ms. Asifi is a former teacher who fled from Kabul with her family in 1992, finding safety in the remote refugee settlement of Kot Chandana. She was dismayed by the lack of schooling for girls there, according to UNHCR, which noted that before she arrived, strict cultural traditions kept most girls at home.

Determined to give these girls a chance to learn, Ms. Asifi slowly convinced the community, and began teaching just a handful of pupils in a makeshift school tent. She copied out worksheets for the students by hand on sheets of paper. Today the tent school is a distant memory and over a thousand children are attending permanent schools in the village thanks to her early example.

According to Ms. Asifi, instilling a belief in the power of education for girls in this generation will transform the opportunities of the next. “When you have mothers who are educated, you will almost certainly have future generations who are educated,” she said.

“So if you educate girls, you educate generations. I wish for the day when people will remember Afghanistan, not for war, but for its standard of education.”

Afghanistan is the largest, most protracted refugee crisis in the world, according to UNHCR. Over 2.6 million Afghans currently live in exile and over half of them are children. Access to education is vital for successful repatriation, resettlement or local integration for refugees.

Yet globally it’s estimated that only one in every two refugee children are able to go to primary school and only one in four attend secondary school, the agency added. And for Afghan refugees in Pakistan this falls further, with approximately 80 per cent of children currently out of school.

Coinciding with today’s announcement, UNHCR released a contextual report *Breaking the cycle: Education and the future for Afghan refugees*, which outlines the challenges that children, especially refugee girls, face in accessing education in Pakistan.
Since the fall of the Taliban in 2001, 5.7 million Afghans have returned home, yet insecurity still remains. UNHCR has embarked on a strategy to assist remaining Afghan refugees to return home and a key element of this is ensuring they can access quality education. A ministerial level meeting in early October in Geneva will seek to advance this strategy with key regional partners.

Previous laureates of the annual Nansen Refugee Award, which honours extraordinary service to the forcibly displaced, include Eleanor Roosevelt, Graça Machel and Luciano Pavarotti. This year’s award ceremony will be held on 5 October in Geneva and will feature several celebrity UN Goodwill Ambassadors.

**Millions of children in Syria deprived of education, says UNICEF**

**15 September** - As children around the world return to school, there are more than two million in Syria who will not be able to join them, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) cautioned today, adding that another 400,000 are at risk of dropping out of school as a direct result of conflict, violence and displacement.

With the conflict in Syria now in its fifth year, some children in Syria have never known what it is like to enter a classroom, while others have lost up to four years of their schooling, the agency noted in a news release.

“Syria’s basic public services, including education, have been stretched to the maximum,” said Hanaa Singer, UNICEF Representative in Syria. “We need to do so much more to help the education institutions from collapsing and increase opportunities for children to access education across the country.”

School buildings are also affected by the conflict; 5,000 of them cannot be used as they have been destroyed, converted into shelters for displaced families, or used as bases for armed forces, UNICEF said. Often, the schools and their surroundings are unsafe, dangerous for children to reach, and at risk of deliberate attack. To take their exams last summer, at least 20 per cent of Syria’s children were forced to cross lines of fire.

UNICEF has been working with local partners on the ground to reach around three million children, and has implemented an informal education programme to reduce the number of out-of-school children. The agency is also printing school supplies and text books locally and distributing them to students.

“Even under the worst circumstances Syrian children keep asking to learn and go back to school because they are yearning for a better future and a chance to be influential” said Ms. Singer. “We must all invest in Syria’s children as they are the future of Syria and they will help rebuild their country when peace returns.”

Under the ‘No Lost Generation Initiative,’ UNICEF is starting a self-learning programme to reach 500,000 children who missed out on years of schooling. An accelerated learning programme is also aimed at helping 200,000 children catch up with their learning and eventually reintegrate into formal education. UNICEF is also rehabilitating damaged schools and creating prefabricated classrooms to accommodate 300,000 additional children.

UNICEF requires $68 million by end of the year, of which $12 million is needed immediately in order to continue responding to children’s educational needs.
UNICEF advocate David Beckham issues call to end violence against children

15 September - David Beckham, Goodwill Ambassador for the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), is championing a letter signed by 18 child survivors of violence that calls on world leaders to end the widespread abuse affecting millions of children around the world.

“When I visited Cambodia with UNICEF earlier this year, I spent time with children and young people who have experienced terrible violence and abuse often at the hands of the people who were supposed to protect them,” said Mr. Beckham. “Their stories were deeply distressing and as a father it is devastating to think that any child should have to suffer like this.

“After listening to these incredibly brave children and hearing about the abuse they have endured, I want to make sure that world leaders act to protect children from danger,” he continued in a news release.

“Every child, especially the most vulnerable, should be safe. That’s why I am going to travel to the UN this September, to make sure that children’s voices are heard and that the world comes together to stop violence against children.”

The letter includes the words of survivors of violent conflict in South Sudan, sexual abuse in Iceland, and child trafficking in Pakistan, highlighting an epidemic of violence that faces children around the globe.

Mr. Beckham will join Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and UNICEF Executive Director Anthony Lake in New York next week to ask world leaders to put children, especially the most disadvantaged, at the centre of all decisions and investments made over the next 15 years as part of the new 2030 Agenda.

Earlier this year, Mr. Beckham launched a new fund with UNICEF, and made a commitment to helping the world’s most vulnerable children over the next decade, including children affected by violence.

“It is shocking that every five minutes a child dies as a result of violence,” he stated. “I hope others will join me to call on world leaders to put children at the heart of the new goals and commit to ending violence against children.”

Cornelius Williams, UNICEF’s Global Chief of Child Protection, noted that violence against children, especially sexual violence, leaves deep scars that live on in them right through adulthood.

“It rips apart families and societies, shatters stability and sets back progress,” he said. “Yet all too often, it is unseen and cloaked in silence. We have to speak about the unspeakable, make it visible, and act to end it.”
UN marks International Day by stressing vital role of civil society for true democracy

15 September - A strong and freely operating civil society is crucial for successful and stable democracies and must be given the space to carry out their vital functions, the United Nations emphasized today, as it marked the International Day of Democracy.

“Civil society is the oxygen of democracy,” Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in his message for the Day, observed annually on 15 September.

“We see this clearly in the world’s most vibrant and stable democracies, where Government and civil society work together for common goals,” he continued.

“Civil society acts as a catalyst for social progress and economic growth. It plays a critical role in keeping Government accountable, and helps represent the diverse interests of the population, including its most vulnerable groups.”

Yet, Mr. Ban pointed out, freedom to operate for civil society is diminishing – or even disappearing. An alarming number of governments have adopted restrictions that limit the ability of non-governmental organizations to work, or to receive funding, or both. That is why, he added, the theme of this year’s Day is space for civil society.

“On this Day, let us recall that progress and civic participation go hand in hand,” he said. “As the United Nations continues to work towards a democratic, pluralistic future for all, the State and civil society can and should be partners in building the future people want.”

Alfred de Zayas, the Independent Expert on the promotion of a democratic and equitable international order, and Maina Kiai, the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, issued a statement to mark the Day, in which they noted that civil society is “essential for a true democracy.”

“Unfortunately,” they stated, “space for civil society is shrinking rapidly today, both in countries with no democratic tradition and in ostensibly democratic countries. There is a growing disconnect between elected officials and the people.

“We see this disconnect manifested in the recent surge of large protest movements throughout the world. People perceive a failure of governance and democracy, and protest is often their last resort in making themselves heard,” the independent UN experts said.

“Democracy should not be reduced to an empty word,” they stressed. “It is self-determination in action, and a necessary instrument for securing a more peaceful, just and stable world. Civil society is a key partner to achieve this noble goal.”
No country has yet achieved equality between men and women – UN human rights chief

15 September - The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights said today that no country to date has achieved full equality between the sexes and urged the 47 members of the Human Rights Council “to do better than our societies” and make a real difference in achieving gender parity.

“Very frequently, we see a preponderance of women experts on panels that discuss issues specific to women and children – as if such issues could not be of deep concern to men,” Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein said in his opening remarks to a panel discussion on gender equality held by the Council in Geneva.

“Conversely, discussions on situations of armed conflict, on counter-terrorism, on sanctions regimes, and on the death penalty almost seem as though they are reserved for men,” he noted.

The High Commissioner said “the lack of gender parity in UN human rights bodies may indeed be symptomatic of the under-representation of women in Member States,” adding that “we need to do better than our societies.”

He spoke of the importance of “visible equality.”

“Girls may stay away from computer technology or engineering because beating the boys in maths is seen as somehow ‘unfeminine,’” he noted, and “girls who grow up seeing only male presidents or ambassadors may develop a belief that power is essentially male.”

He said “quotas and other temporary efforts to achieve parity can help to bring women’s voices into legal and political systems, the corporate boardroom, the workplace and higher education,” leapfrogging a process that might otherwise take generations.

Saying “all of us have the power and responsibility to promote gender parity,” he urged action “to address discrimination, combat stereotypes, and promote equality” at the international and national levels.

“We must stop regarding parity as a token exercise, and grasp at last that equal representation of women and men, across themes and bodies, not only embodies but also builds more just societies,” he said.

For his part, the High Commissioner pledged that he will no longer take part in any panel discussion that does not include women experts, and committed to improving gender parity within his office.

At its 6th session, the Human Rights Council encouraged States to promote gender balance by taking all the necessary measures, including budgetary and institutional measures, to guarantee the full participation of women in medium- and high-level ranks, regularly nominating more women candidates for election and appointment to the human rights treaty bodies and mechanisms, international courts and tribunals, the specialized agencies and other UN organs.
Bulgarian musician Theodosii Spassov named UNESCO Artist for Peace

15 September - The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced today that Bulgarian musician Theodosii Spassov is being designated as an Artist for Peace in recognition of his talent and innovation, as well as his commitment to highlight music as a force to enhance dialogue among people, cultures and communities.

Mr. Spassov is an internationally renowned composer and virtuoso player of the kaval, a traditional wooden flute, according to a news release issued by the Paris-based UNESCO. He broke new ground by composing music for the kaval that brings together jazz, folk and classical music. His compositions include symphonic works as well as film music and pieces for the kaval.

He has performed with symphony orchestras and other musical ensembles in Bulgaria and around the world. He has released over 30 recordings, some of them solo performances.

In announcing his designation, UNESCO noted his talent, “his innovation in creating a unique music style and his virtuoso performance, his commitment to raise public awareness about music as a force to enhance dialogue among people, cultures and communities, as well as his profound commitment to the ideals and aims of the Organization.”

Mr. Spassov, who will be officially named at a ceremony tomorrow in Sofia, Bulgaria, joins a roster of internationally renowned personalities who use their influence, charisma and prestige to help promote UNESCO’s message and programmes. These include musicians Céline Dion and Gilberto Gil, Chinese actress Gong Li and fashion designer Bibi Russell.

New allegation of sexual exploitation received by UN mission in Central African Republic

15 September - A new allegation of sexual exploitation in the Central African Republic (CAR) was received today by the United Nations peacekeeping mission in the country, reportedly committed by one of its civilian staff last Saturday.

The latest allegation follows 15 other possible cases of sexual exploitation and abuse by personnel of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (MINUSCA) that are currently under investigation.

“MINUSCA has informed the country’s authorities of this allegation,” UN spokesperson Stéphane Dujarric told reporters. “The United Nations Office of Internal Oversight Services has immediately taken steps to investigate this case, consistent with the Secretary-General’s zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.”

He also reiterated that MINUSCA condemns in the strongest possible terms any instance of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel in CAR.

Meanwhile, the Secretary-General’s Special Representative and head of MINUSCA, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, has discussed this new case with both the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein, and the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Hervé Ladsous.

“[Mr. Onanga-Anyanga] reiterates his personal and institutional commitment to ensure that the rights and dignity of victims...
are protected, an investigation is carried out swiftly, and that justice is done,” Mr. Dujarric added.

Also from CAR, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in the country, Aurélien Agbénonci, today said he is alarmed by the recent eviction of 114 people from the Saint Jean Gabaladja displacement site in the capital, Bangui.

According to the UN, they have been temporarily moved to Benzvi displacement site, where they have been provided with support to resettle.

“The Humanitarian Coordinator says he was concerned the evictions could signal the start of a wave of forced movements, with nine displacement sites hosting 2,700 people currently under threat of eviction,” Mr. Dujarric noted.

“He said that any movement of displaced populations must be based on a voluntary decision by the concerned people, ensuring best safety conditions and [respecting] the dignity of people affected, following the rules and principles of international humanitarian law and the Kampala Convention.”

There are 31 displacement sites in Bangui alone hosting over 27,300 people, and the UN estimates that some 368,000 people are also internally displaced.

**Killing of Somali media worker draws condemnation from UN official**

15 September - The head of the United Nations agency tasked with defending the freedom of the press today denounced the recent killing of a Somali news editor.

“I condemn the killing of Abdullahi Ali Hussein,” said Irina Bokova, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

“Extremists must not be allowed to stifle freedom of expression with their violence and intimidation,” she continued. “Free and vibrant media, with committed journalists, have an essential contribution to make to the rule of law and good governance in Somalia.”

A Somali editor for the news website *Waagasucub*, Abdullahi Ali Hussein was shot dead in the capital, Mogadishu, on 8 September.

Statements issued by UNESCO on the killing of media workers are posted on a dedicated webpage.